

## **Parameters and Guidelines**

Government Code Sections 54952, 54954.2, 54954.3, 54957.1, and 54957.7

Statutes of 1986, Chapter 641

Statutes of 1993, Chapters 1136, 1137 and 1138

### *Open Meetings Act/Brown Act Reform*

#### **I. SUMMARY OF THE MANDATE**

Government Code sections 54952, 54954.2, 54957.1 and 54957.7, require that “legislative bodies” of local agencies comply with certain changes to the Ralph M. Brown Act, also known as the Open Meetings Act.

On June 28, 2001, the Commission on State Mandates (Commission) adopted its Statement of Decision on the *Brown Act Reform* test claim (CSM-4469). The Commission found that Government Code sections 54952, 54954.2, 54957.1, and 54957.7, as added and amended by Statutes of 1993, chapters 1136, 1137, and 1138, constitutes a reimbursable state mandated program upon local governments within the meaning of article XIII B, section 6 of the California Constitution and Government Code section 17514. The test claim legislation expanded the types of “legislative bodies” required to comply with the notice and agenda requirements of Government Code sections 54954.2 and 54954.3, to include:

- Local Bodies created by state or federal statute.
- Standing Committees with less than a quorum of members of the legislative body that has a continuing subject matter jurisdiction or a meeting schedule fixed by formal action.
- Permanent & Temporary Advisory Bodies (except bodies of less than a quorum of the members of the legislative body).

It also required all “legislative bodies” to perform a number of additional activities in relation to the closed session requirements of the Brown Act, as follows:

- To include a brief general description on the agenda of all items to be discussed in closed session. A brief general description of an item generally need not exceed 20 words. (Gov. Code, § 54954.2, subd. (a).)
- To disclose in an open meeting, prior to holding any closed session, each item to be discussed in the closed session. (Gov. Code, § 54957.7, subd. (a).)
- To reconvene in open session prior to adjournment and report the actions and votes taken in closed session for the five items identified in Government Code section 54957.1, subdivision (a)(1-4, 6). (Gov. Code, § 54957.7, subd. (b).)
- To provide copies of closed session documents as required. (Gov. Code, § 54957.1, subd. (b) and (c).)

The Commission previously adopted two test claims on the Brown Act:

1. Open Meetings Act

On March 23, 1988, the Commission adopted the *Open Meetings Act* test claim (CSM-4257). Statutes of 1986, chapter 641, added Government Code section 54954.2 to require that the legislative body of the local agency, or its designee, post an agenda containing a brief general description of each item of business to be transacted or discussed at the regular meeting, subject to exceptions stated therein, specifying the time and location of the regular meeting and requiring that the agenda be posted at least 72 hours before the meeting in a location freely accessible to the public. The following types of “legislative bodies” were eligible for reimbursement:

- Governing board, commission, directors or body of a local agency or any board or commission thereof, as well as any board, commission, committee, or other body on which officers of a local agency serve in their official capacity.
- Any board, commission, committee, or body which exercises authority delegated to it by the legislative body.
- Planning commissions, library boards, recreation commissions, and other permanent boards or commissions of a local agency composed of at least a quorum of the members of the legislative body.

Statutes of 1986, chapter 641 also added Government Code section 54954.3 to provide an opportunity for members of the public to address the legislative body on specific agenda items or any item of interest that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body, and this opportunity for comment must be stated on the posted agenda.

2. School Site Councils and Brown Act Reform

On April 27, 2000, the Commission approved the *School Site Councils and Brown Act Reform* test claim (CSM-4501). This test claim was based on Government Code section 54954 and Education Code section 35147, which addressed the application of the open meeting act provisions of the Brown Act to specified school site councils and advisory committees of school districts.<sup>1</sup>

## II. ELIGIBLE CLAIMANTS

Any county, city, a city and county, school or special district that incurs increased costs as a result of this reimbursable state mandated program is eligible to claim reimbursement of those costs.

