

TRAVEL AND EXPENSE POLICY FOR ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS

1. BACKGROUND

The City of Westminster ("City") recognizes the constructive value of professional conferences, seminars, meetings and training and provides travel funds for City officials to attend such events. Elected and appointed City officials shall be entitled to reimbursement for their reasonable expenses associated with travel, meals, lodging and other actual and necessary expenses associated with attending such events in a manner and in the amounts set forth in this policy.

2. PURPOSE

This policy applies to City elected officials (e.g., City Council) and City appointed officials (e.g., Commissioners, Committee members). Hereinafter, references to "officials" applies to all such persons. This policy does not apply to City employees. City employees are covered under a separate policy.

The purpose of this Travel and Expense Policy is to prescribe the terms and conditions for reimbursement of travel and other expenses by City officials when attending business or professional conferences, training seminars or other travel on authorized City business.

Training and travel should be submitted as part of the annual budget process. The City Council and Commissions budgets includes a line item for "Trainings and Meetings" (Account No. 44030).

3. AUTHORIZED EXPENSES

City funds, equipment, supplies (including letterhead, business cards, and city-branded attire), titles, and staff time must only be used for authorized City business. Expenses incurred in connection with the following types of activities generally constitute authorized expenses, as long as the other requirements of this policy are met:

- a) Communicating with representatives of regional, state and national government on issues or matters affecting the City or on City adopted policy or political positions.
- b) Attending conferences and/or educational seminars designed to improve the official's expertise and information levels including but not limited to, ethics or fiscal and financial training required pursuant to Government Code Section 53234 et seq. or 53238 et seq.
- c) Participation in regional, state and national organizations whose activities or interests may affect the City's interests.
- d) Attending events of partner organizations, cities and school districts who serve the Westminster community.

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- e) Recognizing service to the City (for example, thanking a longtime employee with a retirement gift or celebration of nominal value and cost).
- f) Attending City sponsored or co-sponsored events or other community events.
- g) Implementing a City-approved strategy for attracting or retaining businesses to the City, which will typically involve at least one staff member.

Reimbursement for expenditures incurred in connection with activities and events not listed above shall be approved by the City Council in a public meeting before the expense is incurred. In addition, the following expenses also require City Council approval which shall be considered at a meeting of the legislative body:

- a) International and out-of-state travel.
- b) Expenses exceeding any annual budgeted amounts for the above references authorized expenses.
- c) Expenses exceeding \$1,500 per trip per member.

4. EXPENSE AND REIMBURSEMENT GUIDELINES

To conserve City resources and keep expenses within appropriate standards for public agencies, expenditures, whether paid directly by the City or reimbursed to an official, should comply with the following guidelines. Unless specifically provided herein, reimbursement for travel, meals, lodging, and other actual and necessary expenses shall be at the rates specified in the U.S. General Services Administration ("GSA") publications, as amended from time to time. All expenses not covered by this policy, or which are in excess of the reimbursable rates set forth in this policy, shall not be reimbursable unless approved by the City Council at a public meeting before the expense is incurred.

Examples of personal expenses that the City will not reimburse include, but are not limited to:

- a) The personal portion of any trip taken at the City's expense.
- b) Political or charitable contributions or events.
- c) Family expenses, including spouse, friend or partner's expenses when accompanying official on City-related business, as well as children or pet-related expenses.
- d) Social events, and related expenses such as parking and meals regardless of hosting agency (e.g., "Taste of" events, organized family outings). If a social event is paid as part of the registration, such cost must be reimbursed by official.
- e) Entertainment expenses, including theater, movies (either in-room or at the theater), any sporting event or personal care (including gym, massage, spa services, and/or golf related expenses), or other cultural events.
- f) Personal losses incurred while on City business (e.g., theft or property destruction).

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- g) Generally, no allowance will be approved for charges covering laundry, dry cleaning, or toiletries.
- h) Non-mileage automobile expenses incurred, including repairs, traffic citations, insurance, or gasoline.
- i) Under no circumstances shall alcohol be reimbursable for meals or any other expenses.
- j) Optional "resort fees" or similar fees charged for a hotel stay.

