



City of Aliso Viejo

COUNCIL POLICY

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BACKGROUND

Occasionally, it is necessary for City personnel to attend meetings and to travel outside the City to conduct City business or attend conferences. To control the costs involved and to compensate individuals for actual and necessary expenses, the City Council has established a policy on travel and meetings.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a travel and expense policy for elected officials and City employees when attending business or professional conferences, training seminars or other travel on authorized City business. Contract employees are not covered under this policy, since individual contracts address allowable expenses.

POLICY

1. DEFINITION

For purposes of this policy, *employee* means all regular, part-time and temporary employees designated to represent the City of Aliso Viejo at an authorized meeting, training session, or conference. This policy also applies to elected officials. For purposes of this policy, employees and elected officials maybe collectively referred to as Official.

For the purposes of this policy statement, the word “*travel*” is used to denote activities of individuals in connection with authorized attendance at conferences, meetings, seminars and training, including necessary transportation thereto and there from. Travel is further delineated as local or non-local as defined below.

- a. Local Travel (No Travel Request and Expense Report Form is needed)
Official travel performed within 50 miles from Aliso Viejo City Hall, or the Official’s residence, whichever is less or accomplished within one day.
- b. Non-Local Travel (Requires submittal of Travel Request and Expense Report Form)
Official travel involving at least one overnight stay or to a location over 50 miles from City Hall or the Official’s residence, whichever is more.

2. GENERAL POLICIES

- a. City Business: The City will only pay for expenses incurred by Officials in connection with authorized City business in accordance with the conditions of this policy.



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b. Budget approval: Travel requests should be initially submitted as part of the annual budget process. Requests for attendance at conferences, seminars and/or meetings should directly relate to the Official's duties and provide a benefit to the City. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this Policy, elected officials shall not be required to obtain prior approval to attend any conference, seminar or meeting or to incur any expense authorized in this Policy provided that such expense is within the limits specified in the budget for that fiscal year.

c. Department approval: Non-elected officials must secure approval from their Department Head, Director of Financial Services and the City Manager prior to registering for attendance at any conference, seminar and/or meeting.

d. Registration: All registration fees for approved conferences, seminars or meetings shall be paid directly by the City. Officials should register at the earliest time possible to avoid late registration charges. In cases where an Official's registration is unavoidably late to meet the registration and warrant processing timelines, the Official will have to pay the registration fee and seek reimbursement with appropriate receipts.

e. Lodging: The cost of lodging accommodations for approved conferences, seminars or meetings may be paid directly by the City or reimbursed to the Official as outlined below. Overnight lodging expenses associated with meeting attendance within a 50-mile radius of City Hall may be authorized if the overnight stay is justified based on early morning or late hour attendance requirements. The approval of the Director of Financial Services and the City Manager shall be required for such overnight stay.

The City will pay for actual lodging costs when the Official is traveling on official City business subject to the following limitations:

- ♦ If the lodging is in connection with a conference or other organized educational activity, lodging costs shall not exceed the maximum group rate published by the conference or activity sponsor, provided that lodging at the group rate is available to the Official at the time of booking. If the group rate is not available, then the Official shall use comparable lodging that is either: (1) consistent with the per diem rates for lodging as established in IRS Publication 1542, as amended, or any successor publication; or (2) provided at a governmental rate.
- ♦ If the lodging is not in connection with a conference or other organized educational activity, the Official shall use lodging that is either: (1) consistent with the per diem rates for lodging as established in IRS Publication 1542, as amended, or any successor publication; or (2) provided at a governmental rate.



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An Official may stay with a friend or relative while attending an out of town meeting or conference; however, the City will not pay the Official for any payment to the friend or relative for lodging, meals or transportation.

Whether for a conference or a meeting, making early reservations and registration is encouraged to take advantage of lower costs. If prior payment is needed to hold a reservation, the Official may submit a Check Request form and forward the payment to the hotel prior to the Official's trip, or the Official may have billing for accommodations sent directly to the City for payment if this is an option. In such instances, it shall be processed by the Official's department, as applicable, and submitted to the Finance Department. The Finance Department shall pay the invoice and, in turn, the Official will reimburse the City for any additional charges for double occupancy, room service or other items. Be sure to cancel any reservations you will not use. If the City is charged for an unused reservation, the Official will be responsible for that charge unless circumstances requiring cancellation were reasonably beyond the Official's control.

When making lodging reservations, be sure to ask about exemptions from the local transient occupancy tax (TOT). Some cities exempt travelers on City business, others don't. If there is an exemption, you can save up to 12% on lodging costs depending on the local TOT rate. Almost all lodging operators will require an official, written claim for exemption. See Exhibit A.

f. Transportation: Officials shall use the most economical mode and class of transportation reasonably consistent with scheduling needs and cargo requirements, taking into consideration distance, time and total costs to the City after all expense items are tabulated, including travel time and salary costs.

When the use of private automobile is approved, reimbursement shall be at the prevailing IRS established rate. Use of a privately owned vehicle on City business requires the driver to possess a valid California driver's license and to carry automobile insurance. Any damages to the vehicle or service repairs shall be considered a personal liability, and shall not be reimbursed by the City. Reimbursement will be based on the vehicle and not on the number of Officials attending (i.e., the owner of the vehicle will be paid and not the passengers). Mileage for local travel will not be reimbursed to Officials who receive auto allowances. Expenses such as tolls and parking will be fully reimbursed upon presentation of the original receipt.

