

**CITY OF NEW ORLEANS  
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE**

**Policy Memorandum No. 9 (R)**

**October 17, 2022**

TO: All Departments, Boards, Agencies, and Commissions

FROM: Gilbert A. Montañó, Chief Administrative Officer



SUBJECT: **TRAVEL AND BUSINESS EXPENSES**

**I. PURPOSE**

This policy memorandum is being reissued to improve internal controls by the establishment of additional guidelines for official business travel by authorized employees of the City of New Orleans ("City").

**II. DEFINITIONS**

**Authorized Employee.** An employee traveling for official City business as approved by the employee's Appointing Authority and the Chief Administrative Officer ("CAO").

**City's Authorized Travel Agency.** The travel agency explicitly authorized for City employee travel arrangements by CAO Policy Memorandum, Circular Memorandum, or other written approval of the CAO.

**Conference or Convention.** A non-routine meeting or series of meetings organized for a specific purpose and/or objective, such as a seminar, conference, convention, or training.

**International Travel.** Travel outside the 50 United States and its territories.

**Receipts and Documentation.** Records of expenditures associated with official City business travel.

**Travel Advance.** The terms "travel advance" or "advance of travel expenses" refer to funds to cover eligible travel expenses that are provided to the traveling employee prior to the travel period.

**Travel Period.** The period of time between the time of departure from the City and the time of return to the City. Employees must return to the City or the base office on the ending date of the travel purpose unless an extension of the travel period has been preapproved by the respective Appointing Authority or unless return transportation is canceled or delayed.

**III. TRAVEL GUIDELINES**

**A. General Guidelines.**

1. **Relevance.** All authorized travel for City business should be directly related to the authorized employee's duties and responsibilities.

2. **Credit Card Use.** Employees authorized to use a City-issued credit card may use it to purchase airline tickets, lodging, transportation, and eligible expenses for travel related to official City business.

When not using the City's authorized travel agency, employees may secure travel arrangements such as airfare, hotel accommodations, and registration fees and pay for travel expenses with a personal credit or debit card, for travel approved pursuant to this policy. To be reimbursed, appropriate documentation must be submitted with the Travel Authorization Form and detailed receipts must be submitted with the Travel Expense Form.

3. **Travel Changes.** Changing travel plans is only permitted under the following circumstances and with written support thereof: (1) the employee is injured on duty; (2) the employee is on funeral leave; (3) the employee is at scheduled training; (4) the employee is on military, maternity, family medical, or official emergency leave; or (5) the Appointing Authority requests a travel change.
4. **Complimentary Admission, Lodging, and/or Transportation.** Pursuant to La. R.S. 42:1115.2, any public servant who accepts complimentary admission, lodging, or transportation, or reimbursement for such expenses, shall file a certification with the Louisiana Board of Ethics within 60 days after such acceptance. Louisiana Board of Ethics Form 413 is attached to this policy for this purpose.

**B. Conference Registration and Per Diem for Travel.**

1. **Conference Registration Fees.** Employees are encouraged to secure early registration rates. Deluxe or luxury registration packages are strictly prohibited for travel within the United States. Documentation of anticipated registration fees associated with official City business travel must be submitted with the Travel Authorization Form. Receipts for such fees must be submitted with the Travel Expense Form.
2. **Per Diem Rates for Travel.** The City will provide authorized employees a per diem to reimburse the employees for subsistence expenses (meals and incidental expenses) for each day of the travel period per the guidelines established herein. The total amount requested for the per diem shall be submitted with the Travel Expense Form.
  - a. Rates. The per diem rates fluctuate annually. To ensure that each employee is calculating the correct rates for travel, lodging, and conferences, each employee must determine the appropriate per diem rate for the travel location, as set by the U.S. General Services Administration. When the per diem request is submitted, the rates furnished must be reviewed by the employee's HR Manager or Appointing Authority prior to approval. Please use the link below to determine current per diem rates:

<https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>

- b. Meals. Meals provided as a part of a conference and/or included in the conference registration fee are not subject to reimbursement and the amount shall be deducted from the per diem. Employees are not eligible to receive a per diem if meals are paid for with a City-issued credit card.

