VACDE
VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF
CONSERVATION DISTRICT EMPLOYEES

POLICIES
&
OPERATING PROCEDURES

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide professional development, leadership and a voice for communicating issues and solutions on behalf of conservation district employees.

VISION STATEMENT

To be a professionally accepted and integrated work force of employees dedicated to the conservation of natural resources.

Last Reviewed/Updated	Board Approved
4/25/23	5/31/23
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Policy #1 - Reimbursements

VACDE Officers, Area Representatives, and members are not eligible for reimbursement of expenses (lodging, meals, mileage, etc.) associated with their attendance and participation in VACDE Board Meetings, Committee Meetings or VACDE Business Meetings. Individuals will be reimbursed for items purchased for VACDE needs as approved by a VACDE Executive Officers. (*Examples: postage for service awards, receipt book for treasurer, etc.)*

Events or activities outside of regular VACDE business requires pre-approval by the VACDE Executive Officers before expenses are eligible for reimbursement. Documentation of prior approval of expense(s) must accompany receipts. SECDEA events are considered outside of regular VACDE business.

A representative of VACDE can be reimbursed for expenses with submission of detailed receipts while on approved VACDE business, in accordance with the caps outlined below. Alcoholic beverages are not eligible for reimbursement.

Eligible expenses include:

- lodging
- meals
- mileage & related expenses
- event registration

Lodging

When overnight travel is required, an individual can be reimbursed for their lodging as long as the need for lodging is associated with official VACDE business. Only lodging expenses and associated taxes & fees are eligible for reimbursement. Valet parking is only eligible if self-parking is not available or practical. Room service (excluding meals), phone usage, wifi, and other incidental expenses are not eligible for reimbursement.

Meals

Meals will be eligible for reimbursement when:

a. Associated with travel to an event or activity where the individual is representing the VACDE.
b. Staying out of the individual's "home area" for VACDE related business. Meals beginning the evening of the first day out of service area until return will be eligible.
c. Exceptions will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Consult a VACDE Officer for authorization.

Meal reimbursement limits, excluding tax and gratuity, shall not exceed: Breakfast $20; Lunch $20; Dinner $35. Reimbursable gratuity shall not exceed 20% of any pre-discounted amount. Alcohol is NOT reimbursable. When meals are provided as part of a registration package, expenses for a replacement meal may not be reimbursed.

Mileage & Related Expenses

Mileage should be documented using Google Maps and the shortest distance will be reimbursed. If an individual uses a District vehicle for eligible travel, the reimbursement should be made to the District, not the individual. Mileage will be reimbursed at the current IRS rate.

Tolls and parking fees are eligible for reimbursement. When receipts are not available, hand written documentation of the expense will be permitted. Traffic and parking tickets are not eligible for reimbursement.

Event Registration

When the VACDE pays registration fees for an individual's attendance at a VACDE approved event and the individual does not attend all or part of the meeting or event, the costs incurred for the individual's attendance

associated with the unattended portion of the event will be reimbursed by the individual. Exceptions shall include:

a. When another VACDE representative attends the event in the individual's place for all or part of the event.
b. In the case of partial use, the unused portion of the costs will be reimbursed by the initial individual.
c. Cases beyond the individual's control, such as death in the family, sickness or work-related obligations unknown at the time of registration.

Expense Voucher

The VACDE's Expense Voucher shall be used for submission of eligible expenses for reimbursement. Itemized receipts are required for reimbursement of all expenses, except mileage. Mileage should be documented using Google Maps and the shortest distance will be reimbursed. Expense vouchers should be submitted within 30 days of the date the expense was incurred to be eligible for reimbursement.

Policy #2 - Check Policies

Returned Checks

Returned checks are subject to a fee equal to the current returned item fee charged by the bank; this fee will be passed on to the individual/organization with the returned check.

Uncleared Check

Uncleared checks shall be handled in a manner consistent with the current DCR Desktop Procedures for District Fiscal Operations.

