

Suggested Procedures for Requesting ABJA Travel **by Ann Virgadamo**

The following are suggested procedures to assist you in requesting reimbursement for your training and training-related travel expenses. Every court is different and the JA must follow how their court operates.

1. The ABJA must obtain approval of the agenda from the AO in order for a JA to receive full reimbursement of the registration fee and reimbursement for training-related travel expenses. The agenda must meet the requirements for chambers' training funds – administrative, operational, or managerial training components. (See Guide, Vol. 19, Chapter 4, § 420.40.10)

In general, appropriated funds are not available to cover the cost of travel and subsistence expenses, membership fees or dues, registration fees, and any other expenses for an employee to attend a meeting or convention of an association. However, an exception may be authorized in specific circumstances as described below. Generally, attendance or participation in meetings of associations such as the American Bar Association, Court Clerks' Associations, U.S. Court Reporters' Association, and other similar associations and societies does not constitute the performance of official business. . . .

An exception is also authorized when the appropriate judge or court unit executive determines that a chambers or court employee's attendance at the training portions of a meeting is essential for carrying out the purposes of the court's program. Before granting such an exception, the judge or court unit executive must first determine that the training is a necessary expense and is consistent with the provisions of Guide, Vol 12, § 1125 (Funding for Learning and Development). Under those provisions, a judge or court unit executive should consider the following factors in making a determination to authorize training for court and chambers staff employees in administrative, operational, or managerial areas:

(1) the training is essential to carry out an official function, duty, or activity for which that individual is responsible, or will otherwise contribute to improved conduct, supervision or management of such function, duty, or activity;

(2) the training is in the best interest of the judiciary and is not primarily for the convenience or personal gain of the employee;

(3) the training is cost-effective, in light of budgetary and other constraints on the judiciary; and

(4) the training is not available locally through traditional workshops or electronic medium (e.g., interactive video teletraining, video conferencing, web

based training, computer based training), or through cross-training by another member of the court staff.

If training is approved consistent with the criteria discussed above, then the cost of transportation to and from the training location would be fully reimbursable as official travel as provided in this chapter. Payment of the expenses of lodging and subsistence is at the discretion of the authorizing official consistent with § 450.10, below. (See Guide, Vol. 19, Chapter 4, § 420.40.10)

The ABJA goes to great lengths every year to have the AO review the Association's agenda and identify the reimbursable training components of the event. Substantive legal training cannot be reimbursed from the Salaries and Expenses appropriation account, which funds court salaries, benefits, and operating expenses. If 50% of the Association's agenda is devoted to administrative, operational, or managerial training, then 50% of the registration fee would be reimbursable.

If the agenda meets the above requirements, the JA can pursue his/her authorization through their Chief Judge and court.

With regard to reimbursement of your expenses, every court has different requirements. Some courts require reimbursement of the registration fee with a purchase order form and reimbursement for training-related travel expenses by travel voucher. The codes necessary for the purchase orders and vouchers are:

Fund: 092000 - Salaries and Expenses appropriation

Budget organization codes (centrally funded accounts):

BXXBBCX - Bankruptcy courts

Cost organization codes:

B_____W - The office symbol used for bankruptcy chambers staff

Budget object codes (BOC) valid for general authorization for training expenses:

2125 - training travel (*i.e.*, travel to the training site)

2543 - training enrollments (registration fee)

Note: The registration fee should not cover food, such as the banquet dinner.

2. Steps before going to the ABJA Annual Educational Conference:
 - a. Prepare a Training Request or Travel Authorization form to be signed by the judge (samples from two courts are attached), with attachments, and be as

accurate as you can. Your Judge must approve the training request first. Include with your request a copy of:

- i) Conference Agenda and course descriptions
 - ii) Conference Registration form
 - iii) Any emails from the AO approving the agenda and course descriptions
- b. If your Court will exceed the general authorization (number of authorized positions times a \$400 per capita allowance), your Chief Judge must obtain authorization from the AO for additional funding. (See *Guide*, Vol. 12, Chapter 11, § 1125.20(c)(1)(A))
- i) At least 4-5 weeks prior to the conference, prepare a letter to the AO over the Chief Judge's signature requesting approval to exceed your allotted amount. This will avoid delays in processing your voucher when you return.
 - ii) The letter should be addressed to the appropriate person in the Budget Division (see example form letter attached that can be used as a guideline).

3. Upon return from the conference:

- a. Prepare Travel Voucher for Reimbursement of Travel Expenses (10-092000-BXXBBCX-B____W-2125). Be sure to attach:
- i) Original hotel invoice - make sure it covers the days you are seeking reimbursement for.
 - ii) Airline e-ticket or confirmation showing fare amount
 - iii) Receipt showing any baggage fees charged
 - iv) Taxi, shuttle, and parking receipts
 - v) Conference Agenda and Registration Form, if needed
 - vi) Written authorization from AO for funding if it exceeds amount.
- b. Prepare Purchase Order Voucher for Reimbursement of Registration Fee (can get voucher from Clerk's Office financial manager) (10-092000-BXXBBCX-B____W-2543). Be sure to attach:

- i) Receipt from ABJA (received at the conference) showing that you have paid the registration fee
- ii) Any approval from the AO that shows the portion of the registration fee that will be covered.

Sample

REQUEST FOR TRAINING

Name: _____ Date: _____

I hereby request consideration for the following training:

In-House Training *(Check here for training program available in-house)*

Title of Course or Subject Matter: _____

- or -

Outside Training *(Check here for training program available in-house)*

Title of Course or Subject Matter: _____

Dates: _____ Location: _____

Sponsored By: _____

Funds Required (program cost, travel, per diem, books, material):

Please provide a description of the training and benefit to the Court:

Requests for outside training should be accompanied by a copy of the program agenda.