**C. Booking Travel and Accommodations.**

- 1. **Airfare.** Employees are required to purchase the lowest airfare available. Unless an employee's flight meets the criteria for eligibility for a business class upgrade as described in Section III(C)(1)(d), flights must be booked for an airline's lowest level fare (e.g., coach, economy). Documentation showing that rates for airfare comply with this policy must be submitted with the Travel Authorization Form.

- a. Early Booking to Ensure Best Fare. Airfare quotes and arrangements must be obtained at least 14 calendar days prior to departure, except when documented support indicates the inability to comply with the 14-day advance ticket purchase guideline. Such support must be submitted with the Travel Authorization Form.
- b. Documentation for Lowest Fare. Platforms such as Expedia, Travelocity, Hotels.com, etc., using similar search criteria (such as flight times, date of departure, return flight date and time, etc.) are acceptable methods of providing price quotes for approval prior to travel. The submitted price quotes from such platforms should show what filters were used to find the available flights.

Employees have the option to use the City's authorized travel agency to obtain flight schedules and pricing.

- c. Nonrefundable Tickets. If a nonrefundable airline ticket is purchased for official travel and is not used, it must be returned to the Appointing Authority for other possible use before the expiration period allowed by the airline.
- d. Business Class Flights. The City will cover airfare for a business class flight at a rate not to exceed 110% of the coach rate for international flights greater than 10 hours. Documentation showing the length of the flight must be submitted with the Travel Authorization Form.
- e. Upgrades. Upgrades for airfare at the expense of the City are not permitted unless the airline is unable to provide the allowable accommodations at the time necessary to carry out the purpose of travel. Documentation establishing that the upgraded seat is the lowest available fare must be submitted with the Travel Authorization Form.

Unless an upgraded fare falls under an exception provided in Sections III(C)(1)(d) or III(C)(1)(e), employees who choose an upgrade from coach, economy, or business class flights are solely responsible for the difference in cost. Proper documentation that exhibits the amounts of the lowest airfare

available and the cost of the upgrade shall be submitted with the Travel Expense Form.

- f. Frequent Flyer Miles. Employees are allowed to retain promotional items, including frequent flyer miles earned, while on official City business.
2. **Lodging Rates.** Employees must obtain the best rates possible for hotel/motel accommodations by seeking the government rate, conference rate, or the lowest possible nightly rate for a standard single occupancy room. Documentation showing that rates for lodging comply with this policy must be submitted with the Travel Authorization Form.
    - a. Sales Tax. Authorized employees must present sales tax exemption documentation when securing hotel accommodations for official City business travel. Documentation is defined in Louisiana Revised Statute 47:301(1), Louisiana Revised Statute 47:301(8)(c), and Section 150-801 of The Code of the City of New Orleans. For more information, see the attached letter from the Director of Finance.
    - b. Documentation for Lowest Rates. Platforms such as Expedia, Travelocity, Hotels.com, etc., using similar search criteria (such as length of stay, time of arrival, etc.) are acceptable methods of providing price quotes for approval prior to travel. The submitted price quotes from such platforms should show what filters were used to find the available rates.
    - c. Upgrades. Upgrades for hotel accommodations at the expense of the City are not permitted unless the hotel is unable to provide allowable accommodations at the time necessary to carry out the purpose of travel.
    - d. Hotel Points. Employees are allowed to retain promotional items, including hotel points earned, while on official City business.

**D. Travel by Vehicle.**

1. **City-Owned Vehicles.** City-owned vehicles may be used for travel with prior approval of the employee's Appointing Authority, provided that (1) the travel distance is less than 500 miles from the base office or domicile of the employee and (2) said use is the most cost-effective means of travel.
  - a. Persons Authorized to Use City-Owned Vehicle. Only the following employees are authorized to operate a City vehicle: (1) a classified or unclassified employee of the City, (2) any member of the City Council, or (3) any other person who has received specific written approval from the Department Head or Appointing Authority. A file containing such approvals shall be maintained by each department's Vehicle Coordinator.
  - b. Expenses Paid by City-issued Credit Card. Items incidental to the operation of the City vehicle may be purchased with a City-issued credit card only when an employee is away from their residence on travel status. All purchases related

to City-owned vehicles made with a City-issued credit card must be signed by the employee who holds the credit card and who is the authorized operator of the City vehicle.

