



SECTION: HUMAN RESOURCES	REFERENCE NUMBER: A23
SUBJECT: TRAVEL POLICY	EFFECTIVE DATE: 3/01/2024
FROM: CRYSTAL CALDERA, CITY MANAGER <i>CC</i>	LAST REVISION DATE: 04/20/2019

**A. PURPOSE:**

1. To establish standard policies and procedures governing the travel and attendance of conferences by City employees, either out of town or local.
2. To provide guidelines for the authorization, reimbursement, or payment for travel expenses necessary and appropriate for approved travel-related costs.
3. To require all travel-related expenses to be submitted in a timely manner in accordance with the policies and procedures outlined herein.
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, parking, and reimbursement for mileage); or,
  - b. If the conference lasts more than one (1) day in duration.

**B. SCOPE:**

This policy complies with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) regulations and applies to all city employees, board members, and City Council members. The City will pay or will provide reimbursement for all reasonable travel-related expenses when the purpose is applicable to city operations and enhances the knowledge of the individual, which in turn benefits the city.

**C. DEFINITIONS:**

1. **Conferences** – Any trainings, programs, schools, special events, seminars, workshops, consortiums, functions, meetings, or to conduct other activities 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](http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem).
4. **Incidental Expenses** – Minor expenses such as for internet, parking, taxes and/or tips for meals when traveling for authorized conferences.

**D. RESPONSIBILITIES:**

1. **Employees are responsible for:**
  - a. Exercising good judgment when incurring travel costs.
  - b. Discussing planned travel and expenses with the immediate supervisor and obtaining approval from the Supervisor and Finance Director using the **Travel Request Authorization & Estimated Expense Report (Attachment A)**.
  - 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 for reimbursement of any expenses paid with personal funds, when applicable, using the **Travel Expense Report (Attachment C)** upon return.
2. **Department Directors are responsible for:**
  - a. Reviewing travel plans for compliance with this policy.
  - b. Reviewing travel plans for appropriate availability of budget.
  - c. Determining if travel plans are legitimate and in the best interest of the city.
  - d. Approving or denying employee's request to travel.
  - e. Submitting all documentation to the Finance 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.
  - b. That employee's travel request is within budgetary limits.
  - c. Approving or denying an employee's Travel Request based on budgetary constraints.

- d. Reviewing and processing reimbursements.
- e. Reporting any abuse and/or misuse of travel funds to the appropriate Director and/or City Manager.

**4. The City Manager is responsible for:**

- a. Approving the travel budget.
- b. Final approval for travel requests.
- c. Maintaining record of travel/trainings requests for Department Directors.
- d. Implementing, revising, communicating, and/or making exceptions to this policy.

**E. POLICY IN GENERAL:**

1. Failure to follow this policy may result in disciplinary action.
2. All employees must make an effort to use a city-issued vehicle, unless the use of a personal vehicle is authorized by the City Manager.
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. The traveler is required to attend all events/classes offered for the approved conference, training, convention, and other city related business functions.
5. Travel Request Authorization & Estimated Expense Reports are to be turned in before travel arrangements are made and should include an itemized list of all anticipated 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.
6. 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.
7. In good financial practice, all city-related business travel expenses should either be paid by a city-issued check, charged to a city-issued credit card, and/or charged to a city-issued gas card, when applicable. Accumulation of receipts or tracking the mileage for an approved-use of a personal vehicle for business errands shall be

submitted for reimbursement no less than quarterly within each fiscal year (October-December, January-March, April-June, July-September).

**F. AUTHORIZATION/APPROVAL OF TRAVEL:**

1. Authorization for travel is limited to and shall only be approved for conferences, trainings, conventions, and other functions held locally or out-of-town from which the City derives a specific benefit through attendance by the traveler and must:
  - a. Have job-related content.
  - b. Fall within the scope of the department and/or city's goals.
2. 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, to include approximate costs associated with the travel and attached to the Travel Request Authorization & Estimated Expense Report.
3. **Travel authorization is required before an employee can travel, or register at a conference, and shall not commit City funds until travel is approved in accordance with this policy.**
4. 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.

**G. TRAVEL EXPENSES AND REIMBURSEMENT POLICY:**

1. The City will not reimburse travelers for unauthorized travel expenditures, including unauthorized expenses related to the use of a personal vehicle.
2. Receipts must be turned in to receive reimbursement. Unreadable receipts will not be accepted.
3. Reimbursement can be delayed or denied due to incomplete documentation by the Finance Director or City Manager.
4. Any expenses may be reviewed and rejected by the Finance Director or City Manager for noncompliance with this policy.
5. Reimbursement for expenses accrued will be paid once all appropriate paperwork has been submitted upon return and approved.
6. No advances will be granted for mileage, or per diem unless approved by the City Manager.
7. As representatives of the City, employees are expected to be conservative in their expenses as if such costs were being paid by themselves.
8. When a city vehicle is utilized for travel, employees authorized to use a city-issued fuel card or assigned a city credit card must first apply these methods of payment before using personal funds to fuel a city vehicle.



