

# CITY OF WHITE SETTLEMENT



## TRAVEL POLICY

## **PREFACE**

The aim of the Travel Policy is to guide the City of White Settlement's employees, committee members and volunteers for reimbursement and payment requirements of travel expenses during their required travel for meetings, conferences and training. Travel expenses should be practical and best judgment should be followed when expending taxpayer funds. This policy establishes standards for travel that provide for reporting, sufficient internal controls and accountability measures for budget management purposes. This policy is referenced in the Employee Handbook.

## **REVIEW & CITY MANAGER APPROVAL**

March 2021

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The duties and responsibilities of City representatives occasionally require attendance at various conferences, seminars, meetings, workshops or other events and may require travel to other areas of the state or country. The purpose of this policy is to establish and maintain the atmosphere of prudent stewardship of public funds and ensure that citizens of the City of White Settlement are represented at the conferences, etc. that are relevant and important to the future of the City.

## **II. RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF**

The following travel guidelines are set forth to serve as a policy statement for business travel by all representatives of the City of White Settlement. The "city representative" includes the Mayor, City Council Members, Committee Members, Volunteers, and City Employees.

### **A. Responsibilities of Traveler**

City of White Settlement travelers are expected to spend funds prudently and plan appropriately so costs do not exceed budgets. Business travel expenses will be paid by the City when expenses are reasonable, appropriately documented, properly authorized, and within the guidelines of this policy. The traveler should neither gain nor lose personal funds as a result of travel.

Travelers may not authorize reimbursement of their own expenses. The Director or Supervisor should approve the reimbursement for all travel. The City Manager or Assistant City Manager will approve travel for the Department Directors. All expense reports will be submitted within 15 working days after travel. In addition, no future travel advances will be issued if travel reports are pending. All travel reports must be signed by the traveler.

### **B. Responsibility of Supervisor**

Department Directors and/or Supervisor have the primary responsibility for ensuring compliance with this policy. The director must approve the traveler's expense reports and ensure that the following criteria is met:

- 1) The travel expense was incurred while conducting City business.
- 2) Information contained on the expense report and in the attached documentation is accurate and in accordance with this policy.
- 3) The expense line item has funding availability prior to travel. If funding is unavailable, an initiation of an insufficient appropriation notice is necessary.

City Manager and City Secretary travel is approved by City Council. Committee Members and Volunteers travel is approved by the Department Supervisor. The Mayor and City Council members travel is overseen by the City Secretary.

### III. PROCEDURES FOR TRAVEL

#### A. Travel Advances

- 1) Travel advances are only issued for pre-approved travel or authorized travel for overnight stay.
- 2) Should payment prior to travel be necessary, a Travel Form must be completed with the payee designated as the traveler and must include the purpose, dates and estimated amounts for advancement of funds.
- 3) Travel Form must indicate proper authorization by signature of required supervisor and/or City Manager or his/her designee.
- 4) Travel Form must be submitted to the Finance department for processing no later than ten (10) days before the funds are requested. The completed form must be accompanied by documentation of the event such as brochures, registration forms, agenda and other descriptive information.
  - Exceptions to this requirement shall be approved by the City Manager or his/her designee.
- 5) The traveler will be held accountable to complete the required expense report upon return from the travel. P-Card receipts should be uploaded to purchase card portal for coding and review.
  - The amount provided through an advance or paid for with a p-card must be recorded properly on the final travel form.
- 6) Should the advance exceed the amount of expenses reported, a reimbursement must be made to the City and attached to the travel form. Finance will verify that the repayment does not violate DOL wage guidelines.
  - Should reimbursement not accompany the travel form, the amount due will be deducted from the next issued payroll deposit.
- 7) No more than one travel advance per traveler shall remain outstanding at any given time.

- Exceptions to this requirement shall be approved by the City Manager or his/her designee.

B. Travel Authorizations

1) Elected Officials

Authorization for travel is obtained during an open meeting and it requires the consensus of the City Council. It is the responsibility of each individual council member to request travel approval and verify budget is available for the request with the City Secretary.

2) Committee Members and Volunteers

Committee Members and Volunteers must obtain authorization from department staff to perform travel.