Check Re-Issuance

Checks will not be re-issued unless it has been 180 days from the original check issued date or a stop payment through the bank has been processed. For all re-issued checks, the VACDE will request a stop payment through the bank when the original check amount exceeds the current stop payment fee or the 180-day time frame has not elapsed. The fee will be deducted from the original check amount at the time of re-issuance. Checks older than 1 year will not be re-issued.

Check Voiding

When a check needs to be voided for any reason, one of the following procedures must be followed:

- **a.** When the check has not been distributed, the check should be voided in QuickBooks and the policy outlined in the DCR Desktop Procedures for District Fiscal Operations shall be followed. Additionally, the documentation associated with the original check shall be stapled to the voided check and a reason for the void shall be written on the check stub.
- **b.** When a check has been distributed and has not cleared the bank within 180 days from the date of the check, the check shall be voided in QuickBooks and the reason for the void shall be written on the check stub.

Policy #3 - Refunds for Events and Trainings

Refund requests for VACDE hosted events and trainings must be made in writing (email is acceptable and preferred). Situations beyond the individual's control, such as death in the family or sickness will be dealt with on a case-by- case basis.

Refund Requests made Prior to the Event Registration Deadline (Full Refund):
Participants who request reimbursement of their registration fees prior to the event registration deadline will receive a full refund of the registration fee.

Refund Requests made After the Event Registration Deadline, but More Than 7 Days in Advance of the Event (Partial Refund):
Participants who request reimbursement of their registration fees after the event registration deadline and at least 7 days in advance of the event will receive a partial refund of 75% of the registration fee.

Refund Requests made Less Than 7 Days in Advance of the event (No Refund):
Participants who request reimbursement of their registration fee less than 7 days in advance of the event will not be eligible for a refund.

Refunds for Make & Take kits or other items/activities:
Participants who request reimbursement of associated fees prior to the event registration deadline will receive a full refund. Reimbursement requests received after the registration deadline will not receive reimbursement.

Policy #4 - Provisions for Guest Speakers

The VACDE will cover the costs of guest speaker's expenses including: mileage; lodging and meals. When a partner agency staff member, or specialized guest speaker not associated with SWCD's is invited as a guest speaker, their expenses shall be considered eligible for reimbursement. Costs associated with SWCD staff speakers may be covered on a case-by-case basis.

Only the speaker and one additional person in association with the invited guest speaker will be considered eligible for reimbursement of expenses. If anyone additional is needed, a detailed request shall be submitted in writing for approval by the VACDE Executive Committee in advance of the presentation.

When possible, the VACDE will coordinate having eligible expenses billed to the organization. When necessary, the speaker can request reimbursement from the VACDE for eligible expenses using the VACDE Expenses Voucher and in accordance with the VACDE Reimbursement Policy. Costs associated with companions or spouses are not eligible for reimbursement.

The VACDE may cover the costs of the meals and lodging for the day of the speaker's scheduled speech based on the parameters below:

a. For a one-day speaking event, the VACDE will cover one night's lodging and three meals.
b. For a two-day speaking event, the VACDE will cover two nights lodging and six meals.

Guest speakers will not be charged an event registration fee, for the event that they are speaking at even if they wish to attend other sessions.

When possible Registration fees should be set to cover all associated costs with training/event delivery.

Speaker fees other than lodging, meals and/or mileage shall be pre-approved by the VACDE Executive Committee. In the event that a guest speaker charges a speaker fee, and requests reimbursement of other expenses, a detailed request shall be submitted in writing for approval by the VACDE Executive Committee in advance of the presentation.

Policy #5 - VACDE Awards

VACDE Awards will be given out annually at the VACDE's Winter Business Meeting typically in association with the VASWCD Annual Meeting. Recognition will take place during the VACDE Employees' Luncheon and recognition will also be made during the VASWCD Awards Banquet (if possible). If an employee is not present to receive their award, the award will be sent home with a colleague. Awards will only be mailed during times when the Annual Meeting is held virtually or when a colleague cannot be identified.

