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July 1, 2026

Coalition Leadership:

We are excited to continue the collaborative partnership between the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Georgia Hospital Association Research and Education Foundation (GHAREF), an affiliate of the Georgia Hospital Association (GHA), to administer the Georgia Healthcare Coalition Assistance Program. This handbook will provide you with the tools and avenues necessary to help manage your Coalition activities and approved emergency preparedness assets.

We have updated the handbook based on feedback and guidance from all involved agencies to serve as a reference for budgeting and spending approvals. Note that all payments and purchasing must meet the criteria set forth by GHAREF, DPH, and applicable grant requirements.

As we work through these systems and processes, we know there will be questions. We appreciate your patience and honest feedback as we all work to enhance emergency preparedness across Georgia.

Sincerely,

KT McKnight, MPH

Healthcare Preparedness Program Director
Emergency Preparedness and Response
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INFORMATION TO REMEMBER

While we include as much information as possible, **some situations and procedures will not be listed**. If you have questions about an issue that the handbook does not cover, please reach out **before** making a final decision.

Monday, May 3, 2027 – Submission Deadline for Supplies & Equipment Spending – Purchase orders or reimbursement requests for ALL supplies and equipment must be submitted **no later than close of business on Monday, May 3, 2027**. Failure to submit purchasing requests by this deadline may result in the forfeiture of the remaining funds in those categories. If funds are available in those categories after this deadline, these remaining funds will be distributed at the discretion of DPH to those Coalitions in good standing who could utilize these funds on additional approved projects.

NOTE: If a vendor is unable to guarantee delivery of requested goods by **Tuesday, June 15, 2027**, the order will be canceled (even if appropriate paperwork has been submitted by established deadlines).

Tuesday, June 1, 2027 – Submission Deadline for Outstanding Expenditures (e.g., invoices, reimbursements, travel reimbursements, etc.) must be submitted **no later than close of business on Tuesday, June 1, 2027**. **No submissions will be accepted after this date without prior notice and approval.**

VENDOR DEPOSITS/CONTRACTS

Paying deposits to a vendor is **HIGHLY** discouraged because there is no guarantee that a deposit will be paid with grant funds if the item or service is not delivered, or the event or travel is canceled. If a Coalition would like assistance with a contract, please e-mail CoalitionSupport@gha.org.

RECORD RETENTION AND AUDIT REQUIREMENTS

Coalition organizations or members that are reimbursed with Coalition Support Funds must maintain books, records, and documents in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and procedures and which sufficiently and properly document and calculate all purchases made using Coalition Funds for a period of at least five (5) years following the date of final payment, termination, or completion of any required audit, whichever is later. Records to be maintained include financial records, and documentation supporting purchases made using Coalition Funds and service records.

Additionally, Coalition members must permit GHAREF or any authorized representative of GHAREF, the Auditor of the State of Georgia, any authorized representative of the State of Georgia, and, where federal funds are involved, the Comptroller General of the United States, or any other authorized representative of the United States government, to access and examine,

audit, excerpt, and transcribe any directly pertinent books, documents, papers, electronic or optically stored and created records, or other records relating to orders, invoices, payments, or any other documentation or materials pertaining to Coalition Support Funds, wherever such records may be located during normal business hours.

VENDOR INFORMATION

Once a vendor has been selected, please instruct the vendor to complete a vendor request form and supply a W-9. A W-9 form is only required for businesses, not individuals. A new vendor request form is required annually for all vendors. For validation purposes, Coalitions are required to enter the vendor form in SmartSuite and attach a hard copy along with the W-9.

FORM SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

When submitting applicable forms as required by this Handbook, two signatures are required on all form submissions – one from the **Healthcare Coalition Facilitator (HCF)** and one from the **Healthcare Coalition Coordinator (HCC)**. Requests will not be processed without adequate authorization. Should the HCF be unavailable for signature, the public health district's Emergency Preparedness Coordinator or a member of the Coalition's Executive Committee, as defined in its governance plan, may sign in their absence with prior approval.

Only handwritten and digitally authenticated electronic signatures with a time stamp will be accepted.

Each Coalition should submit a list of all executive committee members with appropriate contact information to serve as the Coalition's authorized signature list at the beginning of each fiscal year and when there are any changes to the list throughout the grant period.

REALLOCATION OF GRANT FUNDS

There may be several reasons that originally approved budget funds may need to be reallocated during the budget period, including the use of placeholders in the original budget, money savings when purchasing supplies, moving monies from one project to another, etc.

