

City of Sheboygan Travel Expense Policy

Purpose

The City of Sheboygan allows staff to travel on City expense when such travel benefits the City, when it is pre-approved by the appropriate individual, and when it is within the Council-allocated budget. The purpose of this policy is to establish clear guidelines regarding staff travel, including day trips, overnight bus trips, and flying trips, during which staff represent the City of Sheboygan.

This policy is not expected to cover every possible situation. It will be the City Administrator's responsibility, in consultation with the Finance Director and City Attorney, to interpret and apply this policy. The term "employee" is interchangeable with the term "staff."

The City does not distinguish between general travel and travel for training purposes for reimbursement purposes.

Authorization

Travel is authorized by department heads based on funds allocated by the Common Council through the budget process. For travel related to the Mayor's International Committee, travel is authorized by the Mayor based on funds received by the Mayor's International Committee and deposited into a Special Revenue Fund.

Reimbursement

Those traveling on the City's behalf are expected to exercise good judgment and fiscal responsibility when incurring travel costs. Necessary and reasonable expenses related to approved travel shall be subject to reimbursement pursuant to this Policy. Reimbursement requests shall be made via the City's Travel Expense Form, provided by the Finance Department. Such form may be updated periodically. Reimbursement requests shall be completed and submitted to the approving individual within thirty calendar days from the date employee/volunteer returns to the City of Sheboygan. Receipts shall be provided whenever possible. Cash advances will not be granted unless pre-approved by the approving individual, the Comptroller, and the City Administrator. When using a City-issued credit card for approved expenses, the employee shall not be entitled to personal reimbursement. However, when a City-issued credit card is used for unapproved expenses, the employee shall reimburse the City within ten business days after the expense was incurred. Regardless whether a City-issued credit card is used for travel-related expenses, the employee shall submit a travel expense form on a form provided by the Finance Department.

Reimbursable Expenses

Vehicle Travel Expenses. When a department has City-owned vehicle(s) available for employee use, the employee is encouraged to use such vehicle for City-related business travel. The employee should obtain their supervisor's permission prior to using the City-owned vehicle. If the City-owned vehicle is not available or not well-suited for the employee's needs, the employee should obtain their supervisor's permission to use a personal vehicle for City-related business travel if they intend to request mileage reimbursement. When traveling by personal vehicle, reimbursement for mileage shall be at the standard rate per mile allowed by the Internal Revenue Service based upon actual mileage as measured by an online navigation system such as Google Maps or MapQuest, except that when an employee uses a personal vehicle by choice despite a City-owned vehicle being available and suitable, the mileage reimbursement rate shall be the standard GSA rate for personal vehicles when government vehicle are available. Necessary parking and toll expenses will also be reimbursed in full. When travel by air (coach class) is less expensive than vehicular travel and where vehicular travel requires six or more hours of driving time, reimbursement will be based upon the cost of air fare.

Vehicle Policies

When operating a personal vehicle, the employee's automobile insurance will be primary and such expense is not reimbursable. Employees are expected to maintain adequate insurance coverage for their personal vehicles consistent with Wisconsin law. When traveling by City vehicle for City business, the City's automobile insurance shall be primary and the employee shall not be entitled to mileage reimbursement. City-owned vehicles shall not be used for personal business unless de minimis in nature.

The employee is responsible for following all traffic laws and regulations when operating a vehicle, whether personal or City-owned, for business purposes. Employees are expected to maintain absolute sobriety when operating City-owned vehicles. Traffic citations, parking tickets, vehicle maintenance, etc., are not reimbursable. Employees may not use personal electronic devices such as cell phones, while driving a City-owned vehicle unless such use is via hands-free device.

Passengers may be allowed within a City-owned vehicle subject to supervisor approval and upon completion of a ride-along waiver. Minor children are not allowed as passenger in a City-owned vehicle unless accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

Rental vehicle expenses may be reimbursed when reasonable and necessary to support the purpose of the travel. Employees traveling to the same conference are encouraged to share rental vehicles, when practicable. Employees should accept auto physical damage and auto liability insurance from the rental company. Such insurance is a reimbursable expense.

Air Travel Expenses. Air fare expenses will be reimbursed in full at the coach class rate. Airport parking expenses are reimbursable when such expense is supported by a receipt. Flight reservations should be made as early as practicable to take advantage of rate discounts. Up to one carry on and one checked bag shall be reimbursed in full, unless additional expenses are pre-approved by the department head. Waiting time, such as at airport security or check-in, is compensable when occurring during normal work hours.

Taxis/ Ride-Share/ Public Transportation Expenses. When traveling by public transportation, taxi, or ride-share is less expensive or more practical than traveling by air or vehicle, such expenses will be reimbursed in full. Efforts should be made to utilize the most cost-effective ticket for the trip. For instance, where a trip includes rail travel over several days and a discounted rate applies to multi-day tickets, multi-day tickets should be purchased instead of multiple, single-ride tickets. Employees are expected to exercise fiscally prudent judgment when choosing a taxi or ride-share over public transportation. Tips are reimbursable up to 20% of the fare.