Sample

**CERTIFICATION OF TRAINING AND TRAINING-RELATED TRAVEL EXPENSES
FOR JUDICIAL OFFICERS AND CHAMBERS STAFF**

Name of Applicant: _____

Type/Purpose of Training: **ABJA Conference -**

The courses offered are: See attached agenda.

The training is essential in our official function of our job and will enable us to manage our job as a professional. *It falls within two of the following criteria: administrative, operational or managerial areas that are directly connected with and essential to the performance of official duties.* It will enhance our job performance to communicate with the public, as well as in the office, is taught by FJC and will be tailored to address specific chambers questions. This educational conference will keep us on the cutting edge of opportunities being offered in the court system.

Dates of Training: _____

Cost of Training: _____

Estimate Travel Expenses:	Airfare:	\$ _____
	Per Diem (___ Days @ _____)	\$ _____
	Registration	\$ _____
	Ground Transp.	\$ _____
	Parking	\$ _____
_____	Mileage	\$ _____

1. I certify that this training is in one of the following areas: administrative, operational or managerial and is directly connected with and essential the to the performance of my official duties.

(Signature of Applicant)

(Date)

2. I approve of applicant's funding request for travel and training as described above.

(Signature of Judicial Officer to whom Applicant is assigned) (Date)

3. I certify that the expenditures described above are consistent with the authority granted to the Director under 28 U. S. C. Section 604, provided that adequate funds are available for this purpose.

(Signature of Bankruptcy Court Fiscal or Budget Manager) (Date)

4. I certify that the training described above is permissible and necessary according to all Judicial Conference and other applicable rules and guidelines, including all travel regulations restricting travel outside the country.

(Chief Judge, U. S. Bankruptcy Court for above Applicant) (Date)

**NOTICE TO JUDGES AND CHAMBERS STAFF
REGARDING FUNDING FOR TRAINING AND
TRAINING-RELATED TRAVEL**

- Training must be connected with and essential to the performance of official duties. Each district is subject to training budget limitations and approval will be based on funding availability.
- If enrollment or tuition fees are approved, a completed, signed copy of the authorizations on the reverse of this form should be forwarded to the Clerk's Office for preparation of a government purchase order.
- This form, bearing original signatures, must be attached to any voucher submitted to the Clerk for reimbursement. **Include your Bankruptcy Court's Travel Code here 04-092000-BXXBBCX-B05LAEW-2125.**
- Courts are authorized to expend funds on training for judges and court employees in administrative, operational, or management areas consistent with the authority granted to the Director under 20 U. S. C. Section 604. Training must bear a relationship to the administrative, operations, and managerial duties vested in the Director by statute. Training must also be *directly* connected with and essential to the performance of official duties. This may differ from court to court and be considered on a case by case basis by individual courts. Attach documents such as the conference agenda and list of speakers to support your request.
- In general, appropriated funds are not available to cover the cost of travel and subsistence expenses, membership fees or dues, registration fees, and any other expenses for an employee to attend a meeting or convention of an association. However, an exception may be authorized in specific circumstances as described below. Generally, attendance or participation in meetings of associations such as the American Bar Association, Court Clerks' Association, U. S. Court Reporters' Association, and other similar associations and societies does not constitute the performance of official business.
- An exception is also authorized when the appropriate chief judge or court unit executive determines that a judge's or court employee's attendance at the training portions of a meeting is essential for carrying out the purposes of the court's program. Before granting such an exception, the court must first determine that the training is a necessary expense and should consider the factors described under Section 2. B. (9) of Chapter III, Part F., of the Guide to Judiciary Policies and Procedures.
- An exception is authorized when the Chief Justice, the chief judge of the appropriate court of appeals, the chairman of a committee of the Judicial Conference, the Director of the AO, or the Director of the FJC designates a judge or court employee to attend or participate in an official capacity as a representative of the judicial branch.
- Detailed information relating to funding availability can be found in Volume I, Chapter III, Part F of the Guide to Judiciary Policies and Procedures. Also see the May 2000 Memo from the AO. You can review a copy of the memo online.



United States Bankruptcy Court

_____ District of _____

(Date)

U. S. Bankruptcy Judge

Phone:

Fax:

[AO Budget Division Budget Officer]
Budget Officer
Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts
Thurgood Marshall Federal Judiciary Building
One Columbus Circle, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20544

Re: Supplemental Request for Additional Funds for Chambers Staff Travel Expenditures

Dear _____:

Pursuant to Volume 12, Chapter 11, § 1125.20(c) of the Guide to Judiciary Policies and Procedures, I am writing to request authorization to exceed our Court's allowances for training and travel to training for judges and chambers staff.

The Association of Bankruptcy Judicial Assistants is holding its Annual Educational Conference _____ (Dates) _____, in _____ (Location) _____ and my judicial assistant, (Name) _____, is requesting authorization to go. All the courses are consistent with the court training goals and Judicial Conference training policies.

While actual expenses may come out to be less, her estimated cost of training and travel (see attached) is _____ (Amount) _____ which will exceed the _____ (Allowed amount) _____ specified in the Guidelines.

Please let us know as soon as possible whether these supplemental funds can be approved.

Sincerely,

(Judge's Name)
Chief Judge

ESTIMATED COSTS OF TRAINING AND TRAVEL

Dates of Training: _____

Est. Cost of Training: \$ _____

Travel Expenses:	Airfare:	\$ _____
	Baggage Check	\$ _____
	Per Diem (___ days @ ___/day)	\$ _____ (Don't forget to include last day)
	Registration	\$ _____
	Ground Transportation	\$ _____
	Airport or hotel parking	\$ _____
	Mileage (to/from airport)	\$ _____
	TOTAL	\$ <u>_____</u>