

Travel Policy

City of La Crosse, Wisconsin

This policy establishes a standard for: Travel outside of the City of La Crosse for City business and travel outside the City of La Crosse for training to include, but not limited to, accommodations, meals, transportation, registration fees, training materials, and approval. This policy is also established to maintain appropriate internal controls to ensure compliance with federal, state and local laws and maintain the status of an “accountable plan” under IRS regulations in order to minimize the tax impact for City staff. With the exception of Department Heads, all same day City related travel approved by the Department Head, Council President, Board or Commission using a City provided vehicle will not require a completed and approved travel request form to be filed with the Finance Department as long as the travel 1.) is within the State of Wisconsin. or 2.) in the State of Minnesota within 45 miles of the City of La Crosse corporate limits.

Examples of travel include, but shall not be limited to, professional conferences, seminars, training schools, meetings necessitated because of membership in organizations, meetings related to City business including “sister city” travel, transporting City-owned equipment to and from the City and fleet repair parts retrieval.

This policy shall apply to all Council Members, Mayor, Board/Commission Members and City Employees.

All travel must be done in compliance with this policy, regardless of the funding source (e.g., federal and state grants, contracts, departmental operating budgets).

1. All travel funding shall be included in the Common Council approved current year departmental operating budget and/or with other Common Council approved grants/funds.
2. Approval exclusive of the “same day, City vehicle” travel requirements listed in the first paragraph above:
 - A. **COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVEL**: (see also item 5.H.) A completed Travel Request Form must be on file in the Finance Department with the Council President’s approval prior to any travel ensuring sufficient funds exist and insurance is on file in the City Clerk’s Office, if applicable. Newly elected Council Members may attend one “Newly Elected Official’s Workshop” provided sufficient funds exist.
 - B. **MAYORAL TRAVEL**: A completed Travel Request Form must be on file in the Finance Department prior to any travel ensuring sufficient funds exist and insurance is on file in the City Clerk’s Office, if applicable.
 - C. **BOARD/COMMISSION MEMBER TRAVEL**: A completed Travel Request Form must be on file in the Finance Department prior to any travel ensuring sufficient funds exist and insurance is on file in the City Clerk’s Office, if applicable. Must be approved by Commission Chair Person/ Board President and applicable department head for funding.

- D. **DEPARTMENT HEAD TRAVEL:** Department heads shall secure initial travel approval from the Mayor. In the event of the Mayor's absence, the Council President may authorize said travel. In the event said approval is not obtained, the Department Head may obtain approval from the Finance and Personnel Committee. After approval is obtained, the Travel Request Form shall be submitted to the Finance Director or designee, for final approval ensuring sufficient funds exist and insurance is on file in the City Clerk's Office, if applicable.
 - E. **EMPLOYEE TRAVEL:** Applicant must complete a Travel Request Form which is to be submitted to the department head or designee for approval. The completed approved Travel Request Form must be forwarded to the Director of Finance or designee for final approval prior to any travel ensuring sufficient funds exist and insurance is on file in the City Clerk's Office, if applicable.
 - F. **SISTER CITY TRAVEL:** Common Council Resolution is required to approve any Sister City travel.
3. The policy outlined herein shall not affect the Council's Legislative Committee's authority to direct officials to attend public hearings or matters before the State Legislature or State administrative boards or commissions.
4. All expenses for travel shall be made with City procurement card following the City's Procurement Card Policy. Detailed/itemized receipts and/or invoices are required for all expenses and shall become part of the documentation for payment as stated in the City Purchasing Policy. When use of the City procurement card for purchases is not possible, a personal credit card, cash or check may be used provided **original** detailed/itemized receipts and/or invoices are submitted along with the request for reimbursement. Any expenditure of personal funds for travel expenses will be reimbursed during the next Council cycle approving monthly bills.
5. Policy operational guidelines.
- A. **REGISTRATION FEES:** Registration/tuition fees are allowable. Receipt required.
 - B. **AIR, TRAIN, OR BUS TRAVEL:** The making of reservations well in advance is recommended so as to assure that the lowest possible fare is attained. Flight/travel insurance is not allowed. Boarding passes (tickets) for such travel must be procured through a vendor approved and established by the Director of Finance or designee. Booking of boarding passes (tickets), without the use of approved vendor, is not permissible and will not be reimbursed. Mileage perks shall accumulate as allowed per travel agency corporate account rules and any employer accumulated mileage perks shall be administered by the Finance Department. Departures for airline travel shall be out of the La Crosse Regional Airport only unless approved by the Director of Finance or designee.
 - C. **TAXIS, AIRLINE LIMOUSINE, OR BUSES:** Reasonable charges for taxis and airline limousines and buses, including driver's tips at a maximum rate of 15% of the charge, with an original receipt are reimbursable.