## III. PERIOD OF REIMBURSEMENT

Government Code section 17557, prior to its amendment by Statutes of 1998, chapter 681 (effective September 22, 1998), stated that a test claim must be submitted on or before December 31 following a given fiscal year to establish eligibility for reimbursement for that fiscal year. The test claim for *Brown Act Reform* was filed on December 29, 1994. Statutes of 1993, chapters 1136, 1137, and 1138, became effective January 1, 1994. Therefore, costs

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<sup>1</sup> The parameters and guidelines for the *School Site Councils and Brown Act Reform* test claim are not included in these parameters and guidelines.

incurred on or after January 1, 1994 for compliance with the *Brown Act Reform* mandate are eligible for reimbursement.

Actual costs for one fiscal year shall be included in each claim. Estimated costs for the subsequent year may be included on the same claim, if applicable. Pursuant to Government Code section 17561, subdivision (d)(1), all claims for reimbursement of initial years' costs shall be submitted within 120 days of notification by the State Controller of the issuance of claiming instructions.

If total costs for a given fiscal year do not exceed \$200, no reimbursement shall be allowed except as otherwise allowed by Government Code section 17564.

Initial years' costs shall not include any costs that were claimable or reimbursed pursuant to *Open Meetings Act* Parameters and Guidelines as amended on December 4, 1991 or November 30, 2000. Reimbursement for these costs must be claimed as prescribed in the Controller's Claiming Instructions No. 2000-15 and 2000-16 for local agencies and schools, respectively.

Annual claims, commencing with the 2001-2002 fiscal year, shall include all costs for *Open Meetings Act* and *Brown Act Reform*.

#### **IV. REIMBURSABLE ACTIVITIES**

For each eligible claimant, the following activities are eligible for reimbursement:

##### **A. Agenda Preparation and Posting Activities**

1. Prepare a single agenda for a regular meeting of a legislative body of a local agency or school district containing a brief description of each item of business to be transacted or discussed at a regular meeting, including items to be discussed in closed session, and citing the time and location of the regular meeting.<sup>2</sup> (Gov. Code, § 54954.2, subd. (a).)
2. Post a single agenda 72 hours before a meeting in a location freely accessible to the public. Further, every agenda must state that there is an opportunity for members of the public to comment on matters that are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body, subject to exceptions stated therein. (Gov. Code, §§ 54954.2, subd. (a), and 54954.3, subd. (a).)

Beginning January 1, 1994, the following types of "legislative bodies" are eligible to claim reimbursement under these parameters and guidelines for the activities listed in section IV.A:

- Local Bodies created by state or federal statute.
- Standing Committees with less than a quorum of members of the legislative body that has a continuing subject matter jurisdiction or a meeting schedule fixed by formal action.
- Permanent & Temporary Advisory Bodies (except bodies of less than a quorum of the members of the legislative body).

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<sup>2</sup> As amended by Statutes of 1993, chapter 1136.

Beginning January 1, 1994, the following “legislative bodies” are eligible to claim reimbursement under these parameters and guidelines for the preparation of a brief general description of closed session agenda items, using either the actual or standard time reimbursement options pursuant to section V.A.1 or 2:

- Governing board, commission, directors or body of a local agency or any board or commission thereof, as well as any board, commission, committee, or other body on which officers of a local agency serve in their official capacity.
- Any board, commission, committee, or body which exercises authority delegated to it by the legislative body.
- Planning commissions, library boards, recreation commissions, and other *permanent* boards or commissions of a local agency composed of at least a quorum of the members of the legislative body.
- Local Bodies created by state or federal statute.
- Standing Committees with less than a quorum of members of the legislative body that has a continuing subject matter jurisdiction or a meeting schedule fixed by formal action.
- Permanent & Temporary Advisory Bodies (except bodies of less than a quorum of the members of the legislative body).