Years of Service Awards

Years of Service Awards are only given to District employees who are current VACDE members. Members are recognized for every 5 years of service. Years of Service will be recognized with a gift consistent with the number of years of service. Years of service are calculated starting with the hire date and running through December 1 of the year the award is presented. Only service to a Virginia SWCD will be counted in the calculation. Members with interrupted service will be credited accordingly. If an employee moves from one District directly to another District, their service will be calculated using the hire date from of the first District.

VASWCD employees are eligible for VACDE Years of Service Awards and shall follow the guidelines outlined above. If an employee moves from a District to the VASWCD or vice-versa, their service will be calculated using the hire date from the original employer.

Outstanding Conservation District Professional Award

The Outstanding Conservation District Professional Award is presented annually by the VACDE to recognize dedication in the people behind Virginia's Conservation District programs. All nominees must have been employed for three (3) years and be a current member of the VACDE, as of the date the nomination is received. No award will be given if there are less than two applicants or if the evaluating committee allots an average score of less than 75. Nominations may be submitted by conservation district employees, conservation district boards, state conservation agencies, NRCS, NACD, program participants or other associated conservation professionals or clients. All materials submitted become property of VACDE. Decisions of evaluating committees are final and not subject to appeal. Previous award recipients are not eligible.

Outstanding Conservation District Partner Award

This is not an annual award and is given out as determined by the VACDE Board. This award recognizes the outstanding accomplishments of, and/or the support from, a District partner. Recipients are not required to be a VACDE member.

It should be noted that the Southeast Conservation District Employees Association (SECDEA) also has a District Professional Award for which employees are eligible for as well as a District Official Award for which District Directors are eligible. The VACDE may wish to nominate our VACDE Outstanding District Professional Award winner for consideration of this regional award. The VACDE should consult with the VASWCD regarding the District Official Award nomination. More information is available via the SECDEA website.

Policy #6 - Membership

Full-time and part-time employees of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Virginia are eligible for membership. Membership is also available to non-District employees, such as District Directors and Associate Directors, agency partner staff, etc., interested in supporting the VACDE. VACDE membership aligns with the calendar year, January 1 through December 31. Membership expires December 31st, regardless of when payment is received by the VACDE Treasurer.

Membership and the associated dues are person specific, not position specific. Membership is not transferable among employees within a District office.

VACDE annual dues are $25.00 per year per member and may only be changed by majority vote by the membership per by-laws.

Policy #7 - VACDE Representation on Various Committees

The VACDE has an established seat on multiple committees to represent the District employees across the state. Individuals representing the VACDE shall represent the best interest of all of Virginia's SWCDs and their employees and shall not serve their own personal interest or that of their SWCD.

Those committees include, but are not limited to:

- **South East Conservation District Employee Association (SECDEA)** - Typically represented by the VACDE President as a voting member to this group; Proxy can be assigned to another representative as needed. When possible, proxy designation should be discussed by the VACDE Board.
- **State Joint Employee Development (JED)** – Historically we have had a representative; currently this group is inactive. A representative will be selected by the VACDE Board or an Executive Officer when and if needed.
- **Ag BMP Technical Advisor Committee (TAC)** – DCR coordinates the Ag BMP TAC. Per the established TAC guidelines, the VACDE is allowed to have a member on the Full TAC and can have a member on each of the TAC sub-committees. Individuals interested in serving as the VACDE representative on a TAC sub-committee and/or on the Full TAC shall submit via email their interest in representing the organization and shall outline their experience and qualifications for such. Timely submission of interest statement is encouraged to ensure we can comply with established DCR timelines and requirements for the TAC.

It is the responsibility of the VACDE Executive Officers and or Board (when applicable) to select and appoint representatives for these committees.

Any and all SWCD employees can participate in the VASWCD Committees.