- c. Required Documentation for Expenses. The license plate number, the vehicle inventory number (or A-number), and a detailed receipt of purchases and justification of purchases must be submitted with the Travel Expense Form. A list of authorized employees traveling together in a City-owned vehicle should also be submitted with the Travel Expense Form.
2. **Privately Owned Vehicles.** Employees may use privately owned vehicles for official City business travel with prior approval of the employee's Appointing Authority, provided that (1) the travel distance is less than 500 miles from the base office or domicile of the employee and (2) said use is the most cost-effective means of travel.
- a. Justification. Justification for use of a privately owned vehicle must be submitted with the Travel Authorization Form. A list of all employees traveling in the privately owned vehicle should also be submitted.
  - b. Operating Expenses. The employee is responsible for all operating costs associated with the travel in a privately owned vehicle.
  - c. Mileage Reimbursement. If an employee uses a privately owned vehicle for official City business travel, the City will reimburse the employee for the mileage traveled to the travel destination.
    - i. *Reimbursement Rate.* The City's mileage reimbursement rate will be the equivalent of the Internal Revenue Service's annual reimbursement rate.
    - ii. *Mileage Eligible for Reimbursement.* The mileage eligible for reimbursement shall be the total mileage: (1) from the employee's residence to the official destination, (2) from the official destination back to the employee's residence, and (3) to any locations in between that are for official business, less the round-trip mileage from the employee's residence to their base office. Employees departing from the office to the final destination are entitled to the full mileage from the office to their destination and back.
    - iii. *Computation of Mileage.* Mileage must be computed by using software such as Map Quest or Google Maps to obtain the relevant distances. Such calculations must be submitted with both the Travel Authorization Form and the Travel Expense Form.
    - iv. *Registered Owner to be Reimbursed.* Only the registered owner of a vehicle used for travel is eligible for reimbursement of mileage when two or more employees are authorized to travel by a privately owned vehicle. A list of authorized employees traveling together in a privately owned

vehicle should be provided with the Travel Authorization Form and Travel Expense Form.

**E. Ground Transportation.**

1. **Mass Transit Preferred.** The use of mass transit, such as buses, subways, elevated trains, taxi cabs, shuttles, and ridesharing vehicles, is the recommended method of ground transportation, except when authorization has been provided for a rental vehicle. Ground transportation not related to the specified travel purpose will not be reimbursed. Documentation and receipts must be submitted with the Travel Expense Form.
2. **Rental Vehicles.** If approved, employees are authorized to rent a vehicle at the cost of a compact car, unless a larger vehicle is being used to transport more than three authorized employees or the larger vehicle's cost is provided at the same rate as a compact vehicle. Documentation showing that rates for a vehicle rental comply with this policy must be submitted with the Travel Authorization Form.
  - a. Prior Approval by Appointing Authority. Use of a rental vehicle is only permissible if approved by the employee's Appointing Authority.
  - b. Required Documentation. The traveling employee must submit to the employee's Appointing Authority written justification and documentation establishing the cost-effectiveness of the vehicle rental during the travel period.

Platforms such as Expedia, Travelocity, Hotels.com, etc., using similar search criteria (such as length of rental, etc.) are acceptable methods of providing price quotes for approval prior to travel. The submitted price quotes from such platforms should show what filters were used to find the available rentals.
  - c. On-board Navigation Systems. On-board navigation systems, such as GPS, may be requested by employees for use in a rented vehicle while traveling on official City business, provided justification is included with the request for prior approval with the Appointing Authority.
  - d. Insurance. If a rental vehicle is authorized, employees may purchase Collision Damage Waiver (CDW), Loss Damage Waiver (LDW), Supplemental Liability Insurance (SLI) or Theft/Super-Theft Protection.
  - e. Unauthorized Drivers/Riders. Unauthorized persons are prohibited from traveling in or driving rented vehicles.
  - f. Rental Car Points. Employees are allowed to retain promotional items, including rental car points earned, while on official City business.

