

3.10 EMPLOYEE TRAVEL POLICY



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POLICY OVERVIEW

The intent of this policy is to establish provisions for reimbursement of necessary expenses of City of Providence employees or officials who are required to travel in performance of their duties and in the interest of the City. The City of Providence recognizes employees and officials may be required to travel for the purpose of representing the City at meetings and professional associations, as well as for training to enhance their skills regarding the performance of their duties within City government. The following guidelines are to be used in reporting travel-related expenses, and requesting reimbursement associated with such travel.

An individual traveling on official City business is expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business and expending personal funds. Excess costs, indirect routes, delays, or luxury accommodations and services unnecessary, unjustified, or solely for the convenience or personal preference of the traveler in the performance of City business are not acceptable under this policy.

Travel-related expenses for City employees may be third-party funded if the purpose of the travel is to engage in an activity that serves a legitimate public purpose. An activity has a legitimate public purpose if it is intended to promote the interests of the municipality. Attendance at training and educational events and conferences designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiencies of public services or enhance the knowledge and skills of public employees relative to their official duties, are eligible for third-party reimbursement or funding as long as they do not present a conflict of interest. Conflicts of interest are decisions related to public duties that provide a financial benefit or detriment to an employee, an employee's family or household member, an outside employer, or an employee's business associate.

Employee requests for travel will not be approved by Finance without an accompanying paragraph explaining why the travel is pertinent to the employee's position and what they hope to learn or how the knowledge gained will benefit their job or department.

Pre-approved employee expenses are eligible for reimbursement with a Travel Reimbursement Form and valid receipts. Employees who wish for travel to be paid upfront by the City may contact the Department of Purchasing for more information.

All expenses associated with employee travel must be pre-approved by the employee's department director, the Chief of Staff in the Mayor's Office, and the Finance Director, using the employee **Travel Request Form**, which is available for download on the [ProvNet](#) server under [Forms + Docs, Travel](#).

TRAVEL REQUEST FORM: Step-by-Step Guide

An employee seeking City-sponsored travel must first obtain permission from their department director, then locate the Travel Request Form on the [ProvNet](#) server under [Forms + Docs, Travel](#). To complete the Travel Request Form, please download the form and adhere to the following instructions:

- 1) Tally travel-related expenses. For instructions on how to tally each expense, see individual sections for Lodging, Meals, Airfare, and Transportation in this document.
- 2) Record each expense on the corresponding line on the Travel Request Form. Some conference fees cover meals and/or lodging. Do not expense any items that are included within the conference fee.
- 3) Attach all back-up for expenses to Travel Request Form. An example would be a printout of hotel costs from the hotel Web site.
- 4) Include an attachment with a paragraph explaining why the travel is pertinent to your position and/or what you hope to learn and incorporate into your job function.
- 5) Obtain your department director's signature on the Travel Request Form.
- 6) Create an Asana task with the documentation uploaded in PDF form.
- 7) Tag the executive assistant to the Chief of Staff and the confidential assistant to the Finance Director on the Asana task. Assign the task to the Chief of Staff's assistant first. Once CoS signature is obtained and the signed request is returned and uploaded into the task, reassign the task to the Confidential Assistant to the Finance Director for Finance Director's signature.
- 8) If using a travel agent to pre-pay expenses through Purchasing, submit the complete signed Travel Request Form to Purchasing, so they can complete the booking.

LODGING

When choosing lodging for City-sponsored travel, the first choice should be where the conference is being held or where it is recommending. If an employee is unable to stay where the conference is recommending, they should choose a comparably-priced hotel or the most economical option.

Lodging must be in a standard hotel. Out of precaution for safety, City employees are not allowed to book Air BnB or other privately-owned residences for travel reimbursement. Should the hotel have a policy whereby it does not accept a PO as payment, or employees do not want to pay upfront and receive reimbursement from the City for lodging expenses upon trip completion, they may contact Purchasing to help book lodging.

MEALS

The City uses the GSA Per Diem Meals & Incidental Rates: Standard Rate. Meals are reimbursed per diem and a la carte. For example, if breakfast/lunch are included in the conference fee, only include the reimbursement rate for dinner. If no meals are covered by conference vendors, use the MI&E Total daily standard rate. First and last days of travel are subject to a percentage of the Standard Rate. Employees can access the GSA Rates via [GSA Meals & Incidentals Rates](#) or reference the included table. In lieu of the City's travel reimbursement policy with regard to meals – per diem includes all taxes and tips that the employee may incur on the trip. No special per diems will be allocated based on the destination.

