

Travel Procedures and Guidelines

Travel Procedures and Guidelines (Updated 12/23/2011)

I. General Requirements:

- A. *Policy:* These regulations establish a standard procedure for reimbursing officials and employees of the City of Columbus for authorized expenses incurred while traveling on City business, attending conferences, conventions or such activities which are deemed to have a municipal purpose.
- B. *Audit of Travel Expense Reports:*
 - 1) The City Auditor has the authority to question any item of expense for which reimbursement is asked and may refuse to pay, modify or reduce any item which is unreasonable or incompatible with present travel costs. (Reference Ordinance 1187-60)
- C. *Definitions:*
 - 1) *Activity:* Any conference, convention, seminar, school, meeting or similar municipal affair will henceforth be referred to as an activity.
 - 2) *Extended Travel:* Travel on City business where overnight lodging is required.
 - 3) *Traveler:* Any elected or appointed City officer or other employee of the City who is attending an activity on behalf of the City of Columbus will henceforth be referred to as a traveler.
- D. *Approval:*
 - 1) Prior to attendance at any activity, the benefit of the activity to the City must be approved by the appropriate department head.
 - 2) In order for all actual, necessary and reasonable expenses to be reimbursed, the responsible department shall have the travel encumbrance certified by the City Auditor, prior to any obligation being incurred by the City, that moneys have been appropriated and not encumbered for any other purpose in an amount sufficient to liquidate the estimated expenses.
 - 3) The travel encumbrance provides multiple lines for the appropriate vendor numbers for registration fees and airline costs. Use only the

appropriate vendor numbers. When registration fees are part of the costs, attach a copy of the registration documents. If registration fees or airline tickets should be paid in advance, so indicate in the explanation section. **NOTE: the travel encumbrance is not intended to be used for local mileage.**

- 4) If travel is funded and or to be reimbursed via grant funding the City Auditor hereby recognizes and permits the travel, lodging and per diem amounts(GSA rates) as provided by the grant . All grant expenditures require valid receipt for proof of payment.

E. *Reporting:* Upon return from an eligible activity each traveler shall:

- 1) Individually file an accurate and detailed travel expense report, properly vouchered, with the City Auditor. Each traveler shall claim only his own expenses unless otherwise specifically approved by the City Auditor.
- 2) Reimbursable items shall be actual, reasonable, and necessary expenses incurred while attending an eligible activity.
- 3) Receipts should be obtained whenever practicable:
 - a) Receipts are required for such items as lodging, travel, registration fees, and extraordinary expenses that are an integral part of the activity.
 - b) Receipts are not required for meals.
 - c) Receipts are required for taxi fares, bus, or other local public transportation, only where practicable.
 - d) Upon return from a trip involving City charged air travel, the traveler should properly voucher reimbursable travel expenses incurred. A copy of the airline ticket or other evidence of the charge should also be attached to the travel expense report.
 - e) Frequent flyer miles awarded as a result of flights paid for by the City are to be used only in conjunction with other City authorized flights and not for personal use.
- 4) It is expected that every traveler will be as prudent and mature in handling City funds as his own.

F. *Excluded Items:* The City of Columbus will not reimburse the traveler for expenses of entertainment or expenses incurred on behalf of any non-city employee for any reason.

II. **Specifications and Guidelines:**

A. *Living Expenses:*

1) Meals

- a. The following daily “per diems” and/or allowances for meals, including gratuities, are considered reasonable.

	Premium priced <u>areas</u>	All other <u>areas</u>
Breakfast	\$ 8.00	\$ 7.00
Lunch	12.00	8.00
Dinner	<u>30.00</u>	<u>20.00</u>
	<u>\$ 50.00</u>	<u>\$ 35.00</u>

- b. The following metropolitan areas are premium priced areas:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Atlanta, Georgia | 8. Miami, Florida |
| 2. Baltimore, Maryland | 9. New Orleans, Louisiana |
| 3. Boston, Massachusetts | 10. New York, New York |
| 4. Chicago, Illinois | 11. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania |
| 5. Dallas, Texas | 12. San Francisco, California |
| 6. Detroit, Michigan | 13. Seattle, Washington |
| 7. Los Angeles, California | 14. Washington, DC |

- c. Meal allowances for areas outside of the continental United States will be established on an individual basis.
- d. Special meals that exceed the reasonable cost allowance are reimbursable when they are an integral part of the activity, receipted, and itemized and explained on the expense report.
- e. If a meal(s) is included as part of the registration fee from the activity being attended, the normal allowance for that meal will not be reimbursed.
- f. There will be no meal allowances for “same day travel”; when an employee leaves home and returns home on the same day.

