




SECTION: HUMAN RESOURCES	REFERENCE NUMBER: A23
SUBJECT: TRAVEL POLICY	EFFECTIVE DATE: 04/20/2019
FROM: KELLY KUENSTLER, CITY MANAGER 	LAST REVISION DATE: 03/01/2009

A. **PURPOSE**

1. To establish standard policies/procedures governing the travel to and attendance at conferences by City employees.
2. To provide guidelines for the authorization and payment of travel expenses for necessary, appropriate, and approved travel-related costs.
3. To provide guidance on the reimbursement to employees for necessary, appropriate, and approved travel-related costs.
4. The provisions of this procedural directive are applicable to conferences if either of the following criteria is met:
 - a. If there is a cost to the City for the individual to attend the conference (this includes such items as fees, meals, and reimbursement for mileage); or,
 - b. If the conference lasts for more than one (1) day in duration.

B. **SCOPE**

This policy applies to but is not necessarily limited to, employees, board members, and City Council members.

C. **DEFINITIONS**

1. **Conferences** – Any trainings, programs, schools, special events, seminars, workshops, consortiums, functions, or meetings that are being attended by a City employee for, on behalf of, or representing, the City of Leon Valley.
2. **Employee** – Any City official, elected official, full or part-time employee, board member, committee member, or volunteer that has been approved to attend any such conference, and for which the City has agreed to pay travel expenses.

3. **Per-Diem** – The rate is established by the U.S. General Services Administration for federal travel conducted in the Continental United States and internationally. The City uses this schedule to determine daily paid rates for meals. This rate schedule can be found at www.gsa.gov/perdiem.
4. **Incidental Expenses** - Expenses for internet and/or tips for meals.

D. **RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. **Employees are responsible for:**
 - a. Exercising good judgment when incurring travel costs.
 - b. Discussing planned travel and expenses with immediate supervisor and obtaining approval.
 - c. Arranging for transportation, hotel accommodations, and conference registrations.
 - d. While at conferences, meetings, or other events, the employee serves in a leadership role in a professional organization and should behave in such a manner.
 - e. Obtaining and retaining itemized receipts for all expenses, other than those covered by per diem, regardless of payment method.
 - f. Requests reimbursement of any expenses paid with personal funds, when applicable, using the **Travel Expense Report (Attachment A)** upon return.
2. **Supervisors/Department Heads are responsible for:**
 - a. Reviewing travel plans for compliance with this policy.
 - b. Reviewing travel plans for appropriate availability of budget.
 - c. Approving or denying requests to travel.
 - d. Submitting all documentation to the Financial Director in a reasonable amount of time prior to travel being taken.
3. **Financial Directors are responsible for:**
 - a. Exercising due diligence to ensure that all expenses associated with travel are reasonable and necessary for conducting City business, that they are within budgetary limits, comply with this policy, and approving or denying the request based on budgetary constraints.
 - b. Reviewing and processing reimbursements.
4. **The City Manager is responsible for:**
 - a. Approving the travel budget.
 - b. Final approval for travel.

E. **POLICY**

1. Workshops, conventions, and conferences held locally or out-of-town must:
 - a. Have job-related content.
 - b. Fall within the scope of the department and/or city's goals.
2. All employees must make an effort to use a city-issued vehicle.
3. Local conference participation is encouraged. When several location options are made available for any particular conference, the employee must attend the closest location possible.
4. All documentation must be submitted for approval with an official event brochure and or agenda of the event that describes the schedule of sessions, provided meals, and other amenities of the event.
5. Travelers shall not commit City funds until travel is approved in accordance with this policy.
6. The traveler is required to attend all events/classes offered for the approved conference, training, convention, and other functions.
7. The City will not reimburse travelers for unauthorized travel expenditures.
8. Unreadable receipts will not be accepted.
9. Reimbursement can be delayed or denied due to incomplete documentation.
10. Approving Officials shall exercise due diligence to ensure that all expenses associated with travel are reasonable and necessary for the conduct of City business, are within budgetary limits, and in compliance with this policy.
11. Any expenses may be reviewed and rejected by the Finance Director or City Manager for noncompliance with this policy.
12. Failure to follow this policy may result in disciplinary action.
13. Authorization for travel is limited to and shall only be approved for conferences, trainings, conventions, and other functions from which the City derives a specific benefit through attendance by the traveler.
14. Travel Expense Requests are to be turned in before travel arrangements and should include an itemized list of all expenses and the dollar amount of each purchase. Since this will be used to determine reimbursement, all business-related purchases should be included in this report. In order to ensure reimbursement for travel expenses, employees should file the expense report as soon as possible. The Finance Director is authorized to make adjustments to the documentation submitted to correct errors or reflect business expense limits. If adjustments are necessary, a copy of the correct forms will be given to the employee.
15. All expense reports are subject to review to ensure compliance with City policy, State regulations, and prudence in incurring expenses on behalf of taxpayers and the City. Reviews will be made for documentation requirements and for the legitimacy of the expense. Exceptions noted during the review process must be resolved, or the claimed expenses will not be

reimbursed. In certain circumstances, the City Manager may approve exceptions to this policy.