B. Closed Session Activities

1. Disclose in an open meeting, prior to holding any closed session, each item to be discussed in the closed session. (Gov. Code, § 54957.7, subd. (a).)
2. Reconvene in open session prior to adjournment to make any disclosures required by Section 54957.1 of action taken in the closed session, including items as follows: (Gov. Code, § 54957.7, subd. (b).)
  - a. Approval of an agreement concluding real estate negotiations as specified in Section 54956.8. (Gov. Code, § 54957.1, subd. (a)(1).)
  - b. Approval given to its legal counsel to defend, or seek or refrain from seeking appellate review or relief, or to enter as an amicus curiae in any form of litigation as the result of consultation under Section 54956.9. (Gov. Code, § 54957.1, subd. (a)(2).)
  - c. Approval given to its legal counsel of a settlement of pending litigation as defined in Section 54956.9, at any stage prior to or during a judicial or quasi-judicial proceeding shall be reported after the settlement is final. (Gov. Code, § 54957.1, subd. (a)(3).)
  - d. Disposition reached as to claims discussed in closed session pursuant to Section 54956.95 shall be reported as soon as reached in a manner that identifies of the name of the claimant, the name of the local agency claimed against, the substance of the claim, and any monetary amount approved for payment and agreed upon by the claimant. (Gov. Code, § 54957.1, subd. (a)(4).)

- e. Approval of an agreement concluding labor negotiations with represented employees pursuant to Section 54957.6 shall be reported after the agreement is final and has been accepted or ratified by the other party. (Gov. Code, § 54957.1, subd. (a)(6).)
3. Provide copies of any contracts, settlement agreements, or other documents that were finally approved or adopted in the closed session to a person who submitted a written request within the timelines specified or to a person who has made a standing request, as set forth in Sections 54954.1 or 54956 within the time lines specified. (Gov. Code, § 54957.1, subd. (b) and (c).)
4. Train members of only those legislative bodies that actually hold closed executive sessions, on the closed session requirements of *Brown Act Reform*. If such training is given to all members of the legislative body, whether newly appointed or existing members, contemporaneously, time of the trainer and legislative members is reimbursable. Additionally, time for preparation of training materials, obtaining materials including training videos and audio visual aids, and training the trainers to conduct the training is reimbursable. See Section V.B.6 of these parameters and guidelines.

Beginning January 1, 1994, the following “legislative bodies” are eligible to claim reimbursement under these parameters and guidelines for the activities listed in IV.B:

- Governing board, commission, directors or body of a local agency or any board or commission thereof, as well as any board, commission, committee, or other body on which officers of a local agency serve in their official capacity.
- Any board, commission, committee, or body which exercises authority delegated to it by the legislative body.
- Planning commissions, library boards, recreation commissions, and other *permanent* boards or commissions of a local agency composed of at least a quorum of the members of the legislative body.
- Local Bodies created by state or federal statute.
- Standing Committees with less than a quorum of members of the legislative body that has a continuing subject matter jurisdiction or a meeting schedule fixed by formal action.
- Permanent & Temporary Advisory Bodies (except bodies of less than a quorum of the members of the legislative body).

## **V. CLAIM PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION**

Each reimbursement claim must be timely filed. Each of the following cost elements must be identified for each reimbursable activity identified in section IV of this document.

### **A. Reimbursement Options for Agenda Preparation and Posting, Including Closed Session Agenda Items**

Eligible claimants may use the actual time, standard time, or flat rate reimbursement options for claiming costs incurred pursuant to section IV.A of these parameters and guidelines for agenda

preparation and posting, including closed session items.<sup>3</sup> Eligible claimants must claim actual costs incurred for subsequent reporting of action taken in closed session, providing copies of documents approved or adopted in closed session, and training.

For each type or name of meeting claimed during a fiscal year, select one of the following reimbursement options. For example, all city council meetings in a given fiscal year may be claimed on only one basis: actual time, standard time or flat-rate. If standard time is selected, all city council meetings must be claimed using this basis for the entire year. However, all city council meetings could be claimed on an actual cost basis during a subsequent fiscal year.

1. Actual Time

List the meeting names and dates. Report each employee implementing the reimbursable activities by name, job classification, and productive hourly rate (total wages and related benefits divided by productive hours). Describe the specific reimbursable activities performed and the hours devoted to each reimbursable activity performed.

