807.1 - Communication Equipment & Services

Purpose:

The purpose of this operational procedure is to outline Bismarck State College’s process for the use of communication equipment and services.

Procedure:

For any employee a department identifies as having an ongoing business need for mobile communication equipment/services (See “Business Need” later in this operational procedure for guidance in making these determinations.), the department may choose between three options. Please note that the department is not required to choose the same option for all departmental employees. The employee has no authority in this election.

Option 1: Employee-Provided Equipment/Service

Departments may provide a stipend that will cover the business use of communication equipment and services. The stipend will be in the form of continuous payments. It is understood that the employee’s stipend is sufficient to cover the business use of the equipment/service. There is no additional reimbursement for business use (e.g., occasional roaming charges). This arrangement allows for personal use of the equipment/service. The equipment remains the property of the employee. Departments may provide only the rate plan appropriate for the business use associated with the employee’s college function. Employees wanting to enhance the rate plan for personal use may do so at their own expense. Technical support will be provided only for PDAs approved by the Information Technology Solutions and Services (ITSS) department (see “Exclusions and Other Arrangements”)

Option 2: College-Provided Equipment/Service, Individually Assigned

The College acquires the communication equipment/service and assigns it to a specific individual who may use it for business use only. The equipment remains the property of the College. At the request of the supervisor or at employee’s separation, the employee must return the equipment (this is also the case when changing from this option to Option 1). (Examples: custodial staff, residence supervisors, mail services staff)

When the College is providing the communication equipment/service, the lowest cost option available to accommodate the particular business need shall be utilized.
Option 3: College-Provided Equipment/Service, Departmentally Assigned
The College acquires the communication equipment/service and assigns it to a specific department who may use it for business use only. Shared devices present special challenges since they are not continuously controlled by one person. These are typically assigned to a group of persons on a rotating or shift basis, or to individuals for a specific period of time (e.g., travel or off-campus events

When the College is providing the communication equipment/service, the lowest cost option available to accommodate the particular business need shall be utilized.

Business Need:
Cell phones or PDAs should not be selected as an alternative to other means of communication -- e.g., landlines, pagers, radio phones, laptops -- when such alternatives would provide adequate but less costly service to the college.

To qualify for the technology allowance or university-owned mobile device, the employee must have a supervisor that includes at least one of the following:

- 1. A requirement to travel frequently to do business, across a geographic area away from the home office, and great amounts of time are spent in transit.
- 2. A requirement for communication about college business when the employee is away from his/her office or worksite during the day or after hours.
- 3. A requirement for communication regarding college business when the employee’s job responsibilities require him/her to be away from a landline during the day.
- 4. A requirement for frequent, immediate, or emergency communications throughout the day or after hours regarding critical programs, services, or systems.
- 5. A requirement to respond to emergencies related to students throughout the day or after hours regarding critical needs.

Use of College-provided communication equipment/service in any manner that is contrary to local, state, or federal laws constitutes misuse and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including confiscation of communication equipment/service, and termination of employment. Communication Equipment Service Agreement

Plan Rates for Stipends (Option 1):
If the business need for the mobile device is either 1, 2, 3 or 4 above; it is strongly encouraged for the employee to use their personal mobile device and receive a stipend. The rates for mobile communication device stipends are produced by Executive VP on an
The stipend is not intended to cover the actual cost of the service selected, by the employee. Employees are thereby free to choose services and equipment that exceed their business needs (i.e., upgrade for personal reasons). Only one technology allowance is permitted per employee during any given pay period. Technology allowances are not allowed during any month when the employee is ineligible or is not earning pay.

To obtain a technology allowance, the employee must complete Communication Equip – Service Agreement_ Stipend and submit it to the supervisor for review and approval. The Supervisor must complete the payroll change order form- Include earnings code H92 and justification.

Upon approval of the technology allowance, the supervisor routes the Communication Equip – Service Agreement_ Stipend form to accounting services and the payroll change order form to Payroll Services. The technology allowance will be charged as salary, not as an operating expense. The standard approval process for budget reallocation would apply should reallocation be necessary.

The request for an allowance must be submitted to Human Resources annually prior to the beginning of each fiscal year. This annual submission of paperwork gives HR and departments an opportunity to review the mobile device needs of each employee although ongoing departmental monitoring is advisable.

Because technology allowances are based on a specific position, a new authorization and approval by the supervisor to HR is required when an employee changes position.

**Reimbursement of Personal Use (Option 2 and 3):**
To obtain a university-owned mobile device, the requester must complete the Communication Equip – Service Agreement_ Individual or Department Form and submit it to the supervisor for review and approval. If approved the supervisor routes the Communication Equip-Services Agreement Individual or Department Form to Accounting Services. Accounting Services will work with the department, employee, and mobile carrier to identify an appropriate mobile device and wireless plan.

**Department Responsibilities:**
Department heads are ultimately responsible for the use of communication equipment/services, including:

- Making the initial recommendation on whether a stipend is paid, or equipment is provided to an employee and on what basis.
• Selecting appropriate services based on business use.
  • Annually reviewing existing equipment/services to ensure they are needed and represent the best options (most economical) given the business use.

At the request of a supervisor or upon the employee’s separation, all BSC-owned equipment (including chargers, extra batteries, hands-free devices, etc.) is returned to the department or purchasing agent and service is cancelled.

Applicability:

This policy applies to all BSC faculty, staff, and student employees who require use of a mobile communication device to perform their job responsibilities.

References:

NDCC 54-06-26
NDCC 16.1-10-02
IRS Publication 15-B

History:

First policy drafted on October 30, 2009, reviewed by the Operations Council on November 9, 2009 and approved by the Executive Council on December 3, 2009.
Revisions – January 5, 2012; July 30, 2013, October 18, 2016; September 24, 2019; reviewed by the Operations Council on March 11, 2020 and approved by the Executive Council on April 6, 2020

Changed to Operational Procedure and approved by President November 28th, 2023.