



4.07 AWARDS, PRIZES AND PROMOTIONAL ITEMS

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 compensation, reimbursement of expenses or an unsolicited award for professional achievement for the public official. City employees must consider ethical principles before accepting, personal gifts, awards or prizes.

When Can a Public Employee Accept a Gift or Prize?

While state law does not restrict gifts from sources that do not have a legislative or administrative interest in the City and gifts of \$50 or less from sources that have a legislative or administrative interest in the City, this rule imposes additional restrictions on the receipt of gifts or honoraria by City employees. City employees should not accept gifts or honoraria of any value that are offered due to their position and work for the City. This does not apply to promotional items of little or no value. 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 an item or service should be: **"Would keeping this item, or using this service 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.

Awards

Unsolicited employee awards for professional achievement, up to a maximum of \$100.00 per employee, are allowable and reimbursable. Such awards may take the form of :

- Cash
- Flowers
- Gifts
- Other appropriate incentives commonly used for employee recognition and motivation

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

Employee awards that are provided as part of a Council endorsed City-wide program as official compensation or as unsolicited awards for professional achievement may exceed \$100.00, if such awards are essential to the success of the particular program.

Retirement Awards and Celebrations

The cost of recognition receptions for retiring employees, at which food and beverages are provided, but not as a sit down, plated meal, are reimbursable and may exceed \$100.00. Awards of appreciation for retirees in the form of plaques, trophies, desk items, wall mementos, or similar items with a resale value reasonably expected to be less than \$25.00 are allowed. If such item is engraved or personalized, it is deemed to have a resale value of less than \$25.00. The total cost of the reception and plaque must be within established bureau guidelines approved by the Elected Official-in-charge and cannot exceed \$500.00.

Bureau award ceremonies open to the public are also reimbursable and the total cost of food and beverages and awards may exceed \$100.00, provided they are within bureau established guidelines and approved by the Elected Official-in-charge.

Travel Incentives

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

Prizes, Awards, and Promotional Items

Placards, trophies or certificates in recognition of service or attendance at conferences or seminars may also be retained by the employee, provided that such items are reasonably expected to have a resale value of less than \$25.

Prizes and awards with a value greater than \$50 that an employee receives when serving as a public official may only be accepted as a gift 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 bureau director may keep the item for use by the bureau, or may dispose of it through the City's surplus and charitable contribution procedures as defined by [City Code Section 5.36](#).

Employees may accept promotional items of little or no value (under \$50.00) that are offered uniformly to all attendees or that are meant to be used during the course of the event. 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.

Under no circumstances may an employee accept prizes and awards with a cumulative value of more than \$50 per year from a single source that has a legislative or administrative interest in the City.

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.

References

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

Administrative Rule History

Adopted by Council March 6, 2002, Ordinance No. 176302
Effective April 5, 2002
Revised July 9, 2007
Revised May 9, 2008

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?