Counties and cities may claim indirect costs pursuant to section V.C.

2. Standard Time

a. Main Legislative Body Meetings of Counties and Cities

List the meeting names and dates. For each meeting, multiply the number of agenda items, excluding standard agenda items such as “adjournment”, “call to order”, “flag salute”, and “public comments”, by 30 minutes and then by the blended productive hourly rate of the involved employees.

Counties and cities may claim indirect costs pursuant to section V.C.

b. Special District Meetings, and County and City Meetings Other Than Main Legislative Body

List the meeting names and dates. For each meeting, multiply the number of agenda items, excluding standard agenda items such as “adjournment”, “call to order”, “flag salute”, and “public comments”, by 20 minutes and then by the blended productive hourly rate of the involved employees.

Special districts, counties and cities may claim indirect costs pursuant to section V.C.

c. School and Community College Districts and County Offices of Education

List the meeting names and dates. For each meeting, multiply the number of agenda items times the minutes per agenda item for County Offices of Education and for districts, by enrollment size, times the blended productive hourly rate of the involved employees. The minutes per agenda for County Offices of Education and for districts by enrollment size are:

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<sup>3</sup> The flat rate includes all of the costs for preparing and posting an agenda, including closed session agenda items. Claimants that filed reimbursement claims under the *Open Meetings Act* Program using the flat rate reimbursement option cannot file another reimbursement claim using the flat rate option for initial years costs for agenda preparation of closed session items under Brown Act Reform. Refer to sections III and IV of these parameters and guidelines.

County Offices of Education:	45 minutes
Districts:	
Enrollment 20,000 or more	45 minutes
Enrollment 10,000 – 19,999	15 minutes
Enrollment less than 10,000	10 minutes

School and community college districts and County Offices of Education may claim indirect costs pursuant to section V.C.

### 3. Flat Rate<sup>4</sup>

List the meeting names and dates. Multiply the uniform cost allowance, shown in the table provided below, by the number of meetings. The uniform cost allowance shall be adjusted each year subsequent to fiscal year 1997-1998 by the Implicit Price Deflator referenced in Government Code section 17523.

1993-1994	\$ 90.10
1994-1995	92.44
1995-1996	95.12
1996-1997	97.31
1997-1998	100.00

### B. Direct Cost Reporting

Direct costs that are eligible for reimbursement are:

#### 1. Salaries and Benefits

Report each employee implementing the reimbursable activities by name, job classification, and productive hourly rate (total wages and related benefits divided by productive hours). Describe the specific reimbursable activities performed and the hours devoted to each reimbursable activity performed.

#### 2. Materials and Supplies

Report the cost of materials and supplies that have been consumed or expended for the purpose of the reimbursable activities. Purchases shall be claimed at the actual price after deducting discounts, rebates, and allowances received by the claimant. Supplies that are withdrawn from inventory shall be charged on an appropriate and recognized method of costing, consistently applied.

#### 3. Contracted Services

Report the name of the contractor and services performed to implement the reimbursable activities. If the contractor bills for time and materials, report the number of hours spent on the activities and all costs charged. If the contract is a fixed price, report the services that were performed during the period covered by the reimbursement claim. If the contract

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<sup>4</sup> The flat rate includes all of the costs for preparing and posting an agenda, including closed session agenda items. Claimants that filed reimbursement claims under the *Open Meetings Act* Program using the flat rate reimbursement option cannot file another reimbursement claim using the flat rate option for initial years costs for agenda preparation of closed session items under Brown Act Reform. Refer to sections III and IV of these parameters and guidelines.

services are also used for purposes other than the reimbursable activities, only the pro-rata portion of the services used to implement the reimbursable activities can be claimed. Submit contract consultant and attorney invoices with the claim and a description of the contract scope of services.

#### 4. Fixed Assets and Equipment

Report the purchase price paid for fixed assets and equipment (including computers) necessary to implement the reimbursable activities. The purchase price includes taxes, delivery costs, and installation costs. If the fixed asset or equipment is also used for purposes other than the reimbursable activities, only the pro-rata portion of the purchase price used to implement the reimbursable activities can be claimed.

