



# ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION

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## I. Purpose

The purpose of this administrative instruction is to set policy and establish procedures related to travel and meeting expense reimbursement. This administrative instruction is established to assure that travel and attendance at meetings are approved in advance and to assure that reimbursements to City employees related to travel and meetings are not reported to the IRS as additional compensation. Everyone who travels or attends meetings for City business purposes, or supervises someone who does, is responsible for knowing and following this administrative instruction.

## II. Scope

This administrative instruction sets the policy for reporting and requesting reimbursement for costs incurred by City employees while traveling on City business or attending meetings. This instruction is not intended to address every issue, exception or contingency that may arise in the course of travel or attendance at meetings. Departments may establish policies and procedures that are consistent with the intent of this policy in addition to those set forth in this administrative instruction.

## General considerations

Normally, you should leave as late as possible and return as early as possible from your trip after business is completed, with the goal of minimizing the time away from work. If you take time away from official business for personal matters, or if you delay your return after completing your business, you will not be reimbursed for expenses incurred during that time. When combining business and personal travel in this manner, department head approval is required. If this extended period occurs during your regular scheduled work hours, the time will be counted as vacation, comp time (if available), flex leave or leave without pay.

## III. Policy

City Departments, recognizing the value of professional conferences, seminars and meetings, include in their budgets funds for costs associated with City employee attendance at conferences, seminars and meetings. The City will reimburse employees for the reasonable costs associated with approved attendance at conferences, seminars and meetings. Reimbursable costs are limited to the following general classifications of costs:

- A. Transportation by air, bus, taxi, or use of rental or personal vehicle.
- B. Reasonably-priced lodging.



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- C. Meals and incidentals while attending meetings, seminars or conferences.

Incidentals are fees and tips given to baggage carrier, bellhops, and hotel maids, and transportation between places of lodging or meetings and places where meals are taken.

- D. Other costs such as registration, parking, internet and phone charges.

A more thorough discussion of each classification follows. Note that advance payment for airfare, lodging and registration may be made by using a City-issued purchasing card, a check or a personal credit card.

## IV. Travel Costs

### Transportation

It is expected that the shortest and most direct routes will be taken. Employees traveling to the same event are expected to carpool whenever feasible.

All travel outside the Southern California area will be by air at coach fares. Employees are expected to plan ahead to obtain the lowest priced airfare.

Reasonable charges for ground transportation (taxi, train, bus or personal vehicle) between the airport and office or home will be reimbursed. When using a personal vehicle, long-term airport parking should be used for travel exceeding 24 hours.

Use of a rental vehicle at the destination must be pre-approved by the department and will be allowed only if it is less expensive and more practical than other available transportation. If a rental vehicle is approved, the lowest cost vehicle should be selected. Employees shall not purchase optional insurance offered by the rental agency.

Use of a City or personal vehicle will be allowed when it is evident that transportation via other means is not practical or when it is less expensive. For example, use of a personal vehicle may be less expensive if two or more employees travel together. The owner of the personal vehicle will be reimbursed at the current per mile rate established by the Internal Revenue Service. Mileage will be calculated from the employee's residence or work to the destination, whichever is less. In other words, mileage from home to the destination should not exceed the mileage from the employee's work location to the destination.

However, employees are encouraged to use a City vehicle if one is available.



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To drive a personal vehicle on City business, employees must possess a valid California driver's license and carry the minimum liability insurance required by law. Any damage to the car or repair occurring on the trip will be the individual's responsibility.

## Lodging

The City will pay for a single room (including taxes) for as many nights as necessary. The accommodations should be economical but practical. If travel is related to a professional conference, it is often preferable to stay at the hotel hosting the conference.

If a credit card is needed to hold a reservation, use a City purchasing card or a personal credit card. The City will not reimburse an employee for unused reservations unless the employee's supervisor determines that circumstances requiring the cancellation were beyond the employee's control.

When making reservations, be sure to ask about exemptions from the local transient occupancy tax. Some cities exempt travelers on City business.

An employee may stay with a friend or relative while attending an out of town meeting or conference; however, the City will not reimburse the employee for any payment to the friend or relative for lodging.