	<i>M&IE Total</i>	<i>Breakfast</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Dinner</i>	<i>Incidental Expenses</i>	<i>First & Last Day of Travel</i>
Standard Rate FY23	\$59	\$13	\$15	\$26	\$5	\$44.25

AIRFARE

If airfare is required, the most economical flights for the dates and times of travel should be purchased. Employees may also choose to purchase through the City's travel agent. To purchase through the City's travel agent:

- 1) Submit a PO to Purchasing for Pearson Travel in the amount of \$1.
- 2) Provide Purchasing with information regarding the preferred date and times for the flights.
- 3) Purchasing will provide flight options via Pearson. Choose the most efficient option.
- 4) Purchasing will update the PO to reflect the correct amount to Pearson.
- 5) Pearson will invoice your department. Invoice to be paid with the PO.

TRANSPORTATION

On-site transportation costs, such as Uber, Lyft, and taxis are subject to reimbursement if the costs are directly associated with sponsored travel, such as to and from a conference. Backup of costs and trip information should be submitted.

Travelers will be reimbursed for business travel use of personal vehicles at the approved mileage rate according to GSA standards and in effect at the time of travel. Employees can access current rates at [GSA Mileage Reimbursement Rates](#) or reference the following table:

		<i>POV Auto</i>	<i>Govt Auto</i>	<i>Motorcycle</i>
Mileage FY23	<i>Rate per mile</i>	\$0.655	\$0.22	\$0.635

The standard mileage allowance is in lieu of all actual operating expenses such as fuel, oil, towing charges, repairs, tires, insurance, accident deductibles, etc.

Personal vehicles used for City travel purposes shall be insured for public liability insurance protection. Travelers are responsible for insuring their own vehicles. Travelers will not be reimbursed by the City of Providence for collision losses that occur during travel business use of a personal vehicle.

Tolls, ferries, and parking expenses incurred while on business travel are reimbursable in addition to the mileage allowance. Reimbursement for these expenses will not be made without adequate receipts.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Travel Reimbursement Forms, including all valid receipts, should be turned in to the department director for approval within five business days of the employee's return from a trip. Trips cannot be combined in a single report, nor can money due the employee or the City be "rolled over" to the employee's next expense report. Each expense report is for an individual employee's travel expense.

All expense reports are to be reviewed by department directors, transmuted into a Direct Pay form, signed by the department director, and then sent to the Finance Director for review and signature. Once the Direct Pay is approved and signed by Finance, it may be submitted to Accounts Payable.

RECEIPTS

Receipt: A paper document detailing information about a specific purchase. The more detailed the receipt, the better. Individual receipts for each employee are easier to report than receipts listing multiple employees' purchases. **A plain adding machine tape isn't a valid receipt.** If a business gives you ONLY an adding machine tape, they must write on the back, as specified above for a hand-written receipt, in order for the adding machine tape to be accepted as a valid receipt.

- **Credit Card Receipts:** All receipts should include as much detail as is shared with the employee at time of purchase. If a credit card is used for payment, the backup for what is actually purchased must be included with the expense report – not just the credit card receipt with the total amount charged and date on it.
- **Hotel Receipts:** All folio pages for a stay must be turned in as a receipt, not just a single sheet noting the grand total. All pages, noting all individual charges are required.
- **Internet Purchases:** Screen prints are acceptable as back-up if they are included with a credit card receipt, purchase confirmation number, or a packing slip. Screen prints should include vendor name, what was purchased, tax if applicable, and total cost.

WHAT IS NOT COVERED

The following items are not reimbursable:

- Car rental, except when specifically approved in advance
- Mileage to and from the airport from the employee's home
- Parking tickets, traffic fines and penalties, towing charges, accidents, and theft losses
- Newspapers, magazines
- Snacks, unless the snack is in substitution for a covered meal
- Personal long distance phone calls
- Alcohol
- Entertainment not covered in the conference package
- Expenses for spouses.

If bringing a spouse, the employee will be responsible for any additional lodging costs beyond the cost of a single-occupancy room. Meals and any other expenses for the spouse **will not be** reimbursed.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I received a PO for some line items of my trip, but also had to use my own personal credit card. How many Travel Reimbursement Forms must I complete on my return?

You will be completing only one expense report containing travel/training expenses that you paid for at cost.

There are so many different forms. Could you explain when I should use each one?

The **Travel Request Form** should be used when requesting a trip.

The **Travel Reimbursement Form** should be used when requesting reimbursement for City travel-related expenses.

I can never find a blank form when I need one. Where can I find these forms?

All forms are available on [ProvNet](#).