3) City Employees

- Require authorization by the City Manager or his/her designee for all out of state travel. The City Manager and City Secretary require authorization from City Council.
- Travel in State requires the approval of immediate supervisor. The City Manager and City Secretary require authorization from City Council.
- The request should be at least one week in advance to allow the supervisor to have enough time to make the necessary arrangements to cover any shortage of personnel in the department if applicable.
- Funds for travel must be available for expense
  - a. The City Manager reserves the right to place any travel on hold regardless of appropriation by the governing body.
  - b. If a hold is placed on travel account and/or specific travel, the funds are considered unavailable for use.
- All travel requests are required to include name, location, and account number, total estimated cost to include registration, hotel, airfare, mileage, meals, parking, and all other miscellaneous travel expenses.
- Travelers will be held accountable for completion of expense reporting on travel form.
- Multiple outstanding travel forms per traveler are strictly prohibited under this policy.

- Travel may not be authorized for a traveler with incomplete travel forms.

C Expense Reporting

1) Elected Officials

Responsible for providing original receipts immediately upon return from travel to the City Secretary for reporting in accordance with the requirements outlined in this policy.

2) Committee Members and Volunteers

Responsible for providing original receipts immediately upon return from travel to the department for reporting in accordance with the requirements outlined in this policy.

3) City Employees

- All charges must be itemized on the City's most recent travel form.
- A travel form must be completed for all travel within ten (10) days of the traveler's return.
- Under no circumstances shall alcoholic beverages be reimbursable or charged on a City issued purchasing card.
- All expenses for a guest traveler must be paid separately with personal funds by the authorized traveler.
  - a. The City will reimburse expenses to the extent it would have incurred the expense for the authorized City traveler independent of the guest traveler (i.e. the single room rate for a hotel room).
  - b. Mixed use travel by a City authorized traveler requires a separate personal form of payment for the personal use segment directly to the private entity (i.e. Hotel, airline, rental car agency, etc.)
    - Reimbursement to the City is not an available option for mixed use travel.
- Actual mileage traveled will be reimbursed at the rate set in accordance with IRS guidelines when a City vehicle cannot be utilized for travel.
  - a. A print out is required to be provided with starting location and ending location and mileage traveled.
- Overnight travel should be utilized if it is in the best interest of the City.
- All travel related receipts must accompany the expense report.

#### IV. GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

The employee must submit a map showing mileage to and from either residence or assigned city location to destination and back. The employee must use the current mileage reimbursement rate set by the IRS. The actual mileage reimbursement will be the lesser of mileage from employee's home to destination or from employee's normal workstation to destination.

##### A. Flight

If it is cheaper for the employee to drive instead of fly, it is encouraged to have the employee take a city vehicle and drive. If it is not, the employee must submit, in their request, flight itinerary indicating arrival and departure times with estimated costs from the airline.

- 1) Only coach fares shall be paid or reimbursed on behalf of the authorized traveler for authorized travel.
- 2) Flights shall be purchased at the earliest date possible to ensure the lowest fare.
- 3) Once reservations are made, any changes, cancellations, or no-show charges made for personal reasons are the traveler's expense.
- 4) Baggage fees will be reimbursed by the City for the City traveler baggage only.

##### B. Taxi / Shuttle Services / Car Rental

If shuttle or taxi services are unavailable and a car rental is necessary, the lowest economical car rental should be utilized. Purchasing can provide employees with the car rental companies that provide rates based on a state or city approved contract. Estimates including any applicable taxes from the car rental company must be attached to the travel authorization form. If the conference hotel or sponsor offers a more economical shuttle service, employees are required to utilize this service.

- 1) Purchasing additional insurance for a rental car is unnecessary and will not be reimbursed.
- 2) The traveler is responsible for filling the vehicle before returning the automobile to the vendor. Any fuel can be charged to a p-card or be reimbursed by the City.
- 3) The size of the rental car should not exceed what is reasonable or necessary for the traveler.
- 4) A traveler shall not pay for both taxi fares and rental car expenses during travel.

##### C. Parking Fees

All parking fees must be listed on the travel form. A copy of pricing per day can usually be obtained from the internet to be included as back-up on the travel form. Parking fees at the airport, or at the destination hotel, will be reimbursed.

D. Registration Fees

Registration and ticket purchases will be reimbursed at actual cost. A completed registration form must be included in the travel form along with any other information pertaining to price, location and dates of event. This includes vendor name and address. Accounts Payable will process a check payment for registration and hold for department pickup for mailing with the completed registration form. Employees or department administrative staff will be responsible for insuring that the registration form and check are mailed. Discounts may be offered for pre-registration and should be utilized.

