

CITY COUNCIL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT POLICY

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for professional development activities of the City Council and for reimbursement of training, professional development, and meeting expenses incurred by the City Council when performing their official duties.

Policy:

The City Council is encouraged to participate in professional development and training activities and programs sponsored by organizations such as the National League of Cities, League of Minnesota Cities, Coalition of Greater MN Cities, and other groups that sponsor programs relevant to local government. These programs not only improve knowledge of local government and provide important networking opportunities, but enhance the City's reputation as a progressive community. This policy covers attendance by the City Council at in-State and out-of-State professional conferences, seminars, meetings, programs, events, training and related activities by the City Council performing their official duties on matters relevant to City business (hereinafter collectively referred to as "Events").

The City Council must set a maximum budget for professional development each year. The City Council is allocated budgeted dollars for attendance at Events. Guidelines for specific Event attendance will be discussed annually with the budget process. The City Council may attend Events without prior approval of the City Council as long as an event falls within the City Council's annual budget for professional development and is an Event relevant to matter of City business.

The provisions of this policy are applicable to all expenses for which the City Council are requesting reimbursement for attendance at Events. Except as otherwise provided herein, the City Council shall be entitled to reimbursement for their reasonable below-listed necessary expenses associated with attending Events in a manner and in the amounts as set forth in this policy.

Authorized Event Expenses:

The City Council must complete a training request form (Appendix A) and submit to the City Clerk or designee.

Except as otherwise provided herein, the following types of Event expenses are approved for reimbursement subject to the expenses meeting the above policy test of appropriateness, relevance and reasonableness.

Transportation

Airline. When possible, reservations should be made as early as possible to take advantage of any discounts offered by the airlines. Except where prior approval is granted by the City Council, air travel costs above the regular coach fare shall not be reimbursable.

Should the individual choose a higher fare, the individual must pay the difference between the lowest priced reasonable fare and the higher fare.

Personal Car. The use of a personal car for travel on City business is permitted. For travel within the State by personal car, reimbursement shall be at the IRS rate. Mileage shall be submitted on the applicable City reimbursement form along with a Google Map showing miles traveled. When a personal car is used for out-of-State travel, reimbursement will be based on the IRS rate, but not to exceed the cost of coach class airfare had airfare been used instead of travel by automobile.

Lodging

Hotel accommodations should be appropriate for the purpose of the trip. As such, unless there are unusual circumstances, reimbursement will be made for only standard double rooms. Receipts for lodging costs should be secured. If a family member accompanies the City Council, reimbursable lodging costs shall be that of a single room (if different from double room rate). When attending Events, one of the designated Event hotels should be selected. The City Council will be reimbursed for hotel expenditures incurred for Events.

Meals

When registration includes one or more meals, the individual is expected to utilize the meal(s) supplied by the Event and not have additional meal expense unless dietary needs require that the Councilmember purchase a different meal and/or city-related business necessitates that the Councilmember miss the hosted meal.

The City Council shall be entitled to reimbursement for meals and associated gratuities in an amount up to the per diem rate. The per diem amount would be the maximum allowable under the IRS high-low substantiation method. Follow this link for Meals & Incidentals (M & IE) Breakdown <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>

The City Council shall be required to submit actual, detailed receipts documenting the expenses.

Expenses for meals, including gratuities, but excluding alcoholic beverages, will be reimbursed with receipts. Identify business purpose and names of people when claiming meal costs for more than the City Council member.

Eligibility for reimbursement of meal expenses is as follows:

- To be eligible for breakfast, the traveler must be in travel status by 6:00 AM.
- To be eligible for lunch, the traveler must be in travel status between 11:00 AM and 1:00 PM.
- To be eligible for dinner, the traveler must be required to remain in travel status until 8:00 PM.

Local Transportation

Local transportation costs for attendance at Events outside the City, including taxi fare or other reasonable transportation (including tips) are reimbursable. Parking expense for personal car or City car may also be included. Car rental costs are not reimbursable unless it can be reasonably demonstrated that it was necessary or less costly compared to other local transportation alternatives. Receipts must be provided for documentation of expenses.

Out of State Travel

For travel outside Minnesota, the IRS includes the continental United States. The purpose of the trip must be unquestionably professional in content and should only be considered if a similar Event cannot be found within the State. International travel, other than extreme situations as outlined in the IRS Code, is not deductible by the IRS as a business expense and will be considered a taxable benefit to the recipient.

The City Council shall approve via motion all out of state travel requests for the City Council, Board and Commission members. Motion must include:

- Explanation of training relevant to the City Networking relevant to the City.
- Study facility or function relevant to the City Goodwill relevant to the City.
- Testify and or meet with federal/state officials relevant to the City (Note: may not be sponsored by or affiliated with political parties.
- Budget expense.

Registration

Fees for registration at any Event attended are reimbursable. A receipt for the registration fee is required. Registration shall be made as early as possible to take advantage of any discounts.

Tips

Expenses for tips should be included with meal expenses and are subject to per diem rates. All other City business related expenses for which reimbursement is requested, for example, transportation to and from airport, local cab fare, baggage handling and other tips, should be itemized with documentation attached where practicable. Maximum gratuity of 20%.

Reimbursement Procedure

To apply for reimbursement, complete City Council Reimbursement Form with expenditures totaled, receipts attached, and signature of the person requesting reimbursement should be submitted to the City Clerk or designee and approval by the City Administrator or designee within 60 days of the Event. All reimbursement requests must be submitted in the same fiscal year. Upon his or her approval, the voucher will then be submitted for processing and approval by the City Council.

Approval by the City Council of professional development and expense reimbursement outlined in this policy is part of the normal disbursement approval process.

The City will require appropriate documentation and/or receipts for any expense reimbursement requested under this policy. Alcoholic beverages are excluded from reimbursement.

Limitations.

Travel and training will not be paid for an individual that has announced their intention to not seek re-election. Newly elected/appointed officials, who have not yet taken office, may, with approval, attend training beforehand.

Miscellaneous

The City Council shall be entitled to reimbursement for miscellaneous expenses incurred in the performance of their duties and in the course and scope of their City Council activities and which are reasonably related to City business including:

Actual cost of telecommunication charges when the City Council are away from City Hall.

Other miscellaneous charges reasonably related and necessary to the activity, including gratuities, parking, shuttle and taxi charges.

Unauthorized Expenses:

The following expenditures incurred by the City Council in the course and scope of their official duties attending events shall not be reimbursed without prior Council approval:

- The personal portion of any trip;
- Political contributions;
- Travel or air insurance premiums;
- Family expenses, including those of a partner when accompanying a Councilmember on official business, child or pet care;

- Entertainment expenses, including theater, shows, movies, sporting events, golf, spa treatments, etc.
- Non-mileage personal automobile expenses including repairs, insurance, gasoline, traffic citations; and
- Personal losses incurred while on City business.

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