Travel Policy
City of La Crosse, Wisconsin

I. ***General.*** This policy is intended to provide guidelines and protect the interest of the City related to travel expenditures by ensuring fair and uniform procedures for administering reimbursement for travel expenses in accordance with State and IRS regulations. The following policy will apply to elected persons, employees, members of boards and commissions, and any other persons incurring travel expenses that will be paid by the City.

II. ***Policy.*** The City of La Crosse provides for travel and training expenses for City employees and other individuals who are required and authorized to travel and transact official City business. Travel expenses will be allowed for attending approved professional meetings, conferences or training sessions that promote the overall job knowledge and comprehension of the individual. With proper authorization, the City will provide reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred for approved travel. 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) within the current year's budget cycle.

All same day City related travel approved by the Mayor, Department Head, Council President, or Commission/Board Chair or President 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) out of the State of Wisconsin but within 45 miles of the City of La Crosse corporate limits.

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 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.

III. ***Definitions.***

(1) ***Approvers.*** Individuals assigned in each department with the responsibility for processing and tracking travel related documents.

(2) ***Authorizers.*** Various individuals as described in the list below. Authorizers are directly responsible for ensuring that the proposed travel is for the conduct of City business and that there is a direct relationship between the purpose of the travel and the employee's work.

(a) Department Heads: authorize travel for department employees.

(b) Mayor: authorize travel for Department Heads.

(c) Common Council President: authorize travel for members of the Common Council.

(d) Commission/Board Chair or President: authorize travel for members.

(3) ***City Business.*** Meetings where issues directly related to the City are being discussed, conferences related to or affecting City functions, training programs and seminars related to City business, a City function or aspect thereof, participation on boards and committees affecting or dealing with City functions.

(4) ***Employee.*** For the purposes of this policy, "employee" means Executive, Exempt and Non-exempt employees, elected officials, appointed officials, and volunteers, who travel while engaged in City business.

(5) ***Mileage Rate.*** Per mile reimbursement rate shall be the current IRS rate and calculated based on the shortest distance, or quickest route, whichever is to the advantage of the City, and must be substantiated with a point-to-point mapping indicating mileage.

(6) ***Reasonable Expenses.*** Reasonable expenses include both ordinary expenses which are common expenses generally accepted for someone in the employee's position and necessary expenses which that are both helpful and appropriate for the employee's work- and work-related travel.

IV. Economy of Travel.

(1) It is expected that the traveler, once approved to travel, shall make travel arrangements by the most efficient and economical means available to accomplish approved travel. This includes pre-registering for events in advance to receive early discounts; making reservations for all travel ahead to procure the best rates; using public transportation and other means available to minimize costs related to travel. Any additional expenses incurred because of alternate modes of transportation will be the traveler's personal expenses. Every effort should be made to coordinate travel schedules when multiple employees are traveling to the same destination.

(2) Employees of the City traveling by personal automobile to the same duty point must coordinate their travel. Department Heads are responsible for ensuring that travel is coordinated to encourage car-pooling. Travelers who choose not to coordinate travel for personal reasons will not be reimbursed mileage, the cost of gasoline, or any other automobile related charges. Employees who cannot coordinate travel in one vehicle due to work related reasons may be reimbursed for their individual mileage expense or rental car.

V. ***Receipts.*** Employees approved to travel are required to obtain, save, and submit all associated receipts and supporting documentation of expenses incurred. Receipts are encouraged, but not required, for expenses incurred for travel by taxi, shuttle service, rideshares, and city bus, unless over $25. If receipts are not available, an itemized list of each claim showing destination and cost of travel is required. Failure to provide substantiating documents of expenses incurred may result in the employee being responsible for payment.

VI. Transportation.

(1) ***Air, Train, or Bus Travel.*** Employees approved to travel via commercial air, train, or bus are required, or to the best of their ability, make reservations well in advance to assure that the lowest possible fare is attained. Flight/travel insurance is not allowed and will not be reimbursable.

(2) ***Taxis, Rideshares, Airline Limousine, or Buses.*** Reasonable charges for taxis and airline limousines and buses, including driver's tips at a maximum rate of 20% of the charge, with an original receipt are acceptable and/or reimbursable.

(3) ***City Owned Vehicle(s)*** are encouraged when available. Only employees 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).

(4) ***Rental Vehicle(s)*** are encouraged when vehicle rental is the most practical and economical. Only authorized employees 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. Employees shall waive the collision damage insurance on the rental. The additional liability and damage insurance is not authorized. Employees who do not waive the collision damage insurance will be responsible for the cost. A 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.

(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.

(5) ***Privately Owned Vehicle(s) (POV's)*** are allowed if use of a City owned vehicle is unavailable, use of a rental vehicle is impractical (See formula in paragraph F.4.) 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.

VII. ***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. If a non-City-sponsored traveler (e.g., family member, friend) accompanies the employee, the employee is only authorized the single occupancy rate. The employee will be responsible for all incidental costs associated with their occupancy of the respective facility.

VIII. ***Meals.***

(1) ***Authorized Expenses.***

(a) The actual and reasonable costs incurred for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

(b) Gratuity not to exceed 20%.

(2) ***Unauthorized Expenses.***

(a) Meals included in the conference or training registration.

(b) Same day travel.

(c) Alcoholic Beverages.

(3) ***Executive Level Employees*** (e.g., Department Heads and Mayor) may be expected to pay for meals of special business guests while traveling. Such expenses are allowable if reasonable and justified in writing along with the names, agencies, and job titles of the guests.

IX. ***Cash Advances.*** Are not permitted.

X. ***Unauthorized 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 (allowed if travel exceeds (5) days), 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, etc.), club membership dues, and childcare costs.

XI. Approval exclusive of the "same day, City vehicle" travel requirements listed in the third paragraph above:

(1) ***Council Member Travel:*** 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.

(2) ***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.

(3) ***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 Chairperson/ Board President and applicable Department Head for funding.

(4) ***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.

(5) ***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.

(6) ***Sister City Travel:*** Common Council Resolution is required to approve any Sister City travel.

XII. Travel Cancellation.

(1) ***Timeliness.*** Cancellations should be communicated as soon as possible to the Approver so that fares, registrations, or deposits can be refunded or applied to future travel.

(2) ***Fees.*** If a trip is changed or canceled because of City business needs or because of circumstances beyond the control of the employee, the City will incur any cancelation fees. If the trip is canceled or changed for personal convenience of the employee, the employee is liable for any cancelation fees.

(3) ***Early returns.*** If travel is cut short due to an emergency or other unforeseen reasons, the City will reimburse any added expense incurred due to loss of flight discounts, etc. subject to review and approval by the Director of Finance. If early return could have been foreseen or avoided, the City will not reimburse employee for added cost.

Violations and/or abuse to this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge in accordance with City policy.