

**POLICY ON
CONFERENCES,
TRAINING AND TRAVEL**

Boston Water and Sewer Commission



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POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this Policy is to promote career development and encourage employees to keep abreast of current practices, standards and innovation by attending short-term, professionally-oriented and/or other conferences, seminars, webinars, training and educational events (“programs”).

In addition, this Policy on Conferences, Training and Travel (the “Policy”) sets forth the parameters relative to the following types of travel:

- Travel involving an out-of-state destination;
- Travel involving an overnight accommodation; and
- Travel to a conference, seminar or training program, including in-state travel.

The Boston Water and Sewer Commission (the “Commission” or “BWSC”) will reimburse employees for all necessary and reasonable expenses incurred in the performance of their jobs for the Commission. Expenses such as mileage, transportation fares, meals, hotel charges and telephone calls are covered under certain circumstances. No employee should either gain or lose personal funds as a result of business assignments; however, the Commission will not pay travel expenses and costs that are unnecessarily incurred by employees.

To provide the necessary controls over travel and related miscellaneous employee expenses, all employees and responsible managers are required to follow certain uniform procedures for reimbursement requests.

It will be the Executive Director’s prerogative to assign responsibility to designee(s) for various portions of these procedures.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies whenever Commission funds are expended in one of two ways:

1. Funds are expended in advance for (a) registration fees for conferences, seminars, other professional meetings, educational events or (b) travel to or from such business-related events; OR
2. Employees will be seeking reimbursement for (a) registration fees for conferences, seminars, other professional meetings, educational events or (b) travel-related expenses such as airfare, mileage, tolls, parking, meals, etc.

Please note that the costs of meals at one-day events will not be reimbursed.

REGISTRATION FOR CONFERENCES, SEMINARS, EDUCATIONAL EVENTS, PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS AND TRAININGS

CRITERIA

The Commission shall pay for or reimburse employees for registration fees to attend conferences, seminars, educational events, professional meetings and trainings provided the following criteria are met:

1. The program is directly related to the employee's current work or career path;
2. Sufficient funds have been budgeted and are available;
3. Attendance does not result in duplication of effort (too many employees attending) or inadequate coverage of Commission responsibilities;
4. Participation is approved by the employee's administrative superior; and
5. Participation is approved by the Executive Director.

PAYMENT APPROVAL PROCESS

Approval in advance for attendance at a conference, seminar, professional meeting, educational event or training class is secured through the employee's completion of a *Travel Request Form*. There is one exception to this requirement: No *Travel Request Form* is required if the employee is not leaving the building (e.g., a webinar or online program).

In **all** situations where the Commission will be paying a vendor directly for an employee's attendance at a conference, seminar, professional meeting, educational event or training class, a *Direct Payment to Vendors Form* must also be completed and signed by the appropriate parties.

SPECIAL TRAININGS

In some situations where a program/training course is mandated by a professional code and/or local, state or federal rule, regulation or law in order to maintain or renew a certification or license – such as mandated training in order to maintain or renew a hoisting license – the following criteria must be met before the Commission will pay for or reimburse an employee for the training:

1. The certification or license is a part of the employee's job description and/or is essential to the employee's job performance;
2. The program is approved or accredited by the licensing authority;
3. The program is not provided by the Commission;
4. Participation is approved in advance; and
5. Proof of attendance and a passing grade, if applicable, is provided.

TRAVEL APPROVAL PROCESS

Employees should not commit themselves to any expenditures or travel plans without first obtaining final authorization.

1. The employee must fill out, sign and submit a *Travel Request Form* at least ten (10) days in advance of departure. Individuals wishing to travel shall set forth the following items of information on the form:
 - Purpose and reason for travel which must explain the importance of the travel-related events to the department's objectives;
 - Destination;
 - The estimated cost, including transportation, lodging, and meals;
 - Which costs must be pre-paid by the Commission and which will be reimbursed to the employee after the trip;
 - Names of all other Commission employees who are traveling to the same destination, if known; and
 - Duration of travel, including number of business days off from work.
2. The *Travel Request Form* must be forwarded to and signed by: the employee's supervisor, division head and the Executive Director or designee. The original, signed *Travel Request Form* will be forwarded to the Finance Department with a copy to the employee.
3. If approval is denied the *Travel Request Form* shall be returned to the employee.