16. Guidelines For Eligible Travel Expense Reimbursement - Reimbursement for expenses accrued will be paid once all appropriate paperwork has been submitted upon return and approved. No advances will be granted for mileage, or per diem unless approved by the City Manager. As representatives of the City, employees are expected to be conservative in their expenses as if such costs were being paid by themselves.

- a. **Per Diem Allowance**

- i. A per diem allowance for employees and officials traveling overnight will be provided to accommodate meals and incidental expenses. The per-diem rate is based on the City to which you will be traveling and is determined by the U.S. General Services Administration. Per Diem rates can be found at www.gsa.gov/perdiem. Per Diem will be provided at a flat rate not to exceed the current standard meal allowance established. Each day of travel is divided into four (4) quarters, 12 (twelve) midnight – six (6) am; six (6) am – 12 (twelve) noon; 12 (twelve) noon – six (6) pm; and six (6) pm – 12 (twelve) midnight. The total daily per diem amount is divided by four (4); each quarter traveled will be paid. For example, if the flight leaves at six (6) pm on Wednesday and returns at 12 (twelve) midnight on Thursday the following day, per-diem would be paid for five quarters. If the daily per-diem rate is \$40.00, then reimbursement would be \$50.00. Time of travel and length of stay will determine compensation for the day.
- ii. If the conference program includes a meal or meals, the included meal(s) will be deducted from the claimed per-diem allowance based on the respective per-diem amount for that meal. If the employee chooses to purchase a meal elsewhere, the employee shall be responsible for the cost of that meal, even those consumed for health or religious reasons. Documentation from the conference agenda or program that includes enough detail to determine if meals are being provided must be submitted with the Per-Diem Worksheet (Attachment B).
- iii. When travel is away from home but not overnight, expenses related to meals are generally not considered eligible for reimbursement. Exceptions to this policy will be made by the

City Manager in accordance with guidelines established by the Internal Revenue Service.

b. Transportation

- i. Employees should use the most expedient mode of transportation available, and determine the lowest cost option of travel. Options include air, rail, or automobile travel. In cases where multiple employees are attending the same conference, consideration should be given to economic feasibility of carpooling or rail travel versus flying. A City vehicle should be utilized whenever possible. In general, any travel destination that is more than four (4) hours of drive-time is considered acceptable to evaluate air travel options. If air travel is more economical than driving, but the employee chooses to drive their personal vehicle, the employee may only be reimbursed up to the value of what airfare would have cost, or the actual costs incurred for gas, parking, tolls, etc., whichever is less.
- ii. Ground transportation for travel to destinations that are less than 100 miles one way from Leon Valley will be paid at the IRS approved rate for mileage. This amount will be updated whenever there is an adjustment in the IRS approved rate.
- iii. Transportation expenses for destinations of more than 100 miles from San Antonio one-way will be based on the round trip rate cost of airplane travel.
- iv. Any other suitable means of transportation may be used on official trips, but the maximum reimbursable travel allowance will be the lesser of the round trip plane fare or mileage at the IRS approved rate.
- v. When computing mileage for travel reimbursement for a one (1) day trip, the employee will calculate the mileage-based from the City of Leon Valley address to the destination.
- vi. Individuals who receive a car allowance and who elect to use their vehicle for travel will not be reimbursed for the transportation part of their travel.
- vii. Parking Fees are reimbursable for airport parking up to the daily rate for the same number of lodging days allowed for the trip for City or private automobiles. Receipts must be submitted with the Travel Expense Report (Attachment C) to receive reimbursement for parking.

