

Summary of Revisions

- A motion was made when the policy was adopted in March 2020 to add “or negotiable” to the \$5,000 maximum for relocation expenses. The revised policy incorporates “negotiable” and includes it in the Exceptions section.
- The current policy only allows relocation expenses incurred after the employee’s hire date to be reimbursed. Since a new employee may need to travel to Harris County before their official start date to find housing, the revised policy allows the employee to be reimbursed for relocation expenses incurred prior to their hire date. This revision will also allow an employee to move to Harris County before their official start date and be reimbursed for those moving expenses.
- Since relocation expenses incurred prior to the employee’s hire date are allowed to be reimbursed, the revised policy will require the employee to maintain employment with Harris County for 180 days instead of 90 days under the current policy. If the employee does not maintain employment for 180 days, they must reimburse the County for any relocation expenses received under the policy. An employee agreement is also included in the revised policy for this provision.



INTERVIEW AND RELOCATION EXPENSE POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to assist Department Heads and Elected Officials in the recruitment and employment of qualified, talented candidates who may reside outside of the Harris County area.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this policy is to establish uniform guidelines for the reimbursement of expenses incurred when eligible candidates who reside outside of the Harris County area interview for certain jobs at Harris County and when selected candidates permanently relocate within a regular commuting distance to their assigned office location.

SCOPE

This policy applies to executive and leadership positions that are exempt under the Fair Labor Standards Act and have a position maximum of at least \$100,000.

Interview Process

For potential job candidates who reside outside of the Harris County area, departments or hiring committees should conduct initial interviews via phone or through the use of technology. At the discretion of the Department Head, Elected Official, or hiring committee, an eligible candidate may be reimbursed for expenses related to the final interview if their primary residence is located more than 100 miles from the Harris County boundary.

Relocation Assistance

At the discretion of the Department Head, Elected Official, or hiring committee, a newly hired employee may be reimbursed for relocation expenses if their primary residence is at least 100 miles from the Harris County boundary. The relocation must be permanent, and the new primary residence must be within a reasonable commuting distance of their assigned Harris County office location.

ELIGIBLE REIMBURSEABLE EXPENSES

Harris County may reimburse eligible job candidates for interviewing expenses and eligible newly hired employees (including candidates who have been extended a job offer) for standard relocation expenses per this policy.

Examples of interviewing expenses eligible for reimbursement include:

- Lodging
- Transportation (airfare, taxi, ride share service, rental car, parking, tolls, etc.)
- Mileage at the standard IRS rate, if use of a personal vehicle

- Meals and incidentals (tips/gratuities) using the policy established for County employees (currently a per diem of \$55 per day with overnight lodging and \$25 per day with receipts without an overnight stay).

Examples of standard relocation expenses include:

- Travel to new location to find housing
- Travel while relocating
- Purchase of packing material
- Packing/unpacking of household goods
- Moving truck rental
- Commercial moving company costs
- Shipment of goods
- Storage of goods
- Shipment of personal vehicle

Examples of expenses not eligible for reimbursement include:

- Expenses of buying or selling a home (including closing costs, mortgage fees, and points)
- Lease breaking or utility breaking fees
- Payment of fees to establish new utilities
- Moving large items such as recreational vehicles and boats
- Real estate fees/apartment leasing fees
- Purchase of new appliances
- Services performed by you or a member of your family
- Tips or gifts to the moving company
- International travel and relocation

This list is not meant to be exhaustive. It is the responsibility of the Department Head, Elected Official, or hiring committee to ensure the most cost-effective method is utilized considering all relevant factors. Airline travel should be planned in advance to ensure best rates are obtained. Questions on the eligibility of the expenses should be directed to Budget Management/Human Resources & Risk Management prior to incurring the expense.

REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURES AND LIMITS

In order to obtain reimbursement, the job candidate or employee must submit itemized expenses with receipts no later than 90 days after the expenses are incurred. For relocation assistance, expenses incurred after 180 days of the date of hire are not reimbursable. If a hired employee does not maintain employment with Harris County for at least 180 days, they must reimburse the County for any relocation expenses received under this policy. The Department Head or Elected Official should have the employee sign the attached Moving and Relocation Expense Agreement. Reimbursed amounts are considered taxable income to the job candidate or employee.

The maximum amount reimbursable to a job candidate for eligible expenses related to an interview is \$1,000. The maximum amount reimbursable to an employee for eligible relocation expenses is \$5,000 or negotiable.

Departments should process the reimbursement in accordance with Harris County Auditor policies and procedures. Each department shall allocate funds in their budget for interview and relocation expenses as deemed necessary.

EXCEPTIONS

Exceptions to this policy may be approved by Budget Management to meet special circumstances or when in the best interest of Harris County, i.e., difficult-to-fill position. A request for an exception including a negotiable amount above the \$5,000 maximum for relocation expenses should be documented, explained, and submitted for approval by the Department Head or Elected Official to Budget Management/Human Resources & Risk Management before the employee incurs any expenses.

This policy does not alter the “at will” nature of employment with Harris County.

Moving and Relocation Expense Agreement

Harris County is providing in its offer of employment, moving and relocation assistance pursuant to the Harris County Interview and Relocation Expense Policy.

I, _____, acknowledge that payments provided for non-deductible moving and relocation expenses will be included in my gross income as wages and subject to withholding of all applicable taxes.

I agree to reimburse Harris County 100% of all moving and relocation expenses if my employment is terminated prior to the completion of 180 days of service. I understand that my employment with Harris County is considered at-will, meaning that either Harris County or I may terminate this employment relationship at any time with or without cause or notice.

I expressly authorize Harris County to deduct the reimbursement amount owed under the terms of this Agreement from any compensation owed by Harris County to me at the time of or following the termination of employment. I agree to promptly pay Harris County the full balance of any amount owed that is not deducted from compensation.

I agree to sign such further documents, if any, requested by Harris County to confirm the precise sum of the amount owed by me to Harris County following termination of employment.

This Agreement shall be construed under the laws of the State of Texas. Venue for any legal action taken in relation to this Agreement shall be in Harris County, Texas, exclusively.

If any action is brought to recover repayment amounts due from me, I agree to pay all costs associated with the action, including costs of litigation and all reasonable attorney fees.

My signature below constitutes my acknowledgment and agreement.

Employee Name: _____

Employee Signature _____ Date _____

Witness Name: _____

Witness signature: _____ Date _____