#### **IV. PROCEDURES FOR APPROVAL OF AUTHORIZED TRAVEL**

##### **A. Travel Authorization.**

1. **Travel Authorization Form.** All travel requests must be initiated using the attached Travel Authorization Form. The Travel Authorization Form must be signed by the traveling employee, Department Head (Director), and Appointing Authority prior to submission to the Chief Administrative Officer. All related documentation, such as airfare, lodging costs, registration fees, etc., must be submitted with the Travel Authorization Form.
  - a. Employees Directly Reporting to Mayor. If the employee seeking authorization to travel is a Department Head (Director) or other employee that reports directly to the Mayor, the Travel Authorization Form shall be signed by the Mayor, who shall sign as the Department Head (Director) and the Appointing Authority.
  - b. Employees Directly Reporting to CAO. If the employee seeking authorization to travel is a Deputy CAO or other employee that reports directly to the Chief Administrative Officer, the Travel Authorization Form shall be signed by the Chief Administrative Officer in his capacity as Department Head (Director), Appointing Authority, and Chief Administrative Officer.
2. Copies of the approved Travel Authorization Form must be retained in the originating Department's files. A copy of the completed and signed Travel Authorization Form must be attached to (1) a Travel Expense Form to receive reimbursement for eligible travel expenses, and (2) payment documents submitted for any advance of travel funds.

**B. Records to be Retained and Made Available.** Copies of the approved Travel Authorization Form, along with the attached documentation, must be retained in the originating Department's files. The Travel Authorization Form and supporting documentation detailing transportation and lodging arrangements for City-approved travel shall be made available, upon request, within three (3) business days of the end of the travel period, pursuant to Ordinance Number 29138 M.C.S.

#### **V. TRAVEL ADVANCE**

- A. **Advance of Travel Expenses.** The City may provide an advance payment to an employee whose annual salary does not exceed \$100,000, to cover eligible expenses that are anticipated to be incurred by the employee while on official City business.
- B. **Procedures for Requesting a Travel Advance.** A travel advance may be requested by submitting a completed Request for Payment Voucher form along with the required documentation to the Department of Finance, Bureau of Accounting. Only items expressly listed and described in Section V(C), below, will be considered for an advance of funds.

1. The Request for Payment Voucher must be submitted to the Department of Finance, Bureau of Accounting with (1) a signed Travel Authorization Form and (2) itemized documentation (e.g., secured airline tickets, hotel accommodations, registration fees, etc.) for all funds requested. The Department of Finance, Bureau of Accounting is responsible for reviewing travel advance requests for accuracy and compliance prior to the release of funds. Any requests for travel advance or reimbursement must be returned to the originating department for correction and resubmittal if documentation is insufficient or not included with the appropriate forms. The Department of Finance may complete the transaction to the authorized employee using the City's current accounting program.
  2. The travel advance may be requested up to 40 calendar days prior to the beginning of the travel period to ensure receipt of funds.
  3. Travel advances shall be for a specific employee and to a specific destination only. Travel advance checks shall not be drafted to any employee other than the authorized employee named on the Travel Authorization Form.
- C. **Eligible Items.** Only the items expressly listed within this section of the policy will be considered for an advance of funds. Employees should note that while some items are eligible for reimbursement as a travel expense (see Section VI(A)), they may not be eligible for a travel advance. The following are eligible for a travel advance:
1. Meal per diem at the rate outlined in Section III(B)(2) of this policy.
  2. Airfare, provided guidelines described in Section III(C)(1) of this policy are followed.
  3. Conference or convention registration fees, provided the guidelines described in Section III(B)(1) of this policy are followed.
  4. Rental vehicle rates, provided the Appointing Authority has issued prior approval to secure a vehicle pursuant to Section III(E)(2).
  5. Lodging rates, provided guidelines described in Section III(C)(2) of this policy are followed.
- D. **Cancellation of Travel.** In instances where travel is canceled, the travel advance payment must be returned. If an employee terminates employment with the City prior to the scheduled travel, the employee must remit all advances to the City prior to termination. If advances are not returned to the City by the employee, the advanced amount will be deducted from the employee's terminal leave.

