

General Policy - Food and Beverage Policy

Policy:

As a general rule, reimbursement for costs of a meal for employees who are not on an overnight trip or on travel status may not be paid or reimbursed by the college. However, employees may be reimbursed and departments may pay for food and beverages, including meals, non-alcoholic beverages or snacks, from department budgets, subject to the limits and regulations below.

Limits and Regulations:

A. College Meetings/Events

1. Purchase of beverages and/or snacks is allowed for hosting dignitaries, guests, seminars, conferences, and other college-sponsored events.
2. Purchase of beverages and/or snacks is allowed for departmental meetings and other employee functions that exceed 3 hours in length.
3. Purchase of meals is allowed for meetings and events where non-employees are also in attendance (e.g. hosting dignitaries, guests, seminars, conferences and other college-sponsored events).
4. Purchase of meals for employee-only meetings is limited to one staff retreat per year for any one department/unit.
5. Departments may not use public funds to purchase alcoholic beverages.
6. Departments are expected to be prudent with state resources when purchasing food and beverages.
7. Departments are expected to utilize BSC Food Service for beverages, snacks and meals for all events held in BSC facilities, as defined in the [Facilities Usage Policy](#).

B. External Meetings/Events

1. College Paid: A department may pay the reasonable cost of employee meals (in non-travel status), in lieu of individual employee claim for reimbursement, if the meal is part of a conference, seminar or other meeting attended at the request of and on behalf of the college or NDUS. In this case, the employee may not claim the actual cost or applicable quarter allowance.

2. **Employee Reimbursed:** Employees may claim reimbursement for meals that are included as part of a registration fee for a conference, seminar or other meetings attended at the request of and on behalf of the college or NDUS, whether in travel status or not. If the reasonable cost of the meal exceeds the applicable quarter allowance, an employee may claim reimbursement for the actual, reasonable cost of the meal, and it is not taxable.
3. Examples of events for which expenses may be paid or employees reimbursed include:
 - a. The college hosts SBHE meetings or system council or user group meetings, the college may pay the reasonable cost of meals, snacks and beverages for board members, institution representatives, and guests in attendance. Employees and board members may not claim reimbursement from their respective institutions.
 - b. If an employee is asked by the College to attend a Chamber breakfast/luncheon meeting, they may claim the actual reasonable cost of the meal.
4. Examples of events for which expenses may not be paid or reimbursed include:
 - a. Expense for an employee meal if an employee elects not to attend a meal paid for or reimbursed as part of a conference fee.
 - b. Expense for a meal not part of an event (i.e., if an employee not in travel status attends a local seminar or meeting and they break for "lunch on your own").
 - c. Expenses for employee spouses or other family members.

Procedures:

1. When meals are purchased under item section A.3. above, the department must include with the interdepartmental billing or request for payment, an explanation or list of the non-employees in attendance at the event.
2. When meals are purchased under item section A.4. above, the department must include with the interdepartmental billing or request for payment, an explanation of the nature of the retreat and which departments/units were in attendance.
3. When meals are purchased through the Mystic Marketplace line, the employee/department charging the meals must present the cashier with a completed [Mystic Marketplace Meal Department Charge Form](#) at the time of the charge.
4. When meals are paid under section B., the following documentation is required: explanation of the nature of the meeting, conference, seminar, etc.; location; date and approximate time; meal served (i.e., breakfast, lunch, dinner); receipt or invoice; and a list of the individuals (when practical) and/or institutions in attendance.
5. The meals paid or reimbursed to the employee under section B. are not considered taxable to the employee (even if not in travel status) if the cost is reasonable and the meal is part of a meeting or other event scheduled for the primary purpose of conducting business where the employee is required or asked to attend on behalf of the college or system or as part of an employee's duties.

Expenses under this policy must be reasonable, moderate, and withstand the test of public scrutiny. The U.S. General Services Administration meal per diem rates shall be used as a guideline for determining reasonableness for cost of meals. Payment or reimbursement of costs that exceed 125% of U.S. General Services Administration rates may be approved only in exceptional circumstances, subject to written documentation including an explanation for why the expense was reasonable and justified. Employees are not required to document individual employee orders and calculations may be based on an average cost for all participants.

References:

SBHE Policy 806.1, OMB Policy 215, NDCC Section 44-08-04

History of This Policy:

First policy drafted September 3, 2009. Reviewed by the Operations Council on September 11, 2009 and approved by the Executive Council on September 11, 2009.

Revisions - Reviewed by the Operations Council on February 13, 2012 and approved by the Executive Council on February 16, 2012; March 27, 2017; reviewed by the Operations Council on April 26, 2017 and approved by the Executive Council on May 3, 2017; March 13, 2019.