When the use of public air carrier transportation is used, travel for all Officials shall be in coach class or equivalent service. The City will only reimburse up to the cost of the least expensive ticket available via commercial air travel. Private automobile use to and



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from the airport shall be reimbursed for all miles at the prevailing IRS established rate. Parking at the most economical location at the airport is reimbursable.

If an Official wishes to drive rather than fly to a destination outside of the normal range, he/she may be authorized to do so by the City Manager, with the following provisions:

- the City will only reimburse for the mileage if the Official chooses to use a rental car to drive to the destination, not the cost to rent the vehicle.
- the City will reimburse the Official the lesser of the mileage rate to and from the site, or the amount that the airline coach fare would have been as determined by the Director of Financial Services.

While traveling, the use of rental vehicles is to be discouraged. Courtesy shuttle service buses or taxis should be utilized between airports and meeting locations. Rental vehicles shall only be permitted when no other transportation is available, or when alternative transportation would be more expensive or impractical. When rental vehicles are used, the least expensive vehicle should be used.

g. Meals: The City will reimburse for *actual* meal expenses (including tax and gratuity) *up to a maximum, not-to-exceed amount of \$75 per full day and \$35 per half day*, with appropriate receipts. However, If meals are included in registration fees, as stated in meeting or conference literature, or if meals are provided by the event, and you choose to go elsewhere, appropriate deductions will be made from the meal allowance. For local travel, \$25 shall be allowed for lunch if the meeting, seminar or conference runs through the lunch period and no lunch is provided.

Original receipts and copies of the conference schedule will be required to substantiate ALL expenses. No reimbursement will be granted without a receipt or outside the 30-day submittal restriction without approval of the City Manager.

h. Phone Calls: One personal phone call a day will be reimbursed by the City. For business calls made by staff, reimbursements will be limited to City business. Officials must use discretion.

i. What's Not Covered: The City will not reimburse you for personal expenses such as laundry, barbering, valet service or in-room movies. Spouses and guests are allowed to accompany you on City travel and at conferences, seminars, and meetings. Any additional costs associated with the participation of your spouse or other guests will not be paid for or reimbursed by the City. This includes any increased room rate due to double occupancy.



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If you are traveling on behalf of another public agency, that agency is expected to handle all expenses, unless otherwise authorized by the City Council. The City is not responsible for any expenses—including advances or reimbursements. The only exception would be if you serve on a committee of a public agency that does not provide travel expenses, such as the League of California Cities or professional associations.

j. Deviations from Policy: Any expense that does not fall within the scope of this policy may be permitted if approved by the City Council, in a public meeting, before the expense is incurred.

k. Memberships In Professional Organizations: The City will pay for memberships in professional organizations that are directly related to authorized City business and are in the name of the City of Aliso Viejo. The City will not pay for individual memberships in the name of an elected official unless an individual membership will make the cost of a conference, meeting, travel or other expense authorized by this policy less expensive than the cost would otherwise be without the individual membership.

l. Subscriptions: The City will only pay for subscriptions to periodicals or publications that are directly related to authorized City business and are in the name of the City of Aliso Viejo. The City will not pay for individual subscriptions to periodicals or publications in the name of an elected official.

3. TRAVEL REQUESTS AND REIMBURSEMENT

a. Officials should complete the top half or pink portion of the Travel Request and Expense Report Form (see Exhibit B), before the trip and the bottom half or blue portion of the form within thirty (30) days of their return. While traveling, collect all receipts, as they will be required to substantiate your expenditures. The Official is responsible for preparing and filing the Travel Request and Expense Report Form and reconciling all travel expenses promptly.

Before you travel:

- Complete the top portion of the “Travel Request and Expense Form”. Exhibit B.
- Provide a reasonable estimate of total costs of the conference-Transportation, Lodging, Meals and any other expected expense.
- Attach a copy of the conference announcement/bulletin/schedule to the request.



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- For non-elected Officials obtain authorization on the travel request from the Financial Services Manager and the City Manager (FSM-to ensure budget availability, CM-authorization to attend).
- Make a copy of the travel request and meeting documents and keep them for your expense reimbursement request on your return.
- Forward the original documents to the Finance Department for payment of the registration and other expenses, if applicable.

On your return:

- Complete the bottom portion of the “Travel Request and Expense Form”
- Provide a copy of the original”Travel Request and Expense Form” that was completed prior to travel.
- Provide original supporting documents.
- Tape all original receipts and other supporting documents on to an 8½ X 11 sheet of paper (if the receipts are not 8½ X 11).
- Forward to the Finance Department for processing.

b. Mileage Reimbursement:

- Mileage for Non-Local travel should be included on the “Travel Request and Expense Form”.
- Mileage reimbursement for local travel should be submitted on the “Mileage Reimbursement Form”. See Exhibit C. Attach the mileage reimbursement form, a copy of the conference brochure with its location and address and the printed one-way directions (Print out one way driving directions and double it to arrive at a round trip number-No rounding) to the warrant request form and submit it to the Finance Department for reimbursement.

4. REPORTING

Elected officials shall provide a brief oral report on any meeting attended at the City’s expense at the next available Council meeting. If more than one elected official attends the same event, the Mayor shall designate one attendee to give the report. The other attendees will be permitted to briefly report on any topics omitted by that designated elected official.