



#### 4.07 AWARDS, PRIZES AND PROMOTIONAL ITEMS

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**Purpose**

State law prohibits a public official or employee from using, or attempting to use, his or her official position or office to obtain a financial gain or for the avoidance of a financial detriment that would not otherwise be available but for the public official's or employee's holding of the official position or office. This excludes official salary, honoraria, the reimbursement of expenses or an unsolicited award for professional achievement for the public official. City employees must consider ethical principles before accepting personal gifts or prizes.

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**When Can a Public Employee Accept a Prize?**

No City employee shall accept any gift, service, or favor which would lead toward favoritism, or the appearance of favoritism in any way. The underlying question regarding whether a public employee can accept a prize should be: "**Would keeping this prize cause the employee to enjoy a financial gain or avoid a financial detriment that would not have occurred but for his/her position as a public employee?**" Attached is an [Ethics in Government Flowchart](#) to assist in this decision-making process. The attached is not part of the binding human resources administrative rule.

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**Awards**

Employee awards, up to a maximum of \$50 each, are allowable and reimbursable. Such awards may be the form of :

- Cash
- Flowers
- Gifts
- Other appropriate incentives

Bureaus should take care that such awards remain occasional and motivational rather than becoming expected.

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**Travel Incentives**

[See the Administrative Rule on Travel.](#)

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**Prizes, Awards, and Promotional Items**

Prizes and awards offered to attendees of conferences, seminars or professional gatherings as a result of attendance or for winning a contest or a game of skill or chance may be kept by the employee. Placards, trophies or certificates in recognition of service or attendance may also be retained by the employee.

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Prizes and awards that constitute personal financial benefit (value over \$100) should not be accepted unless acceptance is advantageous to the City. If such prizes or awards are accepted, they become the property of the City and must be presented to the employee's bureau director for disposition. The agency director may keep the item for use by the agency, or may dispose of it through the City's surplus and charitable contribution procedures as defined by [City Code Section 5.36](#).

Promotional items are items of little or no value (under \$100.00) that are offered uniformly to all attendees or that are meant to be used during the course of the event are excluded from this rule. Examples include pens, pencils, notebooks, notepads, cloth or canvas bags, snack foods, etc. Employees attending conferences, seminars or professional gatherings may keep these promotional items for their personal use.

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**Economic Development,  
Community Cooperation,  
and Information Gathering**

In order to promote economic development, build community cooperation or gather information, elected officials or their designees may be reimbursed for business meals, flowers, or official gifts. Reimbursements shall be on an actual cost basis, documented by receipts which state the date, name of recipient, the nature of the business or relationship with the city, and the public interest reason for the expense.

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**References**

[City of Portland Code of Ethics  
Travel Rules](#)

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**Administrative Rule  
History**

Adopted by Council March 6, 2002, Ordinance No. 176302  
Effective April 5, 2002

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## WHEN CAN A PUBLIC EMPLOYEE ACCEPT A PRIZE?

*Underlying Question: Would keeping this prize cause the employee to enjoy a financial gain or avoid a financial detriment that would not have occurred but for his/her position as a public employee?*