No employee shall be allowed more than five (5) business days off per year for travel without prior written justification and approval by the Executive Director.

TRAVEL ROUTES

Travel to any approved destination shall be by the most direct, economical route and mode available considering dollar cost, travel time and work requirements.

Any individual, who for his/her convenience, travels by an indirect route or interrupts travels by a direct route, shall bear the additional expenses.

Reimbursement shall be based on such charges as would have been incurred by the most direct and economical route.

OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL

Authorization to travel outside Massachusetts will not be granted for more than the minimum number of employees necessary to achieve the intended purpose of the trip.

MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

The mode chosen should give primary consideration to cost, and secondarily, to convenience. Reservations for travel should be made through the least expensive arrangements feasible.

EXPENSES

All travel expenses must be fully supported by original receipts and documented on the *Travel and Itemized Expense Form*. The Executive Director, or designee, has final responsibility to determine the reasonableness of reported expenses. In cases where reported expenses are not documented by receipts, the Executive Director, or designee, has the authority to deny reimbursement.

ALLOWED TRAVEL EXPENSES

Air and Train Travel

Air and train travel must be economy class. Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the Executive Director, or designee, in advance.

All frequent flyer miles, bonus miles, travel points, promotional coupons or other items of consideration provided ("awards") by public carriers as a result of official travel are the property of the Commission. The employee shall be responsible for reporting awards earned to the Finance Department with submission of the *Travel and Itemized Expense Form*. Frequent flyer points, coupons or promotional awards must be used for future Commission travel by the employee, or by other Commission employees when allowed under the terms of the program.

Airline/railroad tickets, or any portion thereof, purchased but not used, must be promptly returned to the Chief Financial Officer. Lost or stolen tickets are the responsibility of the employee traveler.

Privately-Owned Motor Vehicles

Travel by personal vehicle is reimbursable only when it is more efficient, more suited, and more economical than the use of a Commission-owned vehicle or alternate transportation mode.

Travel by personal automobile is reimbursed at the current federal rate as stated in Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Publication 15-B or at the rate set by the employee's collective bargaining agreement, should a mileage rate be stated.

Toll and parking charges are allowed provided original receipts are submitted.

Commission-Owned Vehicles

If an employee is using a Commission-owned vehicle, the employee is reimbursed for operating expenses, provided original receipts are obtained, including:

- Gasoline
- Oil
- Minor emergency repairs
- Toll and parking charges

Rented Automobiles

Automobile rentals will only be reimbursed if public transportation or taxis are not practical or for emergency purposes. When rental of an automobile is required, it should be the most economical vehicle available.

The Executive Director, or designee, determines what constitutes an emergency.

Hotel Accommodations

The actual cost of hotel accommodations, including taxes, is reimbursed to the employee, provided original detailed receipts are submitted.

Whenever feasible, employees attending the same conference are encouraged to share lodging.

Employees are expected to stay at accommodations nearest the conference or event in order to minimize travel costs whenever possible, practical and economical.

It is the employee's responsibility to act with prudence and consider the Commission's financial position by obtaining the best rate available for hotel accommodations. A government rate should be requested, if available.

Meal Expenses

Reasonable meal expenses, excluding liquor, are reimbursed to the employee at their actual cost, up to a maximum of \$30.00 a day including taxes and tips, or a greater amount as approved by the Executive Director.

Reimbursement for meals without original receipts is at the rate of \$5.00 per meal. All meals at greater than \$5.00, including tax and tip, require receipts.

The costs of meals for one-day seminars or conferences will be borne by the employee.

MISCELLANEOUS TRAVEL EXPENSES

Telephone Calls

Business-related telephone calls will be reimbursed. The telephone number and party called should be noted on the *Travel and Itemized Expense Form*.

One personal telephone call per day up to \$10.00 is reimbursed.

Wi-Fi

Business related Wi-Fi expenses will be reimbursed.

Other

The Executive Director, or designee, makes determinations on the reimbursement of items not expressly mentioned.

DISALLOWED TRAVEL EXPENSES

Meals

Liquor expenses are not reimbursable.

Auto

No reimbursement is made for the cost of repairs to personal vehicles or for any automobile violations, regardless of the cause or nature. The mileage allowance is intended to cover all expenses incidental to automobile usage, excluding parking and tolls.