2) Lodging:

- a) Reimbursement for lodging will be made only if such expenses are properly receipted. Said receipts must accompany the travel expense report.

- b) No allowance for lodging expenses may be claimed:
 - 1) within Franklin County
 - 2) within the county of residence from which the employee commutes to his headquarters
 - 3) within fifty miles of the employee's residence
- c) Reasonable, actual, single room rate only is reimbursable.

3) Incidental Living Expenses:

- a) Expenses incurred for laundry and dry cleaning may be reimbursed if the employee is in continuous travel status in excess of five days without returning home during that time. These items must be receipted and itemized.
- b) Safe arrival call: On extended travel, the traveler will be allowed one safe arrival telephone call to his place of residence not to exceed five dollars.

B. *Travel:*

- 1) Personal Automobile Usage:
 - a) Ordinance 1739-94 provided that travelers may be reimbursed at a rate equal to the Internal Revenue Service allowable rate for business mileage for use of privately owned vehicles for transportation on any city business in or out of the City of Columbus. Use of private vehicles will be authorized only when it is the lowest available travel fare or for the convenience of the City. Use of a private vehicle for convenience of the traveler will be reimbursable in an amount equal to coach air fare and limousine allowance round trip to city of destination only or actual mileage traveled, whichever is less. When reimbursement for mileage in lieu of air fare is claimed, no allowance will be paid for lodging or meals or other expenses enroute that would not have been incurred if commercial transportation had been used. Road and bridge tolls are reimbursable so long as the sum of such tolls and the mileage reimbursement do not exceed the coach air fare and limousine allowance. If destination is not served by air, fare to the nearest terminal will be allowed and mileage will be allowed for round trip from that terminal city to destination.
 - b) Reimbursement will be based upon AAA mileage charts. Excess mileage claimed for reimbursement must be substantiated as necessary and reasonable on the Travel Encumbrance.
 - c) Mileage is payable to only one of two or more employees traveling on the same trip and in the same vehicle.

- d) No insurance is carried by the City on privately owned vehicles driven on City business. Each traveler must carry coverage for his own personal protection.
- e) Costs resulting from illegal parking, traffic violations, and driver negligence are not reimbursable.

2) City-owned Vehicle Usage:

- a) When emergency service or repair is necessary on out-of-town trips in connection with a City-owned vehicle, and it is not available through normal departmental procedure, any expense claimed must be itemized, explained and receipted. The City equipment number should appear on any receipt.
- b) No insurance is carried by the City on City-owned vehicles. Each traveler must carry coverage for his own personal protection.

3) Automobile Rental

Automobile rental is not at the discretion of the traveler and must be a necessary and cost effective mode of transportation for the benefit of the City. Reimbursement for such rentals will be dependent on adequate explanation clearly demonstrating the benefit to the City. This explanation should be with the travel encumbrance, and should include all expenses related to rental.

4) Common Carrier

- a) The lowest available rate is reimbursable.
- b) The traveler is personally liable for any charges assessed for unused travel reservations which are not released within the time limits specified by the carriers unless such non-use resulted from the department head's directions.
- c) The traveler may purchase an airline ticket through a travel agency after encumbering such funds. When an airline ticket is purchased through a travel agency, it shall be encumbered on the travel encumbrance along with the traveler's other expenses (using the appropriate vendor number).
- d) If your travel has been charged through a travel agency, payment should be vouchered immediately upon receipt of invoice. If any unused ticket, or unused portion of a ticket remains, the traveler should immediately obtain and submit a credit memo to the City Auditor for the value of the unused charged fare.

5) Other Transportation Expense

- a) Items claimed must be listed individually and accompanied by receipts where practicable.
- b) Allowable items shall include:
 - 1) Airport/hotel limousine service, taxi fares, parking garages or other local transportation (receipts required where practicable).
 - 2) Bridge, tunnel, and highway tolls (receipts required where practicable).

C. *Miscellaneous Expense:*

- 1) Expenses incurred for stenographer fees, baggage, telephone calls on official City business, and rental of equipment for temporary meetings or office facilities necessary for the conduct of official City business may be reimbursed. Such items must be itemized and receipted.

D. *Registration Fees:*

- 1) Reimbursement may be made for the fee for attending seminars, conferences, or other activities provided that attendance by said traveler is deemed beneficial as set forth by the requirements in Section 1-C.

E. Since it is not possible to anticipate every travel potentiality that might arise, requests for reimbursements that vary from the above guidelines will be addressed on a case by case basis. It is anticipated, however, that such cases will be rare.

Prepared by:

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