## 9. Eligible Travel Expenses Reimbursable:

### 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](http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem). Per Diem will be provided at a flat rate not to exceed the current standard meal allowance established. The total daily per diem amount is divided into four (4) quarters; and the time of travel and length of stay will determine compensation for the day:

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter: Twelve (12) am (midnight) - six (6) am;

2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter: Six (6) am – Twelve (12) pm (noon);

3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter: Twelve (12) pm (noon) – six (6) pm; and

4<sup>th</sup> Quarter: Six (6) pm – Twelve (12) am midnight.

[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.]

- 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 the economic feasibility of carpooling or rail travel versus flying.
- ii. A City vehicle should be utilized whenever possible; however, unless the use of a personal vehicle was authorized by the City Manager will an employee be reimbursed at the current standard mileage rate for business miles driven as determined by the Internal Revenue Service.

- iii. In general, any travel destination that is more than 150 miles one-way is considered acceptable to evaluate air travel options.
- iv. 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.
- v. Ground transportation travel expenses during regular business hours (Monday-Friday, 7:30 AM – 6:00 PM) to destinations that are *less than 50 miles* one way from the City of Leon Valley address is NOT reimbursable.
- vi. Ground transportation travel expenses to destinations of *more than 50 miles* one way from Leon Valley will be paid at the current IRS approved rate for mileage from the City of Leon Valley address.
- vii. Ground transportation travel expenses to destinations outside of regular business hours will be paid at the current IRS approved rate for mileage from the City of Leon Valley address.
- viii. Any other suitable or authorized 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.
- ix. When computing mileage for travel reimbursement, the employee will calculate the mileage-based from the City of Leon Valley address to and from the destination at the current IRS approved rate for business travel.
- x. 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.
- xi. 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.
- xii. **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.
- xiii. **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. The 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 who 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.

- xiv. **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 rescheduling 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. Any travel destination that is more than 150 miles one-way is considered acceptable to evaluate overnight lodging options for conferences that start before 9:00 AM or end after 6:00 PM.
- ii. The City Manager may approve or deny any requests for overnight stays before and/or after a conference when considering an employee's travel time to/from the destination and the start/end time of a conference.
- iii. Employees are expected to utilize lodging discounts provided through the conference, if available, and select moderately priced accommodation within an acceptable travel distance from the conference location. Hotel locations that result in excessive commuting or taxi expenses should be avoided whenever possible.
- iv. 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.
- v. Costs of personal entertainment, amusements, or social activities are not eligible for reimbursement.
- vi. Itemized receipts should be retained by the employee upon checkout and turned in.

**d. Emergency Situations**

- i. 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.
- ii. If at any time in 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.

**10. Ineligible Travel Expenses not Reimbursable**

- i. Preventable Charges – Late check-out, failure to cancel lodging reservations or transportation fees will not be reimbursed.
- ii. Alcoholic Beverages – Under no circumstances will expenses for alcohol or alcoholic beverages be reimbursed by the City.
- iii. Personal Expenses – Personal expenses for grooming, such as haircuts, entertainment costs, in-room movies or games, are not eligible for reimbursement.
- iv. 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.
- v. Laundry & Dry Cleaning - Laundry services and dry cleaning are not eligible for reimbursement.
- vi. Family Members – Any expenses for spouses, guests, or family members who are not employees of the City and are not attending the function as a representative of the City will not be reimbursed.
- vii. 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.
- viii. Other – Expenses not directly related to the performance of the travel assignment are not eligible for reimbursement.

**11. Procedure**

- i. When an employee travels in the interest of the City, a **Travel Request Authorization & Estimated Expense Report (Attachment A)** will be completed with all supporting documentation attached and turned into the employee's Department Director 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 Request Authorization & Estimated Expense Report (Attachment A)**. Anyone who attends training, conference, or educational expo that is not on city property must get approval by submitting Attachment A, regardless of cost or reimbursement.
- ii. Once the Travel Request Authorization & Estimated Expense Report has been approved by the employee's Department Director, 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.
- iii. 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.
  - iv. Within five (5) working days following an employee's return from their trip, the employee will prepare a **Travel Expense Report (Attachment C)** and submit it to their Department Director. All reporting expenses in the Travel Expense Report are final; employees cannot resubmit for unclaimed expenses after the Travel Expense Report has been approved by the Department Director. 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 Director may request that the City Manager review the expense and decision as to whether to allow the charge. The City Manager's decision is final.

