



## Guidance for Committee and Task Force<sup>1</sup> Expenses

Revised February 8, 2021

### Committee expenses

- In general, only committee expenses related to a specific City-sponsored event are allowed.
- Exceptions may be approved under the following conditions:
  - The expense is approved by the City Manager or designee and City Council prior to incurring the expense.
  - Existing budget has been identified to pay for the expense prior to incurring the expense.
  - It is an ordinary and necessary business expense related to a current committee activity and responsibility. This means the expense relates to the Committee's current or near-term existing workplan.
  - It is an allowed expense (see eligible expenses below).
  - If all the above conditions are met, the committee will refer the potential expense to the Council liaison. The Council liaison will then refer the expense to the Finance Director with a copy to the City Manager for final approval and payment. City staff must review and approve all invoices for payment.
- At times, committees and task forces may recommend hiring a consultant to provide specialized services. Because only City staff may commit City funds, any outside services must be procured and managed by City staff. Committee members may review and contribute to an RFP, review, and comment on responses to the RFP, and provide feedback on the deliverables. The final selection of the consultant must be approved by City staff and the contract signed by the City Manager prior to the commencement of services. If the amount exceeds the City Manager's approval limits, City Council must approve the contract.

### City-sponsored events

Events sponsored by City committees, such as the recent workshops planned and conducted by the Climate Change Advisory committee, are a valuable part of City outreach to the community. As City events, the following guidelines apply:

- Only City staff may commit City funds, for example arranging for rooms, buying supplies, ordering food and providing for copies of materials;
- In general, all persons shall exercise prudent judgement to avoid unnecessary City expenses
- City staff must review all written materials;
- City staff will provide tech support on the day of the event;

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<sup>1</sup> "Committee" and "Task Force" may be used synonymously for the purposes of this guidance.

- City staff must review and approve all invoices for payment;
- Committee members may assist with outreach;
- Committee members conceive of the event and present to Council liaison for City Council concurrence;
- City staff update the City website, add to City Manager's Message, include in COBI Connects, as appropriate;
- If held in City Hall, City staff set up and clean up.

#### Guidelines for committees:

The City Council must approve financial support for an event to be planned by a committee if an expense is to be incurred. The following information documents the approach to be followed.

Only City staff may make financial commitments on behalf of the City and the expenses must be preapproved and reasonable in amount. As committee members work with members of the public, they can share the following information:

In order to comply with our financial policies, the City must receive an invoice no later than 30 days after the services have been provided. Payment from the City is for services rendered, it is not an honorarium or grant, and in no way should be construed or implied as a gift of public funds.

The invoice should provide the following information:

- Organization/person providing the services, with address, phone number and email
- Date of services performed for the City
- Description of goods or services provided
- Amount
- Attached receipts as applicable if requesting reimbursement of an expense

Eligible expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Speaking fee
- Supplies, materials, advertising, etc. directly related to the event or a current committee activity
- Travel, meals, lodging, parking, etc.

Ineligible expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Alcohol, tobacco, or prohibited substances
- Gifts
- Honoraria
- Any expense not related to the event or current committee activity or responsibility (see Committee expense section above)
- The otherwise eligible expense is not reasonable in amount (e.g. \$500 for a stapler)
- Any expense incurred without authorized budget
- Fines, forfeitures, tickets or penalties incurred while performing committee work
- Theft or loss of personal items or property while performing committee work
- Expenses for any individual other than the speaker (family members, associates, etc.)
- Any expense with a real or perceived conflict of interest

If you have any questions about the use of City funds, please contact Finance Director DeWayne Pitts at 206-780-8626.

**Additional detail on City expense policy:**

Only City staff may commit City funds or make arrangements on behalf of the City. This protects the public, City and committee/task force members:

- Public: accountability for the use of public funds.
- City: ensures City and State regulations, policies and procedures (e.g., public records law, procurement, documentation, approval process, eligible/ineligible expenses) are followed; maintains vendor relations; ensures budget is authorized and appropriate fees are paid; depending on the type of item or service, adheres to labor agreements; mitigates risk in procurement, one of the areas examined yearly during the City's annual audit performed by the Washington State Auditor's office.
- Committee/task force members: ensures members do not accidentally buy or arrange for ineligible items or services and therefore be held personally liable for paying the expense out-of-pocket; does not require committee/task force members to pay for items and then wait to be reimbursed; does not require committee/task force members to submit personal records, such as credit card statements, as part of City financial records

While it is best for City staff to make arrangements and purchases, City Council members may choose to support City committees and task forces, for example by reserving locations or making inquiries on behalf of the City, in accordance with the approved work plan of the relevant group.