Any questions regarding the propriety of a particular type of expense should be resolved by the City Council before the expense is incurred.

Transportation

The most economical mode and class of transportation reasonably consistent with scheduling needs and cargo space requirements must be used, using the most direct and time-efficient route. Government and group rates must be used when they are available. In the event a more expensive transportation form or route is used, the cost borne by the City will be limited to the cost of the most economical, direct, efficient, and reasonable transportation form available.

- a) Travel by airline should be made at the best available economy class rate for the most convenient time and place and departure. Additional fare for a higher level of service or for a route or airline carrier that is not the most cost-effective or direct means of reaching a destination, shall be at the official's expense. Officials shall provide written documentation of the competitive rate they found for their airfare so that the City can adequately determine what is the "regular fare" and what constitutes the "additional fare" so that it may reimburse the official for only the regular fare." This documentation shall accompany the "Training and Meeting Expense Statement."
- b) For airline travel, one checked baggage handling fee up to airlines baggage cost plus carryon baggage fee will be reimbursed.
- c) If required by airline, seat selection at lowest economy class will be reimbursed.
- d) Travel In the Southern California area (Santa Barbara and San Fernando Valley on the north - Indio on the east - San Diego on the south) should be made by automobile with mileage reimbursed. If the official chooses to travel by car instead of plane for travel outside of the Southern California area, the official may do so. The official's reimbursement will be the prescribed mileage or the cost of round-trip airfare to and from the destination, whichever is the lowest cost. Exceptions to this may be granted by the City Manager, as applicable.

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- e) Automobile mileage is reimbursable at Internal Revenue Service rates presently in effect (see www.irs.gov), as such rates are periodically adjusted. These rates are designed to compensate the driver for gasoline, insurance, maintenance, and other expenses associated with operating the vehicle. This amount does not include bridge and road tolls, which are also reimbursable.
- f) Rental vehicles may be reimbursed, if it is reasonably determined that the use of a rental vehicle is more economical than other forms of transportation, or if the conference/seminar is not in a location which provides reasonable access to amenities (e.g. restaurants). The reimbursable rate shall not exceed the best available rate for an intermediate or mid-sized car. Itemized receipts must be submitted with vehicle rental reimbursement request. The rental costs will only be covered for days of official city business. The elected official shall reimburse the City for any days/hours added to the car rental period for personal use and is responsible for liability claims for personal use days/hours.
- g) In conjunction with travel outside the City, officials on City business may have need for public transportation, taxi (e.g., Uber, Lyft) or shuttle service to get from transportation terminals and for commuting in destination cities. Reasonable and necessary charges for public transportation, taxi or shuttle service are reimbursable at actual cost with receipts. Gratuity may be reimbursed at a rate of 20% per fare.

Lodging

Lodging costs will be reimbursed or paid for when travel on official City business reasonably requires an overnight stay.

- a) If the lodging is in connection with a conference or other organized educational activity, lodging costs shall not exceed the maximum group rate published by the conference or activity sponsor, if lodging at the group rate is available to the official at the time of booking. If the group rate for lodging in connection with a conference or organized educational activity is not available, the official shall use comparable lodging that is: (1) consistent with the per diem rates for lodging as established by the GSA (see www.gsa.gov/perdiem), as it may be amended from time to time; or (2) at a government rate, if offered by a lodging provider.
- b) Lodging charges shall be based on single-occupancy rates. The City will not reimburse officials for lodging expenses incurred by family members or guests when an official's family, spouse, or guest accompanies him or her, or for any charges above the single occupancy rate if the lodging establishment charges more for additional guests in the same room.

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- c) An official may stay with a friend or relative while attending an out-of-town meeting or conference; however, the City will not pay the official for any payment to the friend or relative for lodging, meals or transportation.