#### 5. Travel

Report the name of the employee traveling for the purpose of the reimbursable activities. Include the date of travel, destination point, the specific reimbursable activity requiring travel, and related travel expenses reimbursed to the employee in compliance with the rules of the local jurisdiction. Report employee travel time according to the rules of cost element B.1, Salaries and Benefits, for each applicable reimbursable activity.

#### 6. Training

Report the cost of training members of the legislative body to perform the reimbursable activities, as specified in section IV.B of this document. Report the name and job classification of each employee preparing for, attending, and/or conducting training necessary to implement the reimbursable activities. Provide the title, subject, and purpose (related to the mandate of the training session), dates attended, and location. If the training encompasses subjects broader than the reimbursable activities, only the pro-rata portion can be claimed. Report employee training time for each applicable reimbursable activity according to the rules of cost element B.1, Salaries and Benefits, and B.2, Materials and Supplies. Report the cost of consultants who conduct the training according to the rules of cost element B.3, Contracted Services. This data, if too voluminous to be included with the claim, may be reported in a summary. However, supporting data must be maintained as described in section VI.

### C. Indirect Cost Rates

Indirect costs are defined as costs which are incurred for a common or joint purpose, benefiting more than one program and are not directly assignable to a particular department of program without efforts disproportionate to the result achieved. Indirect costs may include both (1) overhead costs of the unit performing the mandate; and (2) the costs of central government services distributed to other departments based on a systematic and rational basis through a cost allocation plan.

#### Cities, Counties and Special Districts

Compensation for indirect costs is eligible for reimbursement utilizing the procedure provided in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-87. Claimants have the option of using 10% of direct labor, excluding fringe benefits, or preparing an Indirect Cost Rate Proposal (ICRP) if the indirect cost rate claimed exceeds 10%.

If the claimant chooses to prepare an ICRP, both the direct costs (as defined and described in OMB Circular A-87 Attachments A and B) and the indirect costs shall exclude capital expenditures and unallowable costs (as defined and described in OMB A-87 Attachments A and B). However, unallowable costs must be included in the direct costs if they represent activities to which indirect costs are properly allocable.

The distribution base may be (1) total direct costs (excluding capital expenditures and other distorting items, such as pass-through funds, major subcontracts, etc.), (2) direct salaries and wages, or (3) another base which results in an equitable distribution.

In calculating an ICRP, the Claimant shall have the choice of one of the following methodologies:

1. The allocation of allowable indirect costs (as defined and described in OMB Circular A-87 Attachments A and B) shall be accomplished by (1) classifying a department's total costs for the base period as either direct or indirect, and (2) dividing the total allowable indirect costs (net of applicable credits) by an equitable distribution base. The result of this process is an indirect cost rate which is used to distribute indirect costs to mandates. The rate should be expressed as a percentage which the total amount allowable indirect costs bears to the base selected; or
2. The allocation of allowable indirect costs (as defined and described in OMB Circular A-87 Attachments A and B) shall be accomplished by (1) separating a department into groups, such as divisions or sections, and then classifying the division's or section's total costs for the base period as either direct or indirect, and (2) dividing the total allowable indirect costs (net of applicable credits) by an equitable distribution base. The result of this process is an indirect cost rate that is used to distribute indirect costs to mandates. The rate should be expressed as a percentage which the total amount allowable indirect costs bears to the base selected.

#### School Districts

School districts must use the J-380 (or subsequent replacement) nonrestrictive indirect cost rate provisionally approved by the California Department of Education.

#### County Offices of Education

County offices of education must use the J-580 (or subsequent replacement) nonrestrictive indirect cost rate provisionally approved by the California Department of Education.

#### Community Colleges

Community colleges have the option of using (1) a federally approved rate, using the cost accounting principles from the OMB Circular A-21 "Cost Principles of Educational Institutions", (2) the rate calculated on State Controller's Form FAM-29C; or (3) a 7% indirect cost rate.