## **VI. TRAVEL EXPENSES**

- A. **Expenses Eligible for Reimbursement.** Only the expenses expressly listed in this section are eligible for reimbursement. The authorized employee must submit documentation of expenses in accordance with the procedures set forth in this policy



to receive reimbursement for eligible expenses. The following are eligible for reimbursement:

1. **Conference Registration Fees.** Conference registration fees are reimbursable, provided the employee has complied with the guidelines established by Section III(B)(1).
2. **Airfare.** Airfare for City-approved travel is reimbursable, provided the authorized employee has complied with the guidelines for the purchase of airline tickets established by Section III(C)(1). Companion and/or spouse fares are not reimbursable.
3. **Hotel Accommodations.** Hotel accommodations are reimbursable, provided the employee has complied with the guidelines for securing said accommodations established by Section III(C)(2). Any expense charged to the hotel room for the entertainment or convenience of the employee is strictly prohibited (e.g., movies, minibar items, fitness center use).
4. **Luggage Fees.** Luggage fees for 1 checked bag for travel of 5 days or less or 2 bags for travel of 6 or more days are eligible for reimbursement. Overweight/oversize luggage fees will not be reimbursed unless they result from transporting business material and/or equipment necessary for travel.
5. **Hotel Internet and Phone Calls.** Hotel fees for gaining internet access are eligible for reimbursement. Hotel fees for placing phone calls are eligible for reimbursement, subject to a \$10.00 limit during the travel period.
6. **Hotel Laundry Services.** Hotel laundry services will be reimbursed only if the authorized employee's travel period extends beyond 7 days.
7. **Mileage.** Mileage traveled in a privately owned vehicle that is related to official City business travel is reimbursable, provided the authorized employee has complied with the guidelines established by Section III(D)(2).
8. **Rental Vehicle Fees.** Rental vehicle costs are reimbursable, provided the employee has complied with the guidelines established by Section III(E)(2).
9. **Operating Expenses of a Vehicle.** Operating expenses, such as gasoline, for the pre-approved use of a rental or City-owned vehicle are eligible for reimbursement. Gasoline purchases beyond the expiration of the travel period will not be reimbursed.
10. **Parking (Including Airport Parking).** Parking costs (at the best rate) for City-owned vehicles, authorized rental vehicles, and privately owned vehicles are eligible for reimbursement for the authorized travel period only. Parking expenses exceeding \$5.00 require receipts.
11. **Tolls and Ferry Fares.** Tolls and ferry fares are eligible for reimbursement. Receipts are required for toll or ferry fares exceeding \$5.00.

12. **Ground Transportation.** The costs of using mass transit for local transportation during the travel period, as described in Section III(E)(1), are eligible for reimbursement. Only ground transportation related to the official purpose of the travel is reimbursable. Ground transportation expenses outside the scope of the official purpose of travel are not reimbursable.

13. **Official Entertainment.** The Mayor and his/her legal spouse and the authorized employees of the Mayor's Office of Economic Development are eligible for reimbursement of funds used for official entertainment with detailed receipts (if not charged to a City-issued credit card). All other employees will not be reimbursed for official entertainment expenses.

**B. Receipts Required.**

Expenses not supported by a detailed receipt, unless otherwise noted elsewhere in this policy, and expenses charged to a City-issued credit card that are not within the guidelines of this policy, will not be paid by the City and are solely the responsibility of the employee.