Cancellations

Costs incurred by failures to cancel hotel or transportation reservations are not reimbursable. Charges associated with unauthorized changes to, or cancellation of, non-refundable airline tickets are not reimbursable.

Family Travel

In instances where the employee's family travels with the employee, only the exact cost of the travel and accommodations for the employee is reimbursed by the Commission.

Lost/Stolen Property

The Commission does not reimburse employees for lost or stolen cash, tickets or property.

Personal Entertainment

No reimbursement is allowed for expenses related to personal entertainment. The following are specifically non-reimbursable:

- Movies
- Magazines and other personal reading materials
- Room service charges (other than meals)

Gifts by Sponsors of Conferences

Employees are reminded that they cannot accept any article of value \$50.00 or over from any outside agency, person or company while traveling on Commission business. No article of value can be accepted if that outside agency, person or company has business before the Commission. Articles of value may include complementary entertainment, meals, libation/beverages or other gifts. The best policy is to decline any offer of gifts or other articles of value.

REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

Employees will be fully reimbursed for all reasonable, documented costs as generally described in this Policy.

1. The employee must fill out, sign and submit the *Travel and Itemized Expense Form* with receipts and a copy of their *Travel Request Form* attached. Original documents will be retained by the Finance Department.
2. The *Travel and Itemized Expense Form* with attachments must be submitted to and signed by the appropriate senior staff member.
3. The Chief Financial Officer, or designee, must receive the completed *Travel and Itemized Expense Form* with attachments within thirty (30) working days of trip completion. If these forms are not filed within thirty (30) working days, the Chief Financial Officer, at his/her option, may withhold any reimbursement until the forms are received.
4. The Chief Financial Officer, or designee, shall review all reimbursement requests to verify that they are in accordance with Commission policy. The Chief Financial Officer shall submit to the Executive Director all travel-related claims that appear to violate Commission policy.

Upon request, the employee shall provide written justification for the travel (in memorandum form). Such justification should include a list of conferences or seminars, speaker and panels, and classes or other events attended with an explanation of the specific relevance of each to the Commission.

TRAVEL ADVANCES

Employees may apply for travel advances from the Chief Financial Officer or designee.

1. Requests must be supported by the appropriate approval and documentation of the use and amount of the requested funds.
2. Travel advances will be paid no earlier than seven (7) days prior to travel, other than situations requiring the prepayment of travel, lodging or conference related costs. If prepayment of a registration fee is required, the check should be made payable to the vendor. The employee should explicitly reference any prepayment on the *Travel and Itemized Expense Form*, so that travel costs, whether prepaid or reimbursed, will be listed on one form.
3. No more than one travel advance per employee may be outstanding at one time.

Reimbursements to employees for business expenses incurred are not reported to the Internal Revenue Service as income. Certain expenses not reimbursed to employees by the Commission may qualify as "business expenses" and, therefore, may be tax deductible. Issues of personal tax liability related to business expenses and reimbursements are the employee's responsibility.

NOTHING IN THIS POLICY SHALL BE CONSTRUED TO ENHANCE OR CONFLICT WITH THE RIGHTS OF BARGAINING UNIT EMPLOYEES UNDER THEIR RESPECTIVE AGREEMENTS WITH THE COMMISSION.

NOTHING CONTAINED WITHIN THIS POLICY SHALL CREATE EITHER AN IMPLIED OR EXPRESS EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT OR MODIFY OR WAIVE THE AT-WILL EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COMMISSION AND AN AT-WILL EMPLOYEE.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF POLICY

This Policy combines and supersedes two Commission policies, the (1) *Policy on Attendance at Conferences, Seminars, Training and Educational Events* and the (2) *Policy on Travel*. The former was originally approved and adopted by the Board of Commissioners at a meeting of the Board on June 20, 1989 and was revised at a meeting of the Board on October 16, 1997. The latter *Policy* was originally approved and adopted by the Board of Commissioners at a meeting of the Board on June 20, 1989, was revised at a meeting of the Board on September 26, 1995 and revised again at a meeting of the Board on February 19, 2009.

This *Policy on Conferences, Training and Travel* shall become effective on July 23, 2015 and shall remain in effect until amended or superseded by vote of the Commissioners of the Boston Water and Sewer Commission.