## **VI. SUPPORTING DATA**

### **A. Source Documents**

For auditing purposes, all incurred costs claimed must be traceable to source documents that show evidence of their validity and relationship to the reimbursable activities. Documents may include, but are not limited to, worksheets, employee time records or time logs, cost allocation reports (system generated), invoices, receipts, purchase orders, contracts, agendas, training

packets with signatures and logs of attendees, calendars, declarations, and data relevant to the reimbursable activities otherwise reported in compliance with local, state, and federal government requirements.

For those entities that elect reimbursement pursuant to the standard time methodology, option 2 in section V.A, documents showing the calculation of the blended productive hourly rate and copies of agendas shall be sufficient evidence. For those entities that elect reimbursement pursuant to the flat-rate methodology, option 3 in section V.A, copies of agendas shall be sufficient evidence.

The blended productive hourly rate, used in claiming standard or unit time reimbursements, may be calculated by determining the percentage of time spent by persons or classifications of persons on the reimbursable activities and multiplying the productive hourly rate (including salaries, benefits and indirect costs, if not claimed elsewhere) for each person or classification of persons times the percentage of time spent by that person or classification of persons. Claimants may determine a percentage allocation for the person or classification of persons in a base fiscal year and use that percentage allocation for subsequent future years by multiplying the base year percentages times the productive hourly rate for that person or classification of persons for the fiscal year of the reimbursement claim.

For example, a city manager may determine that the percentage of time spent on the reimbursable activities by various classifications in a base year of fiscal year 1998-1999 was as follows:

City Manager	17%
City Attorney	15%
City Clerk	36%
Department Managers	9%
Secretaries	23%
Total	100%

The city determines that the productive hourly rate (salaries, benefits, and indirect costs) for fiscal year 2000-2001 for each classification is as follows:

	Salary	Benefits	Indirect Cost Rate	Indirect Costs	Productive Hourly Rate
City Manager	\$60	\$12	29%	\$13	\$85
City Attorney	\$55	\$10	30%	\$15	\$80
City Clerk	\$40	\$ 8	31%	\$12	\$60
Department Manager	\$45	\$ 9	30%	\$11	\$65
Secretaries	\$18	\$ 5	25%	\$ 7	\$30

The blended productive hourly rate for fiscal year 2000-2001 is determined by multiplying the percentages in the base year times the productive hourly rate in the fiscal year claimed, and adding the totals, as follows:

City Manager	17%	\$85	\$14.25
City Attorney	15%	\$80	\$12.00
City Clerk	36%	\$60	\$21.60

Department Manager	9%	\$65	\$ 5.85
Secretaries	23%	\$30	\$ 6.90
Total	100%		\$60.80

The city’s claim would be determined by multiplying the blended productive hourly rate times the minutes per agenda item times the number of agenda items.

**B. Record Keeping**

Pursuant to Government Code section 17558.5, subdivision (a), a reimbursement claim for actual costs filed by a local agency or school district pursuant to this chapter is subject to audit by the State Controller no later than two years after the end of the calendar year in which the reimbursement claim is filed or last amended. See the State Controller’s claiming instructions regarding retention of required documentation during the audit period.

**VII. OFFSETTING SAVINGS AND REIMBURSEMENTS**

Any offsetting savings the claimant experiences in the same program as a result of the same statutes or executive orders found to contain a mandate shall be deducted from the costs claimed. In addition, reimbursement for this mandate from any other source, including but not limited to, service fees collected, federal funds and other state funds, shall be identified and deducted from this claim.

**VIII. STATE CONTROLLER’S OFFICE REQUIRED CERTIFICATION**

An authorized representative of the claimant shall be required to provide a certification of the claim, as specified in the State Controller’s claiming instructions, for those costs mandated by the State contained herein.

**IX. PARAMETERS AND GUIDELINES AMENDMENTS**

Parameters and guidelines may be amended pursuant to Title 2, California Code of Regulations section 1183.2.