

TRAVEL AND TRAINING

Travel Policy

PURPOSE

It is the purpose of this policy statement to establish adequate internal controls to satisfy Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulations, State laws, and to provide a framework to use as a guide to prescribe circumstances for which travel reimbursement or travel purchasing card transactions will be authorized. Only claims for accommodations and services actually incurred or in accordance with the Standard Federal Per Diem Rate in the case of meals and incidental expenses would be reimbursed once the Travel Expense Report has been approved. Employees are expected to utilize the same care when incurring official expenses that a prudent person would utilize if traveling on personal business.

City Reimbursement of Travel Cost.

The City will pay or reimburse all travel costs that are both reasonable and necessary. All persons conducting official City business are expected to show good judgement in the nature and amount of expenses incurred while conducting City business. Per Minnesota Statue, purchase of alcoholic beverages cannot be reimbursed. Travel must be by the most direct or normally traveled route unless approved in advance by the employee's supervisor. Reimbursement will be limited to the cost of travel by direct route or on an uninterrupted basis. The employee will be responsible for any additional cost exceeding the business purpose related expense.

The following expense may be approved for reimbursement:

- **Transportation** – Coach airplane passage is considered standard for travel out of state, as air travel is generally more economical in time and money than other modes of transportation when making long trips. Any out of state training or travel must be pre-approved by the City Administrator, or the City Council in the case of out-of-state training opportunities for the City Administrator.
- **Travel by Automobile** - When traveling in a City vehicle, the employee should use a City assigned purchasing card for fuel expenses or their own credit card if a City purchasing card is not available. Due to potential liability considerations, transportation of persons not on official City business is prohibited in City Vehicles.

When personal automobiles are used as a mode of transportation for travel, reimbursement will be reimbursed at the current IRS mileage reimbursement rate. Payment of mileage will be based on the most direct route from the point of departure to the point of destination. The City is not responsible for damage to personal vehicles while on official business, as the employee's vehicle is not covered by the City's insurance coverage.

- **Car Rental** - Prior approval by the Department Director is required if it is necessary to rent a car at the travel destination. Pre-payment of a car rental can be made using a City purchasing card. No personal use of car rental is allowed to be claimed on the Travel Expense Report.

- **Lodging** – Hotel or motel accommodations should be appropriate to the purpose of the trip. Lodging should be chosen based on reasonableness of cost and proximity to the conference, meeting, or training site.

Each employee shall be allowed an individual single room. Where multiple occupancy by other than City employees/official occurs, only the actual cost of the single room rate (if different from the double room rate) may be claimed for reimbursement or charged to City purchasing card.

Detailed lodging receipts must be submitted for reimbursement as well as documentation for charges on a City purchasing card. The receipts must include the nightly room rate and any incidental expenses charged. Only incidental costs related to the room charges will be reimbursed.

Business telephone calls and reasonable personal calls incurred during overnight stays are reimbursable. When assigned, a City mobile device or cell phone should be used for telephone calls. Expenses that are not deemed reasonable and necessary will not be reimbursed. Some non-reimbursable examples are: movies in your hotel room, fees to use the hotel's health club, dry cleaning, and personal items (such as toothpaste, shampoo, etc.)

Unless previously approved by the Department Director or City Administrator, overnight stays within 60 miles of the City will not be reimbursed.

- **Per Diem** – The per diem allowance is a daily payment for meals and related incidental expenses when overnight travel accommodations are necessary, in accordance with published federal per diem rates instead of receipt based reimbursement. An employee may claim an amount not to exceed the allowable per diem rate in accordance with the Standard Federal Per Diem Rate Schedule in effect at the time of travel (current per diem rates are located at www.gsa.gov). A City assigned purchasing card may **NOT** be utilized to pay for meal expenses when per diem is claimed. The per diem allowance is separate from lodging, transportation and other miscellaneous expenses. The per diem allowance covers all charges, including taxes and service charges where applicable for:
 - **Meals** – Expenses for breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks and related tips and taxes (specifically excluded are alcoholic beverage and entertainment expenses, and any expenses incurred for other persons). Tips shall not exceed 15% of a City reimbursed meal cost.
 - In the event an approved training/conference event is more than one day in duration, the maximum reimbursement will not exceed the daily per diem rates set annually by the Standard Federal Per Diem Rate Schedule for meals and incidentals for the area.

- Employees may claim full per diem for the day of departure and the day of return from a business trip, regardless of the departure or arrival time.
 - When an event encompasses a full day, employees may spend the daily allowance among the three meals, at their discretion, unless meals are included as part of the event registration. In that case, the money allotted for that meal cannot be spent.
 - For partial days, the meal allowance will not exceed the amounts set annually by the Standard Federal Per Diem Rate Schedule for meals and incidentals separately for breakfast, lunch, or dinner.
 - Detailed receipts will be required for reimbursement (also for any meals purchased with a City Purchasing card) upon return from the event. Receipts must clearly state the date, location, and item(s) ordered. Non-itemized credit card receipts will not be reimbursed.
 - Employees may occasionally be in the position of having to provide a meal for other persons who have official business with the City. In addition, receipts for these meals must include the name of each person attending the meal along with a description of the public purpose/benefit of the meeting.
- ***Incidental expenses*** – Fees for Taxi, parking, as well as tips for porters, baggage carriers, bellhops and hotel maid service, associated with travel while on official City business will be reimbursed at actual cost. Receipts must be submitted for reimbursement.

City Reimbursement of Travel Costs that do not Require Overnight Travel

Travel plans involving expenses that do not require overnight travel accommodations will be reimbursed based on actual cost substantiated by appropriate receipts. The employee is entitled to reimbursement of meal expenses after submitting actual receipts. No reimbursement is authorized if meals are provided during the meeting or event. When available, the assigned City credit card should be used for these types of activities. This includes training or meeting within 60 miles from the City.

International Travel

For domestic travel purposes, the IRS definition of the United States includes the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The purpose of travel outside the United States for City business must be unquestionably professional in content and should only be considered if a similar meeting, conference, or training of similar quality cannot be found within the continental limits of the United States. International travel expenses for business related purposes are deductible, as outlined in the IRS Code Publication 463 (Travel Outside the United States), but may be limited if the travel involves non-business activities. Any travel outside the United States must be approved by the City Council.

Other

Falsification of travel documents/expense reporting, resulting in overpayment of the City's assets, may cause for disciplinary action.

It is the employee's responsibility to:

- Maintain accurate records;
- Make a conscious effort to minimize expenses while maintaining an adequate level of comfort and convenience;
- Request reimbursement in an accurate and timely manner, 30 days or less.

Training Policy

Training must be approved in advance by the Department Director. Requests for reimbursement of training costs must include information on the training session and proof of payment.