- viii. **Car Rentals** – The rental of an automobile must be authorized prior to travel. If a conference location requires the use of ground transportation to go to and from the hotel to the conference sight, renting a car may be considered. If the cost of renting a car is more practical to the City compared to other means of transportation such as taxi or subway, a vehicle may be rented for use during the conference. The employee is responsible for obtaining the best available rate on a standard-sized rental car. If more than two (2) employees are attending the same conference, the size of a vehicle may be adjusted according to the capacity needed to accommodate the number of people traveling. Luxury and convertible models are not permitted.
- ix. **Private Automobile** – Employees are encouraged to use a City vehicle for conference travel in lieu of a personal vehicle whenever a City vehicle is available. Employees may use their personal vehicle for business travel only if the use of a City vehicle is not feasible and if the mode of transportation is determined to be a reasonable utilization of employee time and the cost does not exceed the cost of round trip transportation using other modes of transportation. The estimated cost of parking should be included in the cost estimate. Employees using personal vehicles for business purposes will be reimbursed for miles traveled, at the allowable rate established by the IRS. Mileage submitted should be the actual mileage incurred, or documented through an online mapping service that will calculate mileage from one specific address to another. The rate is regularly reviewed and adjusted based on IRS guidelines. An employee that receives a monthly car allowance is not eligible for personal vehicle mileage for any in-state travel. When a private automobile is used for travel, the employee should maintain a mileage log based on the shortest highway distance determined on a point to point basis and submit it with the travel reimbursement forms. In addition, all employees are required to comply with all traffic regulations, laws, and ordinances when operating a City vehicle or personal vehicle for City business. At no time should employees jeopardize the safety of themselves, other City employees, or the public when operating motor vehicles. The City does not assume any responsibility for deductibles or other uninsured

loss to the vehicle. **Ride-sharing services, taxicab, bus, shuttle bus, subway, toll road fares, etc.** – These expenses will be reimbursed at cost. The least expensive of these modes of ground transportation should be used whenever possible. A receipt is needed in order to receive reimbursement.

- x. **Air Travel** – Every effort should be made to obtain the lowest possible round trip coach fare, with reasonable consideration given to the time and distance of travel involved. Any upgrades, seat selection costs, or other enhancements are personal expenditures, and will not be paid by the City. If an employee is required to change a flight prior to the conference due to business reasons, any change fees will be paid for or reimbursed by the City with approval from the City Manager. Change fees due to personal conflicts are not reimbursable. In the event of a conference cancellation or reschedule through the conference itself, reimbursement for any associated travel penalties should be pursued through the conference sponsor. If at any time during an air travel trip, a leg or entire itinerary is required to be changed, resulting in additional fees or unused portions of a ticket, full disclosure and documentation of the situation is to be reported to the Department Director, Financial Director and City Manager as soon as possible. Circumstances will be reviewed on a case by case basis to determine what, if any, portion of the costs may be the responsibility of the employee. When a ticketed flight is not taken, the employee, or booking party is responsible for facilitating a refund or credit from the travel agency or airline for any unused tickets.

c. **Lodging**

- i. Employees are expected to utilize lodging discounts provided through the conference, if available, and select moderately priced accommodations within an acceptable travel distance from the conference location. Hotel locations that result in excessive commuting or taxi expenses should be avoided whenever possible.
- ii. Lodging is limited to the standard room rate for single occupancy for the minimum number of nights required to attend the conference. Employees are encouraged to request “government or corporate rates” when available when making travel arrangements.

- iii. Costs of personal entertainment, amusements, or social activities, are not eligible for reimbursement.
- iv. Itemized receipts should be retained by the employee upon checkout and turned in.

17. Emergency Situations

- a. When due to unforeseen circumstances, a Department Head believes that an employee should make a trip on City business; the Department Head may make an emergency travel request directly to the City Manager. Submission of the Travel Request Form (Attachment A) will not be required prior to an employee's departure when making an emergency request but the forms will be filled out and submitted in the specified manner immediately upon return.
- b. If at any time en-route, during or returning from a City business trip, a weather emergency, natural disaster, threat to national or regional security, or other circumstances occur that are outside the control of the employee, and deviations from planned travel itineraries result, the employee is expected to utilize rational judgment in regards to their personal safety given the situation. Any expenses incurred by an employee in one and emergency situations will be reviewed on a case by case basis to determine if they are reimbursable or personal expenses. Communication of any emergency situation should be directed to the employee's Supervisor, Department Director, or City Manager as soon as possible.

18. Travel Expenses not Reimbursable

- a. Preventable Charges – Late check-out, failure to cancel lodging reservations or transportation fees will not be reimbursed.
- b. Alcoholic Beverages – Under no circumstances will expenses for alcohol or alcoholic beverages be reimbursed by the City.
- c. Personal Expenses – Personal expenses for grooming such as haircuts and entertainment costs such as in-room movies or games are not eligible for reimbursement.
- d. Excess Baggage Charges – Excess baggage charges are generally not eligible for reimbursement. If the airline charges for all checked baggage, the City will cover the cost for one checked bag only. A valid business-related justification must be provided for these charges with a valid airline receipt for the excess baggage charge in order to be considered for reimbursement.
- e. Laundry & Dry Cleaning - Laundry services and dry cleaning are not eligible for reimbursement.