**H. ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Travel Request Authorization & Expense Report
- B. Per-Diem Worksheet
- C. Travel Expense Report



**TRAVEL REQUEST AUTHORIZATION & ESTIMATED EXPENSE REPORT**

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the Conference Attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Conference: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of Travel From: \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_ Is this Request Budgeted?  Yes  No

Are you requesting to use a Personal Vehicle (mileage reimbursement)?  Yes  No

Benefit to the City for Attendance: \_\_\_\_\_

Does this Conference achieve a Certification or License applicable to your Job Duties?  Yes  No

If yes – Type of Certification/License: \_\_\_\_\_

REGISTRATION INFORMATION	COSTS	EXPECTED PAYMENT DELIVERY TYPE
Cost of the Conference		<input type="checkbox"/> Charge <input type="checkbox"/> Invoice <input type="checkbox"/> Reimbursement
Air Transportation		<input type="checkbox"/> Charge <input type="checkbox"/> Invoice <input type="checkbox"/> Reimbursement
Hotel/Lodging		<input type="checkbox"/> Charge <input type="checkbox"/> Invoice <input type="checkbox"/> Reimbursement
Miscellaneous (Parking)		<input type="checkbox"/> Charge <input type="checkbox"/> Invoice <input type="checkbox"/> Reimbursement
Ground Transportation (Personal Vehicle)		IRS Rate: _____ Miles: _____
Per Diem (Meals & Incidental Expenses)		Attach Per Diem Worksheet
<b>ESTIMATED TOTAL EXPENSES:</b>		<b>GL Code:</b>

**CHECKLIST OF ATTACHMENTS (if applicable):**

- Conference Agenda     
  Registration Costs     
  Per Diem Worksheet  
 Flight Costs     
  Ground Transportation Map     
  Hotel/Lodging Costs

**APPROVED BY:**

Department Director: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Finance Director: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

City Manager: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[A signed approved copy of Attachment A shall be maintained by the Finance Department.]

Attachment B



**PER DIEM  
WORKSHEET**

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 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](http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem). Per Diem will be provided at a flat rate not to exceed the current standard meal allowance established.

M&IE Total per Day: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ 4 Quarters = Amount Per Quarter: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

<b>DATES:</b>							
<b>QUARTERS</b>	<b>MON</b>	<b>TUES</b>	<b>WED</b>	<b>THURS</b>	<b>FRI</b>	<b>SAT</b>	<b>SUN</b>
12:00 am – 6:00 am							
6:00 am – 12:00 pm							
12:00 pm – 6:00 pm							
6:00 pm – 12:00 am							
<b>DAILY TOTALS:</b>							

**TOTAL AMOUNT:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_



**TRAVEL EXPENSE REPORT**

(TRAVEL REQUEST AUTHORIZATION & EXPENSE REPORT MUST BE ATTACHED)

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the Conference Attending: \_\_\_\_\_

- The City will not reimburse travelers for unauthorized travel expenditures, including unauthorized expenses related to the use of a personal vehicle.
- Receipts must be turned in to receive reimbursement. Unreadable receipts will not be accepted.
- Reimbursement can be delayed or denied due to incomplete documentation by the Finance Director or City Manager.

**Items Being Requested for Reimbursement**

REGISTRATION INFORMATION	REIMBURSABLE FEES
Cost of the Conference	
Ground Transportation (IRS Rate: _____ x Miles: _____)	
Air Transportation	
Lodging	
Per Diem (Attach Worksheet)	
Miscellaneous (Parking)	
<b>TOTAL ACTUAL REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES:</b>	

**CHECKLIST OF ATTACHMENTS (if applicable):**

Conference Agenda     
  Registration Confirmation     
  Per Diem Worksheet  
 Flight Confirmation     
  Ground Transportation Map     
  Hotel Confirmation

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Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Department Director: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Finance Director: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**ELIGIBLE/INELIGIBLE EXPENSE EXAMPLE MAP:**

To determine eligibility, a ground transportation map to/from the destination must be provided depicting the actual distance.

- **50 Mile Radius (one-way)** – ground transportation travel expenses during regular business hours (Monday-Friday, 7:30 AM – 6:00 PM) to destinations that are less than 50 miles one way from the City of Leon Valley address is NOT reimbursable.

Ground transportation travel expenses to destinations of more than 50 miles one way from Leon Valley using a personal vehicle will be paid at the current IRS approved rate for mileage from the City of Leon Valley address.

- **150 Mile Radius (one-way)** - travel destination that is more than 150 miles one-way is considered acceptable to evaluate air travel and/or overnight lodging options for conferences that start before 9:00 AM, or ends after 6:00 PM.