Receipts must accompany all member requests for lodging reimbursement. City is not responsible for any incidentals incurred by official (e.g. smoking/vaping in hotel room, vandalism, damages to property) or any additional charges (e.g. mini bar, laundry/dry cleaning, room service).

Meals

Per diem will be paid at the GSA rates (see www.gsa.gov/perdiem) as they may be amended from time to time, which will include meals, tips and all incidental expenses. For the first and last travel days, the meals and incidental expenses per diem allowance amount shall be prorated to 75%, in accordance with GSA policy.

For travel, \$25 plus 20% gratuity shall be allowed for lunch if the meeting, seminar or conference runs through the lunch period and lunch is not provided.

Telephone/Fax/Cellular/Computer

Officials will be reimbursed for actual telephone, fax, computer and internet/Wi-Fi expenses incurred on City business. Telephone bills should identify which calls were made on City business. For cellular calls when the official has a particular number of minutes included in the official's calling plan, the official can identify the percentage of calls made on City business. If other equipment charges are imposed as part of the plan or a flat rate charge, the official may identify the percentage of use attributable to City business.

Garage and Parking

Actual parking, garage and/or valet expenses will be reimbursed or paid for a standard sized vehicle when incurred by an official in the performance of official duties. Officials should make every effort to keep parking costs to a minimum by opting for lower cost parking when available. Long-term airport parking should be used for travel exceeding 24 hours.

Baggage Charges, Tips and Gratuities

Baggage handling fees of up to \$2 per bag and gratuities of up to 20% will be reimbursed or paid when incurred by the official in performance of official duties.

Other

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Miscellaneous expenses for registration, tuition, and educational materials provided at conferences are reimbursable for City authorized business. All miscellaneous expenses must be supported with itemized receipts.

5. EXPENSE REPORT CONTENT AND SUBMISSION DEADLINE

All expense reimbursement requests must be submitted on an expense report form provided by the City. Expense reports must document that the expense in question meets the requirements of this policy.

Officials must submit their expense reports within 30 days of an expense being incurred or returning from a trip during which an expense was incurred, which shall be accompanied by receipts documenting each expense. Detailed receipts, in addition to any credit card receipts, are also part of the necessary documentation.

Inability to provide such documentation in a timely fashion may result in the expense being borne by the official.

6. “NO SHOW” AND REIMBURSEMENT

Definition of No-Show: A “no-show” occurs when an Elected or Appointed Official fails to attend a scheduled event and a reimbursement will not be provided to the City.

Notification requirements: Officials are required to provide at least three (3) working days advance notice or by organizer’s stated deadline to cancel if they need to cancel a previously requested reservation.

Consequences of No-Show: If an official fails to attend a scheduled event without providing the required notice, they will be required to reimburse the City the total cost for the reservation within thirty (30) business days.

Notification of No-Show: In the event of a no-show, the official will be notified of the missed event and any associated charges via email from the Finance Director or their designee.

Policy Acknowledgement: By requesting the City to reserve attendance at events, officials agree they have read and understood the no-show policy and agree to abide by its terms.

7. AUDITS OF EXPENSE REPORTS

All expenses are subject to verification of compliance with this policy.

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8. BRIEF REPORTS TO GOVERNING BOARD

Officials shall provide a brief report on any meetings the official attended at the City's expense at the next regular meeting of the official body, board or commission. If multiple officials attended, a joint report may be made. Such reports may be given orally or in writing.

9. COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS

City officials should keep in mind that some expenditures may be subject to reporting under the Political Reform Act and other laws. All documents related to reimbursable City expenditures, including but not limited to, expense reports, receipts, and written evidence of payment for expenses are public records subject to disclosure under the Public Records Act.

10. VIOLATION OF THIS POLICY

Use of public resources or falsifying expense reports in violation of this policy may result in any or all of the following:

- a) Loss of reimbursement privileges.
- b) A demand for restitution to the City.
- c) The City's reporting the expenses as income to the elected official to state and federal tax authorities.
- d) Legal prosecution for misuse of public resources.
- e) Other actions or sanctions decided upon by the City Council on a case-by-case basis.