## Meals and Incidentals

The City uses the Domestic Per Diem Rates established by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA). The GSA rates vary by destination and are available on the GSA website. See U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) [web site](#) for Domestic Per Diem Rates.

Reimbursement for meals and incidentals shall not exceed the per diem allowance rates. Incidentals are fees and tips given to baggage carriers, bellhops, and hotel maids, and transportation between places of lodging or meetings and places where meals are taken.

To calculate eligibility for meal reimbursements and to determine a per meal allowance when the employee is away for a partial day or when meals are provided as part of the conference or training registration, the following guidelines shall be followed:

If employees are scheduled to begin their travel after the start of their regular work day, no allowance may be claimed for breakfast. If employees are scheduled to begin travel after their regular lunch break, no allowance may be claimed for lunch. If employees returning to their home or work before the end of their regular work day, no allowance may be claimed for dinner.



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For purposes of allocating the per diem, please refer to the Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE) Breakdown on the U.S. General Services Administration web site.

<https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates/meals-and-incidental-expenses-mie-breakdown>

Meals, tip, tax, beverages (no alcohol), and incidentals are included in the per diem amounts. Receipts are not required to be provided for per diem payments that are at the federal rate.

## Other Costs

Other costs incurred by an employee that may be eligible for reimbursement include, but are not limited to, registration fees, printed materials, tapes, training materials, costs associated with local meetings as either host or participant, and telephone or internet fees.

Telephone and internet fees should be approved by the employee's supervisor and are limited to \$20 a day.

The City will not reimburse employees for fines for traffic violations or private auto repair, in-room movie charges, alcohol purchases, entertainment, or health club fees.

While spouses and guests may accompany official or employees on City travel, any additional costs associated with the participation of the spouse or other guests are official or employee responsibility. Department liaisons shall collect from the official/employee for travel costs of their spouse/guest prior to the travel in order to avoid the City in advancing funds from the spouse /guest. The only exception to this policy is the Sister City Excursion, where officials are allowed one paid guest.

## **V. Meeting Costs**

The City will reimburse employees for costs of attending local meetings. If pre-approved, employee may seek reimbursement for costs of transportation, parking, training materials, and meals. For local meetings where no out-of-pocket expense other than a registration fee and/or parking is incurred by the employee, reimbursement may be made without submitting a Travel and Meeting Expense Report.

## **VI. Accounting for Travel and Meeting Costs**

The employee incurring the travel or meeting cost is responsible for having travel and attendance at meetings pre-approved by supervisor. Once travel is completed, the employee is responsible for submitting a reimbursement report.



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A Travel and Meeting Expense Report documenting the travel costs should be prepared and include amount, time and place, and business purpose. The Report must be submitted no later than 30 days after the expense is incurred.

Prepare a Travel and Meeting Expense Report using the form posted on [eDesk](#) even if the employee used a City purchasing card for all travel costs thus requiring no reimbursement to the employee.

Advance payment for costs associated with travel and meetings must be included on the Travel and Meeting Expense Report.

## **VII. Procedures and Responsibilities**

### **Procedure**

### **Responsible Party**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Obtain approval for travel or attendance at meeting   | Employee                                   |
| 2. Approve employee request for travel or attendance at meeting<br>after confirming sufficient budget is available | Supervisor                                 |
| 3. Make reservations according to policies   | Employee                                   |
| 4. Maintain records of all costs incurred and obtain receipts  | Employee                                   |
| 5. Prepare Travel and Meeting Expense Report and attach receipts and supporting<br>documentation                   | Employee                                   |
| 6. Review and approve reimbursement to employee  | Department Director or<br>Division Manager |
| 7. Submit request for reimbursement to Finance Department  | Accounts<br>Payable Staff                  |



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## **VIII. Exceptions**

Any exception to this policy must be pre-approved by the City Administrator. Department Directors or others City officials may request an exception by sending an e-mail request to the City Administrator, explaining the exception and justification for the exception. If approved, an e-mail noting approval will be sent from the City Administrator's Office to the Department Director. Department staff should attach a copy of the e-mail approving the exception to the request for payment associated with the exception.

## **IX. Authorized By**

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Edgar P. Cisneros  
City Administrator