Should monies need to be reallocated for any reason during the budget period, the **BUDGET REALLOCATION FORM** must be completed and sent to CoalitionSupport@gha.org

- Reallocation must be completed and approved before the order is made.
- The justification for **each** reallocation should follow the **POETE** analysis structure demonstrating the five elements of **Planning** (must include how it supports the region as a whole), **Organizing**, **Equipment**, **Training** and **Exercising**.

DPH approval is required for:

- Cumulative budget reallocation requests for existing line items that exceed 25% of the **total** budget amount
- Adding a new line item to the approved budget

FUNDS FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR

Any funds made available are separate from FY27 funding; however, the same procurement and reimbursement rules apply. Carryover fund amounts will be decided by DPH and will be based on the project. Requests to use carryover funds must be submitted to GHA at coalitionsupport@gha.org for approval. Once approved, funds will be made available for use.

REIMBURSEMENT/PAYMENTS

Reimbursements must be submitted to GHAREF at CoalitionSupport@gha.org no later than **30 calendar days** of purchase/travel. If the correct and complete payment request is sent to GHA by the 25th of the month, GHA will pay that month. If received after the 25th, GHA will pay the following month. GHA pays once a month, at the end of the month. Payments received over 90 days after the purchase/travel **will not be approved**.

Please allow **two (2) weeks** from the monthly submission date before checking the status of a reimbursement. (*Allow **six (6) weeks** for Emergency Management Association of Georgia (EMAG) travel reimbursement*).

OFFERINGS

An “Offering” is defined as any Coalition hosted training, meeting, conference or exercise and **must be entered into the Training Registration System (TRS)**. To be reimbursed, trainings must have at least ten attendees registered or be canceled.

PRE-OFFERING

- Create and advertise the Offering in TRS.
- Manage registrations in TRS.
- Cancellations of events should be completed in TRS, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. If cost is associated with the cancellation, please contact Coalition Support via SmartSuite (Other Request).
 - GHAREF will work to avoid cancellation penalties, but Coalition members may be charged and liable for cancellation fees.
- Refer to the **Approved Coalition Training Providers** appendix for a listing of currently approved training providers.

TRAINING COURSE FORMS should be submitted **no later than 60 calendar days** prior to the training to EPR.training@dph.ga.gov. If there is no response within two (2) business days, please submit the completed form to DPH-EPR-CoalitionSupport@dph.ga.gov.

If applicable, **EVENT LOGISTICS REQUEST** should be emailed to coalitionsupport@gha.org no later than 60 calendar days prior to the event.

POST-OFFERING

- Update attendance in TRS based on the sign in sheet(s).
- Close out the offering in TRS within 7 days from the conclusion of the event.
- **PAYMENT REQUEST FORM** and associated documents (e.g., invoice, agenda, sign-in sheets) must be submitted to GHAREF via SmartSuite no later than 10 business days from the conclusion of the event.
- **TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT FORMS** must be submitted to GHAREF via SmartSuite within 10 business days but no later than 30 calendar days of purchase/travel.

REGISTRATION FEES

Registration fees required for participation in workshops, seminars, or conferences that a Coalition member is directed and/or authorized to attend are reimbursable when supported by a paid receipt and proof of payment. NOTE: Conference registration fees can be reimbursed only after the conference has been held. GHAREF will pay registration upfront for the National Healthcare Coalition Conference and EMAG. Registration fees must be reimbursed in this fiscal year.

MEETING FEES

GHAREF or authorized Coalition representatives may coordinate meeting logistics including renting rooms and catering. Fees associated with renting rooms and catering for approved Coalition meetings are generally reimbursable if supported by appropriate documentation and consistent with DPH and GSA guidelines. Clear copies of receipts for meeting expenditures should be submitted to GHAREF via SmartSuite. A Signed **PAYMENT REQUEST FORM** along with invoice, agenda and sign-in sheets (not electronic) must be submitted when requesting GHAREF's assistance with meeting logistics and fee reimbursement. All copies of sign-in sheets must include attendees' handwritten signatures.

Reimbursement of coalition-sponsored catering expenses will be paid at the following rates for **all** Coalitions: **\$15.00 per person for Breakfast** and **\$18.00 per person for Lunch**.

