

## TRAVEL AND EXPENSE POLICY FOR CITY EMPLOYEES

### 1. BACKGROUND

The City of Westminster ("City") recognizes the constructive value of professional conferences, seminars, meetings and training and provides travel funds for City employees to attend such events. City employees 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

For the purposes of this policy, "employee" means all regular, part-time and temporary employees designated to represent the City at an authorized meeting, training session, or conference. This policy applies only to employees. This policy does not apply to elected officials or commissioners; such persons 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 by full-time and part-time City employees including City Manager, City Attorney, and Retired Annuitants filling positions on an interim basis when attending business or professional conferences, training seminars or other travel on authorized City business. Contract employees, other than the City Attorney, are not covered under this policy, since individual contracts address allowable expenses.

Training and travel should be submitted as part of the annual budget process. Each Department budget includes a line item for "Trainings and Meetings" (Account No. 44030).

### 3. AUTHORIZED EXPENSES

#### **Local Meetings of Short Duration**

The City and its employees belong to numerous beneficial associations and organizations where representation is either required or encouraged. These association/organization meetings must be pre-approved and require only a few hours of time away from the employee's assigned work location.

#### **Non-Local or Multi-Day/Overnight Conferences/Seminars**

City Manager or Department Head approval is required for any of the following:

- Travel of more than 50 miles from Westminster City Hall.
- Attendance at conferences or seminars for more than one day.
- Attendance at conferences or seminars which necessitate an overnight stay.

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### **Out-of-State Travel**

All out-of-state travel requires Department Head or the City Manager approval.

#### **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 employee, 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 Department Head or City Manager, as applicable, before the expense is incurred.

Examples of 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 employee 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, cost must be reimbursed by employee.
- 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).
- 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.

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### **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 employee's expense. Employees 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 employee 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 employee chooses to travel by car instead of plane for travel outside of the Southern California area, the employee may do so. The employee'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 Department Head, or City Manager, as applicable. For example, the employee may be required to drive an automobile to transport materials to a conference. Parking and tolls will be reimbursed if employee is required to drive or if driving and paying any applicable tolls is the most economical means of transportation, and are not included in the daily per diem, as discussed below.
- e) Automobile mileage is reimbursable at Internal Revenue Service rates presently in effect (see [www.irs.gov](http://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.

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- 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 the vehicle rental reimbursement request. The rental costs will only be covered for days of official city business. The employee 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, employees on City business may have need for public transportation, taxi or shuttle service to get from transportation terminals and for commuting in destination cities. Reasonable and necessary charges for public transportation, taxi (e.g., Uber, Lyft) 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 travelling for City business reasonably requires an overnight stay.

- a) If 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 employee or employee at the time of booking. If the group rate for lodging in connection with a conference or organized educational activity is not available, the employee 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](http://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 employees for lodging expenses incurred by family members or guests when an employee'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.
- c) An employee may stay with a friend or relative while attending an out-of-town meeting or conference; however, the City will not pay the employee or employee 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 employee (e.g., smoking/vaping in hotel room,

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vandalism, damage 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](http://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**

Employees 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 employee has a particular number of minutes included in the employee's calling plan, the employee 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 employee 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 employee in the performance of City-related duties. Employees 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 employee in performance of City related duties.

#### **Other**

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 ADVANCE**

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Employees may request an Expense Advance. An estimate of anticipated expenses with necessary support documents is to be submitted with the request for Expense Advance to the Finance Department ten (10) business days prior to the need for the advance. Written documentation of the actual expenses shall be submitted upon return on the "Training and Meeting Expense Statement." Any unused advance must be returned to the Finance Department within 30 business days of the employee's return.

### **6. CREDIT CARD USE**

Airline, hotel and car/shuttle reservations may be made by employee or staff in the employee's respective department, using the City credit card or the employee's personal credit card. Receipts documenting expenses incurred on the City's credit card and in compliance with this policy must be submitted within ten (10) business days of use. Receipts documenting travel expenses incurred on the employee's personal credit card shall be submitted along with a copy of the actual receipt of services rendered or the monthly billing statement with the expense highlighted.

City credit cards may not be used for personal expenses, even if the employee subsequently reimburses the City.

### **7. EXPENSE REPORT CONTENT AND SUBMISSION DEADLINE**

All cash advance expenditures and 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.

Employees must submit their expense reports within 10 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 employee.

### **8. AUDITS OF EXPENSE REPORTS**

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

### **9. COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS**

City employees 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

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of direct City advance or 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 employee to state and federal tax authorities.
- d) Legal prosecution for misuse of public resources.
- e) Termination of employment.