



Policy for Food in the Workplace and Celebratory Events

Central Administration Staff and Units

Policy Statements

There are certain occasions that warrant the provision of food and meals at meetings and/or celebratory events for staff members. This policy outlines the criteria and provisional guidelines to aid departments in efficiently managing these benefits.

This policy should be managed out of the current operating budget of the department and should not have incremental budget impact. Amounts per person noted in here are the maximum; lower amounts are encouraged at the department's discretion.

Business Meals (Restaurant, Catered, and Take-out Meals)

- Business meals are meals with faculty, staff, students, donors or other external parties during which specific documented business discussions take place.
- Employees are expected to exercise fiscal responsibility when choosing restaurants.
- The below guidelines are “up-to” guidelines and are inclusive of tax and tip. The expectation is that catered and take-out meal per person pricing is typically lower than restaurant pricing:
 - Breakfast \$15 maximum per person
 - Lunch \$30 maximum per person
 - Dinner \$75 maximum per person
- NOTE: Central Administration does not allow for managers and staff to regularly take each other out for meals at Harvard's expense. These types of meals are done at the expense of the employees involved.

Internal Meetings and Celebratory Events

Central Administration Units may have different preferences for celebratory events and food in the workplace. Working within approved per person budget parameters, departments have flexibility to pursue different approaches. Please work with your local finance or administrative leader to understand the desired approaches, the available budget, and local approval processes. **General per person thresholds for the below items range from \$5-\$25 per person unless noted specifically below.**

1. Internal Meetings

- For longer meetings, please make an effort to not schedule them over a mealtime when possible.
- For longer meetings that do overlap with a mealtime:
 - If the meetings only include internal team members, please encourage a brown bag lunch.
 - For larger meetings that include participants from other groups or outside of Harvard, please first consult with your finance or administrative leader if you are considering providing food at the meeting. It should not be the norm to offer food at meetings, but there may be an exceptional reason to do so.

- ##### 2. New Staff – New hires/permanent employees (not including temps, students, and contractors) may be provided with a welcome meal. The welcome meeting can be done in a number of ways but each Central Administration Unit is asked to create and implement a consistent policy across all departments. For example:



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- New hires can be taken out for a reasonable meal with their direct managers. At the discretion of the department budget, managers may invite additional attendees whose meals will be covered.
 - Departments can hold a semi-annual or annual (in office) new hire welcome breakfast/luncheon, hosted by the VP or Senior Management to welcome all new hires that have started during that period. This can be integrated into the on-boarding program.
3. Celebratory Events – Central Administration Units may spend modest pre-approved amounts from appropriate funding sources to recognize employees under certain circumstances.

The use of university funds for a celebratory event is allowable for the following occasions:

- **Celebrations for departing or retiring employees.**
 - The size of the event should correspond with years of service and position level. When possible, these celebrations should include multiple departing or retiring employees. For guidance on gifts for departing or retiring employees, please refer to the Central Administration “Policy for Gifts.”
- **Occasional employee morale-building events.**
 - Examples include a department-wide luncheon or similar departmental event (e.g., summer employee picnic, annual departmental retreat, office happy hour).
- **Holiday Parties.**
 - Spending for holiday parties should not exceed \$50 per person for unit-wide events. Central Administration Units have discretion on whether they have both a Unit-wide and local department holiday parties. Please first consult with your finance or administrative leader if you are considering having a local department holiday party.

Use an appropriate funding source.

- a) Federally sponsored funds should never be used to charge morale-building events, alcoholic beverages, or celebratory events.
- b) Non-federally sponsored funds may be used only if the budget specifically includes such an expense.
- c) Departmental restricted funds may be used only if within the fund terms.
- d) Departmental unrestricted funds may be used at the discretion of the department within the criteria of the policy and within the approved budget.

Reason for Policy

Centralized policies for providing food and events to employees will improve operational practices while encouraging responsible budget management. Food and celebratory events can be an important benefit that reinforces good practices such as team building, raising morale and inspiring motivation. Inconsistent policies create negative perspectives between departments and senior administrators in Central Administration.

Who Must Comply

All Harvard Central Administration staff, departments and units regardless of funding source.

Exceptions

- Exceptions for food at internal meetings can be made for:
 - Holidays and Weekends
 - Project-based meetings that require staff to remain on location



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Responsibilities and Contacts

Central Administration Units and department finance and administrative leaders are responsible for ensuring that all Central Administration staff complies with this policy.

Central Finance and Administration (CFA) is responsible for final approval when arbitration is needed. CFA is also responsible for reviewing the policy on an annual basis and making updates when needed.

Note to Finance Staff: Payment for Food & Meals at meetings should be under object codes: 8450 "Expenses Ineligible for Federal Reimbursement," 8060 "Catering Services, GENERAL" and/or 6570, "Food & Nonalcoholic beverages." All celebratory events should be charged to object code 8450 "Expenses Ineligible for Federal Reimbursement."

Related Resources

The University Financial Policy website: <http://policies.fad.harvard.edu/>