- Please account for yourself, any staff, and the speakers when entering your RSVP number on the Payment Form. NOTE: The number of food/beverage items ordered must be **EQUAL TO or LESS THAN** the RSVP number entered on the Payment form. If the criteria are not met, the catering expenses will not be reimbursable. **Please note: If the RSVP number is significantly higher than the actual attendees, a copy of the RSVP may be requested in addition to the sign-in sheet.**
- Meetings must begin by 8:00 a.m. to be eligible for reimbursement for breakfast and must last a minimum of 4 hours to be eligible for reimbursement for lunch.
- Drinks and any other tangible items with a charge are included in the per diem amount.
- Gratuity is not allowed.

PROCUREMENT REQUIREMENTS

When selecting a vendor, the organization making the selection (either GHAREF or authorized representatives of the Coalition) will comply with this Handbook, any relevant [General Services](#)

[Administration \(“GSA”\) standards](#), and any relevant procurement standards at [2 C.F.R. Part 200](#), including:

- **Domestic Preference for Procurements:** As appropriate and to the extent consistent with law and the greatest extent practicable, a preference will be provided for the purchase, acquisition, or use of goods, products, or materials produced in the United States.
- **For Purchases Less Than \$15,000:** A vendor may be selected without soliciting competitive price or rate quotations if the Coalition considers the price to be reasonable based on research, experience, purchase history, or other information and documents the selection accordingly (see [2 C.F.R. § 200.320\(a\)\(1\)](#)).
- **For Purchases Greater Than \$15,000, But Less Than \$350,000:** Price and rate quotations must be solicited from an adequate number of qualified sources as determined appropriate by the organization making the selection (see [2 C.F.R. § 200.320\(a\)\(2\)](#)).
- **Non-Competitive Procurement:** In the following situations, non-competitive procurement may be used:
 - The purchase does not exceed \$15,000.
 - The item is available only from a single source.
 - The public exigency or emergency for the requirement will not permit a delay resulting from publicizing a competitive solicitation.
 - If GHAREF is making the selection, DPH has authorized a non-competitive procurement in response to a written request from GHAREF.
 - If the Coalition is making the selection, GHAREF has authorized a non-competitive procurement in response to a written request from the Coalition; or
 - After solicitation of several sources, competition is determined inadequate (see [2 C.F.R. § 200.320\(c\)](#)).

ACQUIRING EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

Equipment and supplies appearing on approved Coalition budgets are available for acquisition via two methods:

- (1) GHAREF procuring goods/services on behalf of the Coalition; or
- (2) Individual purchase of items with a payment request.

Equipment means *tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one (1) year and a per-unit acquisition cost that equals or exceeds \$10,000* (cost determined **per unit**).

Supplies means *all tangible personal property other than those described in Equipment* (cost determined in **total aggregate value**).

If a Coalition decides to use a GHAREF account to purchase equipment and supplies, the Coalition must complete and submit a signed **REQUISITION FORM** and attach the signed quote to GHAREF via SmartSuite. If assistance is needed with onboarding new vendors and obtaining a quote, please reach out to coalitionsupport@gha.org.

Coalition organizations or members should NOT authorize or directly place an order with a vendor for which payment is to be made by GHAREF. Orders must go through the proper channels to ensure orders are paid for by GHAREF. To submit an order request, a signed **REQUISITION FORM** should be submitted via SmartSuite.

GHAREF will obtain a quote from the vendor before ordering the goods and services. The Coalition must approve and sign the quote and return it via SmartSuite along with the PURCHASE ORDER REQUEST FORM to initiate the order. GHAREF will coordinate with the vendor to arrange delivery to the address stated on the **REQUISITION FORM**. GHAREF will pay the vendor directly. The quote must indicate bill to GHAREF. Any special instructions related to the delivery, e.g., Warehouse/Receiving Dock instructions, receiving hours, lift gate requirements etc., must be provided in the comment section.

REIMBURSEMENT FOR PURCHASED EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

To request reimbursement for equipment and supplies purchased directly by the Coalition, a signed **PAYMENT REQUEST FORM** and detailed receipts must be submitted to GHAREF via SmartSuite. Failure to ensure that an expense is reimbursable before purchase could result in GHAREF being unable to reimburse the expense.

PROCEDURE FOR WHEN ITEMS ARE RECEIVED

Please note that deliveries cannot be delivered to unmanned warehouses. All delivery locations must have personnel available to receive and sign for shipments to ensure the security and proper handling of the goods.

Once items are fully received by the Coalition, a copy of the signed and dated packing slip should be attached to the original request in SmartSuite.

EMAG

Each coalition-approved EMAG attendee must meet the following requirements:

- Complete a Vendor Form.
- Sign a list of EMAG policies and procedures.

EMAG attendees' reimbursement forms must be sent to GHA by the HCF or HCC, not the traveler.