E. Meals and Incidentals

- 1) The City will reimburse the employee for all meal expenses up to the allotted Federal per diem rate for the locality. The employee will use the allotted current per day rate found at <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>.
  - By using a per diem rate reimbursement, employees are not required to submit itemized receipts for meals.
- 2) Meals may be charged directly to a City p-card but cannot exceed the per diem rates per day.
  - Itemized receipts must be uploaded to p-card portal as well as be submitted with the travel form.
  - If the receipt includes more than the travelers meal, the names of the individuals for which the expense was incurred, the name of the organization they represent should be documented, and the nature of the meeting (if they are not City employees).
- 3) If meals are included in the cost of the registration, the employee will not be reimbursed for those meals, based on the Federal breakdown of the per diem rate for the locality. The employee will not be reimbursed for alcohol expenses or taxes related to the alcohol.
- 4) The traveler must be away from the City before 7:00 a.m. to qualify for payment of per diem charges or meal costs for breakfast.
- 5) The traveler must be away from the City after 7:00 p.m. to qualify for payment of per diem charges or meal costs for dinner

F. Lodging

The City will pay for lodging during the duration of the trip. If it is necessary for the employee to arrive a day early or stay a day later due to training/conference ending times or flight conflicts the city will evaluate the additional day on a case by case basis during authorization approval. The employee can use a City p-card or personal credit card to reserve the room. If employees do not have a City p-card or personal credit, the city will pre-pay hotel reservations. Accounts

Payable will process a check payment for hotel registration and hold for department pickup for mailing with the completed registration form. Employees or department administrative staff will be responsible for insuring that the registration form and check are mailed or submitted to the hotel.

- 1) The host hotel where the meeting is being held is preferable due to the discounts they normally allow.
- 2) Personal items such as telephone calls and movies are not reimbursed.
- 3) Internet usage is reimbursable if for City business unless wifi access is provided by the City.

G. Mileage

Personal vehicle mileage allowance or reimbursement will be based upon actual mileage at the rate set each year by the IRS.

Tolls will be the responsibility of the employee and will not be reimbursed.

H. Unauthorized Hotel Charges

- 1) The City shall not pay or reimburse State of Texas sales tax paid for a hotel stay regardless of purpose.

The City is tax exempt; therefore, a tax exempt form must be provided by the traveler to the hotel at time of check in or the traveler may request the Finance department fax a tax exempt form to the hotel prior to the stay or during the stay.

- 2) The City is not exempt from Hotel Occupancy Tax.
- 3) Room service (to include the tip) shall be subject to the per diem rate or meal cost and shall not be charged to the hotel stay.
- 4) Sales taxes can be paid for meals.

**CITY OF WHITE SETTLEMENT  
TRAVEL FORM**

<b>ADVANCE</b>		<b>FINAL</b>	
Traveler	_____	Type of Travel	_____
Department	_____	G/L Account	XX-XXX-20-233
Travel Description	_____		
Destination	_____	Method of Travel	_____
Departure Date/Time	_____		
	Return Date/Time		

<b>EXPENSES</b>				
	<i>Check</i>	<i>P-Card</i>	<i>Advance</i>	<i>Total</i>
Registration	-	-	-	-
Lodging	-	-	-	-
Meals	-	-	-	-
Airline Ticket / Auto Rental	-	-	-	-
Parking/Taxis/Tolls	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

		<b>Meals</b>		
Breakfast		\$	-	
Lunch		\$	-	
Dinner		\$	-	

If meals are provided at event, meals cannot be paid for by City.

<b>Actual Meals</b>	<b># of Receipts</b>		<b>Actual Cost</b>	\$ -
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If actuals meals on a p-card are more than per diem allotment employee must pay for the difference.

<b>Mileage</b>		\$	-	<b>Must provide print out</b>
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<b>Amount Prepaid (+ P-Card)</b>	\$	-	<b>Amount Due to City</b>	\$	-
<b>Reimbursable Expenses</b>	\$	-	<b>Amount Due Employee</b>	\$	-

I certify that all expenses being paid by the City are valid and conform to City policies. I attest that all expenses submitted for advancement have not been previously paid through a prior expense report, cash advance or by an outside agency or third party.

<b>Traveler</b>	_____	<b>Date</b>	_____
<b>Approver</b>	_____	<b>Date</b>	_____
<b>Reviewed by</b>	_____	<b>Date</b>	_____