Operating Procedures

Expectations of VACDE Officers & Representatives

Employees who wish to serve as a VACDE officer or representative are strongly encouraged to obtain their Board's permission to serve. Boards and employees should be aware that time dedicated to VACDE activities will not be reimbursed. In addition, expenses associated with filling the responsibilities of the VACDE officer or representative position such as travel and meals related to Board Meetings or Membership Meetings will not be reimbursed. Exceptions include, but are not limited to, situations where the employee travels to represent the VACDE at a meeting, event, etc. as outlined in the VACDE Reimbursement Policy.

Officers and representatives are strongly encouraged to confirm that costs that they plan to request reimbursement for can be reimbursed by the VACDE.

Reference the VACDE By-Laws, Strategic Plan and Annual Plan of Work for more details regarding officer and representative expectations.

VASWCD Auction

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) exists between the VACDE and the VASWCD outlining the roles and responsibilities for the Annual Educational Foundation fundraising auction. Reference the MOA for additional details.

VACDE Fundraising

Expenses and income received from fundraising will be allocated based on the annual Budget. Modifications to where these funds will be assigned shall be discussed by the Board or Executive Officers. Often, fundraising is used to support the VACDE Benevolence Fund.

Training Registration Forms

When appropriate, the Registration Form should include the question of whether or not the registrant is a VACDE member (Yes/No), as this often affects registration cost. Consider distributing a copy of the current Membership List with the Annual Summer Training Flyer and/or consider posting a copy on the VACDE Webpage for reference by members to verify membership.

Outline the VACDE's Refunds for Events and Training policy on all VACDE event Registration Forms (Graves Registration, SECDEA Mid-year Planning Meeting, etc.)

Bank Records and Signatories

When new officers are elected, banking records and signatories need to be updated.

VACDE Committee (Reference VACDE By-Laws)

Committees shall work in concert with the VACDE and shall keep the VACDE Board abreast of all actions and efforts. Individual Committee financial requests shall be brought to the Executive Officers in advance of annual Budget preparation.

Taking an Official Stance or Expressing Thoughts on an Issue or Topic

Before the VACDE takes an official stance on an issue, topic or situation, the VACDE Board shall discuss in detail the issue, topic or situation and shall take action to establish the VACDE's official stance and determine next steps. The Board's discussion and associated action(s) shall be documented in the meeting minutes. All official correspondence shall be reviewed by the Executive Officers at a minimum prior to dissemination.

VACDE Benevolence Fund

The VACDE Benevolence funds was established to aid and assist all currently employed Virginia Soil & Water Conservation District employees, who are members of the VACDE, as needed during times of financial hardships. The awarding of VACDE Benevolence Funds will be handled by a committee. A Benevolence Committee shall be appointed by the VACDE President or an Executive Officer.

- The amount of an individual benevolence award will be at the discretion of the Committee and shall not exceed $500 per recipient. The Benevolence Committee can award a maximum of $1,000 per calendar year. Exceptions to the $1,000 maximum can be made based on funding availability.
- A recipient can receive only 1 benevolence award per calendar year.
- Hardships include, but are not limited to: illness, loss of child or spouse, accident, fire, natural disaster, unemployment of spouse.
- Both full and part time employees are eligible.

Application Process:

- The employee or a person making the request on behalf of the employee shall complete the VACDE Benevolence Request Form and submit it to the current VACDE President.
- All requests will be kept confidential, but applicants should know that requests will be shared with the Benevolence Committee for review.

Review Process:

- Upon review of the request, the Benevolence Committee shall make a recommendation for funding of the request to the VACDE President. A Committee member shall prepare and submit a memo listing the names of the Committee members and the Committee's decision regarding funding amount awarded and send it to the current VACDE Treasurer for payment.
- The Committee shall provide the recipient/applicant a letter advising them of the decision regarding the request.

Payment Process:

- Payment will be in the form of a check.
- Payment will be mailed from the VACDE Treasurer directly to the recipient.

It should be noted that the Southeast Conservation District Employees Association (SECDEA) also has a Benevolence Fund to which VACDE members are eligible to request funding from. More information is available via the SECDEA website.