- f. Family Members – Any expenses for spouses, guests, or family members that are not employees of the City, and are not attending the function as a representative of the City, will not be reimbursed.
- g. Personal Property – The City of Leon Valley is not responsible for the loss of personal items, including baggage and will not reimburse or replace property lost or stolen.
- h. Other – Expenses not directly related to the performance of the travel assignment are not eligible for reimbursement.

F. **PROCEDURE**

1. When an employee travels in the interest of the City, a Travel Expense Request (Attachment A) will be completed with all supporting documentation attached and turned into the employee's supervisor for approval. When approval is requested to attend a meeting/seminar that is not specifically approved in the budget, this fact should be noted on the Travel Expense Request form (Attachment A).
2. Once the Travel Expense Request has been approved by the employee's supervisor, the Financial Director will review the request for comparison with the budgetary allowance. The request will then be forwarded to the City Manager with any comments regarding the request.
3. The City Manager will either approve or disapprove the request for travel. Once the City Manager indicates approval or disapproval, the request will be returned to the originating department.
4. Within five (5) working days following an employee's return from their trip, the employee will prepare a Travel Expense Report (Attachment B) and submit it to their supervisor. The report will then be reviewed and submitted, along with itemized receipts to the Financial Director.
 - a. The Financial Director will audit the items listed as expenses by the employee. After verifying the accuracy of the Travel Expense Report and ensuring that all the required paperwork is correctly completed, the Financial Director will authorize and process the check request for reimbursement.
 - b. If an item is disallowed because it is not considered to be eligible for reimbursement, the Department Head may request that the City Manager review the expense and make a determination as to whether to allow the charge. The decision of the City Manager is final.

G. **ATTACHMENTS**

- A - Travel Expense Request
- B - Per-Diem Worksheet
- C – Travel Expense Report

Attachment A



Name of Person and Job Title: _____

Name of the Conference Attending: _____

Location of Conference: _____

Dates of Travel is From: _____ To _____

Is this Request Budgeted Yes No

Benefit to the City for Conference Attendance: _____

Registration Information	Fees
Cost of the Conference	
Ground Transportation Rate: _____ Mileage: _____	
Air Transportation	
Lodging	
Per Diem (Attach Worksheet)	
Miscellaneous (Parking)	

Checklist of Attachments:

Per Diem Work Sheet _____ Agenda for the Conference _____

Registration Confirmation _____ Flight Confirmation _____ Hotel Confirmation _____

Approved by:

Department Director: _____ Date: _____

Finance Director: _____ Date: _____

City Manager: _____ Date: _____

Attachment B

**Per Diem
Worksheet**

<u>DATES</u>							
<u>QUARTERS</u>	<u>Mon</u>	<u>Tues</u>	<u>Wed</u>	<u>Thurs</u>	<u>Fri</u>	<u>Sat</u>	<u>Sun</u>
12 Midnight – 6 a.m							
6 a.m. – 12 Noon							
12 Noon – 6 p.m.							
6 p.m. – 12 Midnight							

Per Diem allowance for employees and officials traveling overnight will be provided to accommodate meals and incidental expenses. Where meals are provided as part of the registration fee, the per diem allowance for meals will be reduced proportionately.

Indicate on the above chart the quarters being requested for per diem. Exclude any quarter(s) where the meals are part of the registration.

The per-diem rate is based on the City to which you will be traveling and is determined by the U.S. General Services Administration. Per Diem rates can be found at www.gsa.gov/perdiem. Per Diem will be provided at a flat rate not to exceed the current standard meal allowance established.

Amount Per Quarter: _____

Total Amount: _____

Attachment C



TRAVEL EXPENSE REQUEST FORM MUST BE ATTACHED

Name of Person and Job Title: _____

Name of the Conference Attended: _____

Items Being Requested for Riembursement

Registration Information	Fees
Cost of the Conference	
Ground Transportation Rate: _____ Mileage: _____	
Air Transportation	
Lodging	
Per Diem (Attach Worksheet)	
Miscellaneous (Parking)	



Submitted by: _____ **Date:** _____

Department Director: _____ **Date:** _____

Finance Director: _____ **Date:** _____