

Frequently Asked Questions Employee & Volunteers Ethics Handbook

Gifts

Q: What are the basic rules of accepting gifts?

A: First, ask yourself if the gift could create the appearance of undue influence or a conflict of interest. If it could, you may not accept the gift. If the gift would not create the appearance of undue influence or a conflict of interest, the gift may be kept with supervisor approval. If the gift has a reasonably estimated value of more than \$50, the gift must be disclosed on a form that is filed with the City Clerk Department.

Q: What's the difference between "reporting" and "disclosing"?

A: "Reporting" refers to discussing a gift with your supervisory chain. "Disclosing" refers to the specific process of filling out and filing a disclosure form with the City Clerk's office when a gift is accepted with a reasonably estimated value of over \$50.

Q: Can I accept holiday food from vendors/suppliers?

A: Yes, as long as the food can be shared amongst your workgroup and it does not create a conflict of interest. For example, if you have an open procurement, you cannot accept gifts from a bidder. You can, however, accept gifts from a vendor with whom your Department currently has a contract. If you can accept the group holiday gift because it does not create a conflict of interest, disclosure requirements do not apply.

Q: Can I accept entertainment or sports tickets from vendors/contractors/consultants?

A: No. Other than few exceptions approved by the City Manager's office, these are considered impermissible gifts.

Q: Can I accept gifts of alcohol, money, gift certificates, or gift cards from vendors/contractors/consultants?

A: No. These are considered impermissible gifts and no exceptions apply.

Q: Can I accept a gift from vendors/contractors/consultants, that's not an impermissible gift described above, if I'm a part of the procurement process or I oversee the contracted personnel?

A: No. If you have influence on the procurement process or oversee the contracted personnel, then you cannot accept gifts.

Q: Can I accept a gift from vendors/contractors/consultants, that's not an impermissible gift described above, if I'm NOT a part of the procurement process and I don't oversee the vendor?

A: Yes, unless accepting the gift would create the appearance of undue influence or a conflict of interest. Reporting and disclosure requirements apply.

Q: Do I need to file a gift disclosure if my travel is paid for by another government agency?

A: No, if another government agency is sponsoring an employee's travel a gift disclosure form does not need to be filed.

Q: Can I accept gifts from vendors/contractors/consultants for a City Sponsored charity, such as the Community Service Fund Drive?

A: Yes, unless the gift would create the appearance of undue influence or a conflict of interest.

Q: Can I accept a one-on-one type of lunch with vendors/contractors/consultants?

A: While you're permitted to have lunch with vendors/contractors/consultants, you must pay for your own meal.

Q: Can I accept holiday gifts from my co-workers?

A: Yes.

Q: Can I put my business card into bowls that businesses (typically restaurants) use as a raffle to win free food?

A: While not expressly forbidden, the City doesn't encourage this practice.

Q: Can I accept money or other honoraria for speaking at an event as a City employee?

A: No. However, you could accept incidental items such as coffee mugs, shirts, stress balls, etc., that are offered to all of the attendees at the event. Disclosure rules apply if the total value of the item(s) is reasonably estimated to be over \$50.

Travel, Conferences, Events, etc. FAQs

Q: Can I accept travel, conference, or training, funded by a third party, at a reduced cost or at no charge to the City?

A: Yes, with Department or Function Head approval. Disclosure rules apply.

Q: Can I participate in all activities, events, and meals while attending a conference or event?

A: Yes, as long as these activities, events, and meals are equally offered to all participants.

Q: Can I accept food and refreshments at meetings, events, or conferences?

A: Yes, as long as the food is equally available to all participants.

Q: If I'm at a conference or event and there is a free raffle, can I enter the raffle and accept the prize if I win?

A: You may enter the raffle and accept the prize with your supervisor's permission. Reporting requirements will apply if the prize has a reasonably estimated value of more than \$50.

Q: If I'm at a conference or event and there is a raffle that I have to pay my own money to enter, can I enter the raffle and accept the prize if I win?

A: You may enter the raffle and accept the prize. Since you paid to enter, this is not considered a gift and no gift requirements apply.

Conflicts of Interest FAQs

Q: Can I hire or be on an interview panel for someone I have a personal relationship with?

A: No. If asked to be on an interview panel for someone you have a close personal relationship with, you should recuse yourself.

Q: Can I supervise a relative or a romantic partner?

A: No. You cannot directly supervise a relative, partner, or a romantic partner. This includes occasional or out-of-class supervision of employees (i.e., a Street Maintenance Supervisor is off on the weekends, so another supervisor oversees the employee on the weekend. The weekend supervisor would not be permitted to supervise a relative or a romantic partner). If you do not directly supervise, but are in the chain of command of someone who is a relative or romantic partner, you must report this relationship to your supervisor or human resources so your department can decide how to manage the situation. If a romantic relationship develops between a supervisor and an employee who directly reports to that supervisor, or, a relative or romantic partner is placed into a position the supervisor oversees, the supervisor must report the relationship to their supervisor or human resources.

Q: Can I work with a relative, partner, or someone I'm in a romantic relationship with?

A: Yes, as long as neither employee can influence the other's employment.

Q: Can I discuss information that is not available to the public about a recruitment with people I'm in a personal relationship with or people not employed by the City who are or may be participating in the recruitment?

A: No. An employee cannot share any information that would not be available to the public, such as who applied, interview questions, the hiring matrix, who is on the interview panel, etc.

Q: Can I participate in a procurement process for a vendor with whom I have a personal relationship?

A: No. If you're asked to do so, you should recuse yourself from the process.

Q: Can I have outside employment?

A: It depends. All outside employment must be approved in advance to make sure that there is not a conflict of interest between your outside employment and your position as a City employee. Outside employment includes running your own business. You must report outside employment on the Notice of Outside Employment form attached to A.R. 2.62, Work Notices for Outside Employment.

Q: Can I discuss future employment with a City vendor or potential City vendor?

A: No. You cannot in your role as a City employee. If a City vendor or potential City vendor discusses future employment or offers you a position, you must disclose it to your supervisor. You may, of course, apply to work for a City vendor or potential City vendor and go through a normal interview process.