D. **LODGING:** The choice of lodging shall be based primarily on cost with consideration given to accessibility in conducting business. When making reservations, the government, conference, or single room rate should always be requested, whichever is less. Travelers shall observe posted hotel checkout hours in order to avoid a charge for the day of departure. The traveler who is required to remain in one location for an extended period of time (one week or longer) is required to find lodging at reasonable weekly and/or monthly rates.

E. **CASH ADVANCES:** Are not permitted.

F. **PER DIEM ADVANCES:** Are not permitted.

G. **MEALS:**

1. Non eligible reimbursement meals:
 - a. Same day travel meals.
 - b. Meals included in cost of registration or lodging.
 - c. Alcoholic beverages.
2. Eligible reimbursement meals:
 - a. The actual and reasonable costs incurred for breakfast, lunch and dinner only.
 - b. Gratuity not to exceed 15%.

H. **VEHICLES USED FOR TRAVEL:**

1. **City owned vehicle** is encouraged when available. Only individuals as authorized in Section 2 Approval are allowed in city owned vehicles. Only City employees are allowed to drive City owned vehicles. Parking fees and tolls are allowable expenses with receipts. Traffic and parking violation expenses are the responsibility of the traveler and will not be reimbursed. Fuel for City owned vehicle shall be procured from the City supply if practical, or by use of city procurement card(receipt required).
2. **Rental vehicle(s)** is encouraged when vehicle rental is the most practical and economical. Only individuals as authorized in Section 2 Approval are allowed in rental vehicles and as per State of Wisconsin rental contract. Only rental agencies that provide the most favorable contract terms, as determined by the Director of Finance or designee, may be used. The rental vehicle shall be an intermediate/standard/mid size sedan unless five (5) or more travelers are involved in the event. City procurement card must be used for both the rental and any fuel purchases. Parking fees and tolls are allowable expenses with receipts. Traffic and parking violation expenses are the responsibility of the traveler and will not be reimbursed. Departments can determine if a rental vehicle is the most practical and economical mode of transportation by using the following formula in comparison to paying mileage as listed below in H.3.

a. **Rental vehicle cost X number of 24 hour days vehicle will be rented + approximate gas cost (use 20mpg X current unleaded regular gas price) = vehicle rental cost.**

COMPARED TO:

b. **Total number of round trip miles X current IRS allowable mileage rate = cost of paying mileage.**

3. **Privately owned vehicles** are allowed if use of City owned vehicle is unavailable, use of rental vehicle is impractical (See formula in paragraph H.2.) or is authorized by the department head. Use of a motorcycle is acceptable. Proof of current minimum liability insurance coverage in compliance with state law must be on file in the Clerk's Office prior to the submission of the travel request. Mileage reimbursement shall be paid in accordance with the standard mileage rate established by the Internal Revenue Service(IRS). Motorcycle mileage reimbursement will be at 50% of the current IRS mileage reimbursement rate. Mileage reimbursement will not apply with respect to personal business. Procurement cards cannot be used for fuel under this section. Parking fees and tolls are allowable expenses with receipts. Traffic and parking violation expenses are the responsibility of the traveler and will not be reimbursed.

I. **NON-ALLOWABLE EXPENSES:** Shall include, but not be limited to: alcoholic beverages, spouse or family member's travel expenses, lost/stolen cash or property, personal services, laundry/cleaning costs, non business related activities (i.e. sightseeing tours, traffic citations, parking tickets and other fines, repair or towing services for personal vehicles, entertainment, charges for late checkout, flight insurance, trip insurance, charges for extra baggage (i.e. golf clubs, skis, ect), club membership dues, and childcare costs.

J. **CANCELLATION FEES:** Except in the case of an emergency as approved by the department head, any and all cancellation fees shall be the responsibility of the individual as listed in Section 2 Approval.

6. Reconciliation: It shall be each department's responsibility to timely reconcile and submit:

A. All individual travel events to the Finance Department within three (3) working days of the end of the travel event. Attach to the Travel Request form a transaction summary supporting procurement card usage for expenses. Expenses submitted for reimbursement shall be with **original itemized invoices only.**

B. In order to avoid late payment processing fees, it shall be the department's responsibility to reconcile all procurement card purchases for travel to the monthly procurement card statement as per the CITY OF LACROSSE WISCONSIN PROCUREMENT CARD POLICY AND PROCEDURES .

7. Department heads are responsible for administering this policy within their department.
8. Violations and/or abuse to this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge in accordance with City policy.