Meals. Employees are encouraged to use their City-issued credit card for meal purchases. For meals purchased without a City-issued credit card, reimbursements will be made at the standard meal allowance, as established by the United States Government Services Administration Rates applicable to the location(s). Using the standard meal allowance requires records to prove the time, place, and business purpose of the travel. Meals outside of approved travel days or times will not be reimbursed. Reimbursement for meals is allowed on trips that do not necessitate an overnight stay pursuant to the following conditions and only if reasonable travel time is required:

Breakfast: Employee leaves their home before 7:00 a.m.

Lunch: Employee leaves their workplace before 10:30 a.m. and returns after 2:00 p.m.

Dinner: Employee arrives back at home or the workplace after 6:00 p.m.

Federal Internal Revenue Service regulations require employees to report, as income, certain meal expenses reimbursed by the employer for trips not involving an overnight stay. Alcohol beverage expenses are not reimbursable.

Lodging. The City will reimburse employees for overnight accommodations when travel extends beyond a single day and when the employee is traveling beyond 50 miles from the workplace. Department heads may allow deviations to this policy when the start or end time of an employee's training or travel purpose discourages safe travel. All overnight stays must be pre-approved by the employee's department head. When available, employees should take advantage of discounts for government entities or through conference booking. The City will not reimburse for sales tax, except when the lodging jurisdiction legally imposes sales tax on such travel, so employees are strongly encouraged to present proof to the lodging place that such purpose should qualify for tax exemption. Employees will not be required to share a lodging room with another employee but may choose to do so if the employee(s) prefer. In cases where shared lodging rooms is necessary for budgetary purposes or facility availability, such expectation will be clearly communicated prior to registration and employees will have the option whether to participate. Reimbursement will be limited to the single room rate. If employees share a room, the reimbursement rate may be divided equally but not in excess of the maximum permitted for each employee had each stayed in a single room.

Miscellaneous Expenses.

Internet. Reasonable charges for internet access for business use are acceptable.

Gratuities. Meal tips are included in the meal allowance.

Personal Expenses and Travel. In some cases, an employee may extend a trip beyond the business purpose or may commingle business with personal during travel. Such behavior is not discouraged as long as it is preapproved by the department head. All personal expenses incurred are the employee's responsibility.

Personal Travel Companions. Employees may be accompanied by a companion while on official City business. A travel companion's expenses are not reimbursable and any costs incurred jointly will be reimbursed at the individual or single rate. Employees may not travel by City-owned vehicle when travel companions accompany the employee on a particular trip.

Visas, Identification, Vaccinations and Insurance

Visas, passports or real IDs may be required in connection with a trip. Employees are responsible for ensuring these documents are timely available for each trip. Visas, passports, and real ID expenses may be reimbursed from the department's budget upon pre-approval if the travel is required by the employee's work. When vaccinations are recommended, such expenses may be reimbursed from the department's budget upon pre-approval. Employees may undertake vaccinations at personal expense if City reimbursement is not approved. Employees are responsible for obtaining and paying for travel medical and/or trip insurance needs that arise during travel.

Non-Employee/ Volunteer Travel. Non-employees invited to travel for the City may be entitled to reimbursement subject to the written, pre-approved reimbursement policy applicable to the travel. The traveler should provide original receipts for all expenses incurred and is expected to follow the policies applicable to employees while traveling for business. The same reimbursement limits apply to non-employee expenses. Non-employees invited to travel for the City will be required to complete the Volunteer Application and Waiver, and consent to a criminal background check prior to being authorized to participate in the travel.

Travel Pay. Employees who are subject to the hourly provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (“FLSA”) may be eligible for pay while in travel status. For a determination of whether an employee is eligible for such travel pay, please contact the City Attorney’s Office directly. Professional, executive, and administrative employees who have been determined to be exempt from the FLSA are not eligible for travel pay outside of normally scheduled days and hours.

FLSA-eligible employees are eligible for travel pay as follows:

- Travel time to the primary work location or to an alternate local training/work site is not paid time. This is personal commute time. Paid time begins at the established start time/location for that day.
- Travel outside of the area for a single day is paid as work time for the duration of the travel from home/the office to the destination, for the duration of the event triggering such travel, and for the duration of the travel from the destination to the office, or, if reporting directly home after the event, from the destination to home. When employees carpool, each employee is eligible for travel pay as if the employee is driving.
- Travel outside of the area with an overnight stay may be considered work time when the travel is for business purposes for the City’s benefit. For example, when an employee has traveled outside of the area for a multi-day conference, the employee is eligible for travel pay during normal work hours regardless of the day of the week, and also when engaged in work activities regardless whether during or outside of normal work hours. For example, an employee regularly scheduled to work on Mondays and Tuesdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. who attends a conference in Illinois on Monday and Tuesday where the conference itself runs from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. is eligible for travel pay for travel from home to the conference and from the conference to home during normal work hours and for the entire conference attendance time of 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Upon arrival, time spent commuting between the hotel, restaurant or lodging, and the conference worksite is a normal commute and not paid time.
- Travel time in passenger status outside of normal working hours is not considered work time unless the employee is engaged in work activities during such travel. When employees carpool, each employee is eligible for travel pay as if the employee is driving.