Roundtrip mileage must show **from your house or office, whichever is closest to the conference location**; do not calculate mileage to the hotel. Round total Mileage to the following whole number.

NOTE: Members are **required** to sign in **each day** of EMAG for reimbursement of any approved expenses.

TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

Coalition members may be reimbursed for reasonable travel-related expenses that are consistent with DPH and GSA guidelines and incurred while on Coalition-approved travel subject to the provisions outlined in these travel regulations. The following items have been authorized as reimbursable travel expenses:

- Meals associated with overnight lodging at the GSA Per Diem Rates.
- Lodging expenses are only allowable if the meeting location is at least 50 miles away from travelers' home or office (closest)
- Mileage for use of a *personal* motor vehicle (i.e., not a company vehicle)
- Transportation expenses (airfare, train, etc.) should generally be booked at least 30 days before travel. Anything less than 30 days requires prior approval.
- Certain miscellaneous expenses associated with travel, such as parking, toll fees, and baggage fees.

Allowable Days of Travel:

- Out-of-state travel - If the conference ends **before noon**, the traveler travels back home, **unless preapproved**.
- In-state travel - If the conference ends **before 5 pm** and the traveler can travel back home within 4 hours, they need to do so, **unless preapproved**.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION FOR TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

The completion of the **TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT FORM** is required for reimbursement of travel expenses.

- Lodging
 - Must be a zero-balance receipt, not an effective balance receipt.
 - Hotel receipt must have the traveler's name on it.
- Airline Fares
- Registration Fees
- Other valid expenses, including parking, taxi fares, ride shares, tolls, and baggage fees
- Roundtrip Mileage maps (Google or Map Quest)
- Parking receipt(s), bank statements are unacceptable.

Receipts for meals on per diem are not required. Clear copies of receipts are required for airfare, registration, parking, baggage fees, and other valid expenses. Claims that exceed the established limits will be reviewed closely on a case-by-case basis to ensure the explanations are sufficient to justify the higher expenses. Travelers should not assume that all expenses exceeding authorized limits that are explained on the travel expense documents will be automatically approved.

***Please note:** Traveler's receiving reimbursement from outside agencies are required to provide a copy of the reimbursement form for that agency.

LODGING

Coalition members who travel more than 50 miles from their home or workplace may be reimbursed for lodging expenses associated with overnight travel. Written pre-approval from Coalition leadership and DPH must be obtained when lodging is required within this 50-mile radius. All lodging claims must be documented by receipts and must be at a business that offers lodging to the public, such as a hotel or motel, and not at a private residence. Prior approval is required for all non-hotel stays (e.g., campsites). Any cancellations are the responsibility of the traveler.

Third party booking is not reimbursable. Using online booking services, such as Expedia, Kayak, Airbnb, VRBO, HomeAway, vacation/condo rentals and other similar service providers, is prohibited and is **not eligible for reimbursement**.

Coalition members traveling overnight are responsible for ensuring that their lodging rates are consistent with [GSA Guidelines](#). Travelers should select the least expensive option available, taking into consideration proximity to the business destination and personal safety.

Travelers should not book non-refundable rates or rates that require a deposit. It is the traveler's responsibility to understand the cancellation rules of the confirmed room. No-show charges and penalties will not be reimbursed when the traveler does not cancel reservations within the allotted time. Non-refundable rates cannot be changed or canceled; therefore, the traveler is accepting the risk of a non-reimbursable cancellation fee.

Non-government employees will be reimbursed for taxes associated with lodging expenses. Government employees should utilize their agencies' Tax-Exempt forms, which may result in the waiver of local lodging taxes.

Some hotels include a resort charge or other fees on the traveler's bill. These are not tax-exempt fees and should be reimbursed as an eligible lodging expense.

Hotel parking fees will be reimbursed for official travel in personal vehicles. Self-parking options should be used where available.

An itemized, zero-balance receipt detailing any applicable lodging and parking expenses should be provided. Effective balance receipts will not be accepted.

TRANSPORTATION - PERSONALLY OWNED VEHICLES

Coalition members may be reimbursed for the mileage incurred from the point of departure to the travel destination. Mileage will be reimbursed at the current State of Georgia mileage reimbursement rate available at the <https://sao.georgia.gov/travel/state-travel-policy>. **Please note:** updates to the mileage rate following the initiation of the fiscal year and will not be reevaluated until the next fiscal year.

Mileage will be calculated from either the coalition member's home or office, **whichever is closest to the destination**.

