



City of Sonora

Travel Policy

Administrative Policy #16

I. Scope and Purpose

- a. The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for reimbursing employees for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred while traveling on official City business. This policy ensures fiscal responsibility, transparency, and compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
- b. This policy applies to all City employees, elected officials, and authorized representatives traveling on behalf of the City. Employees must obtain prior approval for all travel from their department head or designated authority.
- c. Occasionally, it is necessary for City personnel to attend meetings and to travel outside the City to conduct business or attend trainings and conferences. To control these costs and to compensate employees for actual and necessary expenses, the City Council has established a policy on travel.

II. Policy

a. Responsibilities

- i. The Administrative Services Department approves travel requests, reconciliations, and reimbursement requests.
- ii. The City will only pay for expenses incurred by employees in connection with authorized City business.
- iii. Travel requests require an available budget and should be part of the annual budget process.

b. General Provisions

- i. Employees must secure approval from their Department Head prior to registering for attendance at any conference, seminar and/or meeting.
- ii. All registration fees for approved travel shall be paid directly by the City. Employees should register at the earliest time possible.
- iii. Reimbursement for travel expenses is limited to travel by the most direct and common route and by the most economical means of transportation. Any portion of any travel, which is unnecessarily done by indirect route, is not in the interest of the City, or is for personal business, will not be reimbursed.

c. Authorization for Travel

- i. A Travel Request Form is required for all travel.
- ii. Travelers must obtain Department Director or authorized designee approval prior to making travel arrangements.

III. Reimbursement Rates

a. Lodging:



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- i. Reimbursement of lodging is limited to the actual cost of a single room, plus all applicable taxes and fees.
 - ii. When making lodging arrangements travelers must request the government, group, conference, or promotional rate when booking lodging. The City will not reimburse costs for luxury upgrades, such as ocean views, suites, or other premium accommodations.
 - iii. The City will use the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) rate as a benchmark to assess reasonable lodging costs.
- b. Meals**
 - i. Reimbursement for meals shall be made only when travel extends for a minimum of six (6) hours except when specifically approved otherwise by the Department Director or authorized designee.
 - ii. Reimbursements shall be at the current per diem rates established by the U.S. Government Services Administration (GSA).
- c. Transportation:** Travel will be by the most economical means available, taking into consideration requirements for meal reimbursement, lodging, and traveler time. If a location is not served by an airline, reimbursement will be provided for travel by the most direct route.
 - i. Air Travel:**
 - 1. Employees should use the most economical mode of transportation available.
 - 2. Airfare: Travelers must book economy-class tickets and request government, group, or promotional rates where applicable.
 - ii. Car Travel:**
 - 1. Travelers who have not provided the City with appropriate proof on insurance are not authorized to use a vehicle not otherwise owned, rented or leased by the City.
 - 2. Travelers who use a City vehicle must follow the provisions of the City Fleet.
 - 3. Travelers who use a private vehicle must follow the City's transportation policy which provides information on safety and insurance requirements for operating a private vehicle on City business.
 - a. The City will reimburse for mileage at the current Internal Revenue Service (IRS) rate per mile which includes gas, maintenance and all other vehicle related expenses.
 - 4. Carpooling Travelers: reimbursement will only be paid to the owner of the vehicle in which the travel occurred.
 - iii. Other:**



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1. Trains, buses, ferries, or other means of transportation may be used. Reimbursement will not exceed the cost of the lowest available rate and a receipt must be available for reimbursement.
2. Necessary and reasonable expenses such as parking, tolls, baggage fees, and internet access for business purposes may be reimbursed with proper documentation.
3. Tips and gratuities should be reasonable and customary but may not exceed 20% of the service cost.

IV. Travel Expense Reporting and Reimbursement

- a. Employees must submit a completed expense report with original itemized receipts within 30 days of return.
- b. Expense reports must be reviewed and approved by the employee's department head or designated authority.
- c. Any unapproved or excessive expenses will not be reimbursed.

V. Non-reimbursable expenses

- a. Airline club memberships, air phone usage, in-flight headsets.
- b. Alcoholic beverages.
- c. Auto rental upgrades, personal auto repairs, accident insurance, parking tickets, traffic violations, personal auto expenses other than mileage.
- d. Claims submitted for reimbursement more than thirty (30) days following the travelers return date.
- e. Expenses associated with a non-employee who accompanied the traveler (e.g. spouse or domestic partner's transportation, lodging, and/or meals).
- f. Hotel related: Health club fees, room upgrades, movie rentals, mini-bar usage.
- g. Loss or theft of personal funds, property or luggage.
- h. Non-essential program activities associated with travel or event, such as sports tournaments, social activities, tours, etc.
- i. Per diem for meals included in the program/conference/seminar and covered by the registration fee.
- j. Personal expenses: Personal credit cards annual fees, babysitting or dependent care, pet care (including kennel and pet sitting fees), computer rentals for personal use, barber, hairdresser, laundry, spa services, toiletries, shoe-shine, etc.
- k. Travelers who combine personal travel with business travel must identify and pay for the personal segment of the trip.

VI. Exceptions

- a. Any exception to this policy requires prior written approval by the City Administrator. Exceptions must be justified as necessary and in the best interest of the City.



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VII. Policy Compliance

- a.** Fail to comply with this policy may result in denial of reimbursement.