**C. Travel Expense Reconciliation Procedures.**

1. **Travel Expense Form.** The reconciliation of all travel expenses must be documented using the attached Travel Expense Form. The Travel Expense Form is required regardless of whether the expenses equal the amount advanced to the employee prior to the travel period.

2. **Required Signatures and Submittal to Finance Department.** The Travel Expense Form must be signed by the authorized employee, the Department Head (Director), the authorized employee's Appointing Authority, and the Chief Administrative Officer. Once the Travel Expense Form has been signed by the CAO, the authorized employee must submit the Travel Expense Form and supporting documents to the Department of Finance, Bureau of Accounting. The Bureau of Accounting is responsible for reviewing travel expense reconciliations for accuracy and compliance prior to the release of reimbursements to the authorized employee.

a. Employees Directly Reporting to Mayor. If the employee seeking authorization to travel is a Department Head (Director) or other employee that reports directly to the Mayor, the Travel Expense Form shall be signed by the Mayor, who shall sign as the Department Head (Director) and the Appointing Authority.

b. Employees Directly Reporting to CAO. If the employee seeking authorization to travel is a Deputy CAO or other employee that reports directly to the Chief Administrative Officer, the Travel Expense Form shall be signed by the Chief Administrative Officer in his capacity as Department Head (Director), Appointing Authority, and Chief Administrative Officer.

3. **Receipts.** Unless otherwise noted in this policy, the Travel Expense Form must be accompanied by all original, detailed receipts of expenses. Receipts are required for airfare, lodging, registration fees, ground transportation, gasoline for pre-authorized rental vehicles, and related eligible expenses, including funds advanced to the employee. Employees are responsible for maintaining original copies of all receipts and reviewing all charges for accuracy for submission with the Travel Expense Form. Any additional documentation requested by the Appointing Authority, Chief Administrative Officer, or Department of Finance is the sole responsibility of the employee.
  4. **Deadline.** The Travel Expense Form, including all required supporting documentation of expenses, must be filed no later than 14 business days after the expiration of the travel period. Failure to submit the Travel Expense Form and supporting documentation will result in forfeiture of any reimbursement that may be due to the employee.
    - a. **Appeal.** Reimbursements denied for failure to timely submit a request may be appealed directly to the Chief Administrative Officer. A written memorandum explaining non-compliance with the reconciliation deadline will serve as the appeal instrument. The appeal must be signed and dated by the affected employee and approved by the Appointing Authority.
  5. **Overpayment.** Any reconciliation of travel expenses that results in overpayment by the City requires that the employee reimburse the City within 20 business days of the end of the travel period.
- D. **Records to be Retained and Made Available.** Copies of the Travel Expense Form, along with the attached documentation, must be retained in the originating Department's files. The Travel Expense Form and supporting documentation detailing transportation and lodging arrangements for City-approved travel shall be made available, upon request, within 14 business days following the conclusion of the travel period, pursuant to Ordinance Number 29138 M.C.S.

## **VII. TRAVEL INSURANCE POLICY**

- A. When traveling on official City business, employees shall generally be covered under the City's Workers' Compensation Program. The event causing the physical injury or occupational disease must arise out of and within the course and scope of employment with the City.
- B. Reimbursement will not be made by the City to any employee who purchases Flight Insurance, Personal Accident Insurance (PAC), and/ or Emergency Sickness Protection (ESP).

## **VIII. ENFORCEMENT**

Lack of compliance with this policy shall be brought to the attention of the Chief Administrative Officer and may result in disciplinary action.

**IX. QUARTERLY REPORTS**

The Chief Administrative Officer shall provide a quarterly report of all travel by elected officials and City employees within the Executive Branch to the Mayor and the City Council, pursuant to Ordinance Number 29138 M.C.S.

**X. INQUIRIES**

Questions regarding this memorandum should be directed to the Chief Administrative Office, Employee Relations Division at (504) 658-7770.

Attachments:

Travel Authorization Form  
Travel Expense Form  
Request for Payment Voucher  
Letter from CFO for Policy 9 (R)  
Complimentary Admission State Disclosure Form  
Per-Diem Rates for Louisiana