RENTAL VEHICLES

Costs associated with renting vehicles for in-state travel will not be reimbursed unless **pre-approved by DPH in advance of travel**. Circumstances for the requirement of a rental vehicle will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Please contact GHAREF if a rental car is needed for in-state travel.

For out-of-state travel, rental car costs and applicable gas costs can be reimbursed as part of the Coalition member's travel. Pre-approval for rental car use is required **BEFORE** booking. However, it is recommended that travelers utilize available public transit/ride share/taxi/hotel transport when traveling to and from the airport and/or conference locations. Receipts are required for fuel reimbursements.

AIRLINE TRAVEL

Travelers who require air travel should obtain the lowest available airfare to the specified destination. **Third-party booking sites are not reimbursable**. Book airfare directly with the airline you are using.

Travelers should use electronic ticketing to avoid any surcharge associated with hard copy tickets. Travelers should use the lowest logical airfares (e.g., main-cabin coach tickets). Travelers should use non-refundable fares whenever feasible. These fares are typically lower in cost.

Fees for one (1) piece of checked luggage may be reimbursed. If additional bag(s) are required, requests for reimbursement must include an associated explanation. Oversized or excess baggage fees are not reimbursable.

NOTE: Airfare can be reimbursed only **after** the conference has been held. Any reimbursable airfare should be included on the **TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT FORM** as an additional travel expense.

Baggage handling services (Airline) may be reimbursed when incurred.

TRAVEL BY RAILROAD, MASS TRANSPORTATION, TAXI, RIDESHARES, BUSES, OR AIRPORT VANS

Coalition members may be reimbursed for the actual cost of rail or bus transportation, provided the appropriate personnel authorize the travel expense in advance. Coalition members traveling by rail or bus are encouraged to obtain the lowest possible fare.

Airport vans, ride shares (e.g., Uber, Lyft, etc.), or taxi services will be reimbursed between the individual's departure point and the common carrier's departure point and between the common carrier's arrival point and the individual's lodging or meeting place. Other car services (e.g., vans) may be reimbursed if the car is used by more than five (5) people, and the cost per person makes it the most cost-effective method of transportation.

It is expected that the airport van service will be utilized when available and when arrival or departure is during daylight hours.

MISCELLANEOUS TRAVEL PURCHASES

- Parking and toll expenses will be reimbursed for official travel in personal vehicles. (Low-cost, long-term parking should be used.)
- Receipts for these purchases must be provided when seeking reimbursement.
- Credit card and bank statements are not allowable in place of receipts.

CANCELLATION/TRAVEL NO-SHOW POLICY

If any travel reservation needs to be canceled, please **contact HCF and GHAREF IMMEDIATELY**. Penalties and charges resulting from the cancellation of airline reservations (or other travel reservations) shall be the Coalition member's obligation. There may, however, be options to substitute personnel on reservations.

UNALLOWABLE TRAVEL EXPENSES

The following expenses are **not reimbursable**:

1. Laundry (allowable only when overnight travel exceeds seven (7) consecutive days)
2. Valet services for parking when self-parking options are available.
3. Tipping of any kind (Uber, Lyft, taxi, house cleaning, etc.)
4. Theater
5. Entertainment
6. Alcoholic beverages
7. Bank charges for ATM withdrawals
8. Car rental insurance
9. TSA Pre-Check
10. Lodging fees when booked through an unapproved online booking service (e.g., Expedia, Kayak, Airbnb, Vacation Rentals etc.)

PER DIEM ASSOCIATED WITH OVERNIGHT IN-STATE TRAVEL IN GEORGIA

Coalition members traveling overnight are eligible for 100% of the total per diem rate on all days of travel except for the first and last day of travel ("Travel Days"), which are reimbursed at 75% of the total per diem rate, regardless of departure time. Receipts for meals are not required. **Per Diem is available for meals not provided at conferences or meetings.**

Meal per diem rates follow the rates established by the US General Services Administration (GSA). For more information on GSA per diem rates, please visit <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>. Please note that GSA rates are updated in October of each year.

PER DIEM ASSOCIATED WITH OUT-OF-STATE OVERNIGHT TRAVEL

Out-of-state meal per diem rates follow the appropriate GSA per diem rates for the destination of travel. Per diem rates should be utilized for the location where the traveler lodges for the night. These rates can be located at <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>. The GSA per diem rates include both the cost of meals and incidental expenses.

PER DIEM ASSOCIATED WITH SAME-DAY TRAVEL

Individual meal per diems for non-overnight, same-day travel are not eligible for reimbursement.