Business Meals and Hospitality

Introduction
This policy states the requirements for business meal and hospitality expense reimbursements.

Policy Statement
Business Meals

- Brown University reimburses employees for business meal expenses.
- All University funds— including gifts, grants, and contracts—shall be used in a reasonable and prudent manner and only for activities related to Brown’s primary mission of education, research and public service.
- Meal expenditures that exceed guidelines require Senior Officer approval. A Senior Officer is a member of the President’s Cabinet.
- Non-routine business meals (holiday event, summer outing, etc.) may be reimbursed with sufficient explanation or with a Senior Officer approval. Expenses incurred in relation to the following events are not reimbursable: birthdays, weddings, births, showers, etc.
- The number of Brown hosts accompanying a guest for lunch or dinner should be no more than six (exclusive of students). * If the event is hosted at the Faculty Club, additional Brown hosts are permitted.
- Reimbursement for family members is not permitted unless there is a specific business purpose for the family member’s attendance at the event. IRS publication 463 states: “you generally cannot deduct the cost of entertainment for your spouse or for the spouse of a customer. However, you can deduct these costs if you can show you had a clear business purpose, rather than a personal or social purpose, for providing the entertainment.”
  - At Brown University, a business purpose for a spouse’s attendance at an event includes:
    - an event/meal with a donor
    - an event/meal where the visitor brings his/her spouse, or
    - a department social event

Alcoholic Beverages

Alcoholic beverages may be allowable as part of a business meal except when charged to federally sponsored funds.

When procuring and serving alcoholic beverages at University sponsored events, and in order to be reimbursed, faculty and staff must comply with University policies on alcoholic usage: Brown University Alcohol and Other Drug Policy and the Student Activities Office Event Planning guidelines.

- At no time may alcoholic beverages be served to minors.
- The use of alcoholic beverages while in the conduct of University business should be kept to a minimum.
- In no instance may alcoholic beverages be charged to federally funded grants or contracts, either directly or indirectly.
- Travel Meals and Alcoholic beverages: The cost of alcoholic beverages must be charged to the Exclusions spend item. It may not be charged to travel meals.
- When planning events on campus where alcoholic beverages are served, use of Brown Dining Services, an outside caterer approved by Brown Dining Services, or the Brown Faculty Club is preferred.
- If alcohol is purchased for informal University department functions, the reimbursement request
must include the Responsibility for Alcoholic Beverages Form.

- Serving alcoholic beverages at a University event held off campus, such as in an employee’s private home, is strongly discouraged. In such instances where alcoholic beverages are to be available, the sponsor of the event must complete and have approved the statement of Responsibility for Alcoholic Beverages form, and attach the form to the request for reimbursement.

**Definitions**

*Business meals* are those taken with business associates, university guests, job applicants, professional colleagues, or donors, during which University business discussions take place or hospitality is extended to distinguished guests.

- Meals between two or more employees during which routine business issues are discussed are not reimbursable, however,
- Business meals taken with employees when, to ensure privacy and confidentiality, business must be conducted off campus, may be reimbursed.
- When authorized by the department head, business meals may also be taken for the purpose of employee recognition or reward.

**Procedures**

- Business Meals are reimbursed in Workday using the Create Expense Report business process.
  - Receipts are required for all business meals and entertainment expenses.
    - Use a Missing Receipt Affidavit Form if a receipt has been lost or misplaced.
  - The date of the expense item is the date of the transaction.
  - List attendees: a large group can be identified as a group i.e., *Model United Nations Group*
  - Number of Persons: The number will default in from the number of attendees listed. If the attendees are identified as a group, override the default number with the number of actual attendees.
  - Business Reason: Detailed reason for the business meal, i.e., *Lunch for attendees at the Model United Nations session at Brown.*
  - Merchant: Location of the business meal, i.e., *Parkside Rotisserie and Bar, Providence*
- Business meals must be charged to the business meals expense item and may not be charged to any travel expense item.

**Forms/Instructions**

- Missing Receipt Affidavit Form
- Meals and Hospitality Form
Responsibility for Alcoholic Beverages Form

Annual Spending Guidelines

Frequently Asked Questions

A clear, detailed business purpose that adequately describes the business meal expense as a necessary, reasonable and appropriate (business) expense for the University is required. All reimbursable expenses must support or advance the goals, objectives and mission of the University.

Can you provide guidelines on what types of meals are business meals?

Business meal expenses would include:

- Those taken with external business associates, university guests, job applicants, professional colleagues, or donors, during which University business discussions take place or hospitality is extended to distinguished guests.
- Meals taken between employees when, to ensure privacy and confidentiality, business must be conducted out of the office.
- Business meals may not be routine discussions about research, teaching, or department duties and responsibilities.
- Business meals may also be taken for the purpose of employee or student recognition/reward, team building activities, and to welcome new employees or students. These must be approved by the department head and may not be regularly occurring events.
- Business meals include meals at programs held to encourage student and scholar collaboration. Routinely providing meals at these programs is discouraged.
- Business meals include those that support student activities and student athletic events.

What do I do if the expenditure exceeds Brown University’s guidelines for business meals?

If your expenditure exceeds the University’s guidelines, you will need to obtain Sr. Officer approval for the reimbursement. Attach the approval, which can be an email, to the supplier invoice.

When would I use the spend category Business Meals vs. Food and Provisions?

- Use Business Meals when dining in a restaurant or when purchasing meals/sandwiches from a grocery store (Spend Category: 3210)
- Use Food and Provisions when purchasing food supplies for office use (Spend Category: 3230)
- Use Catering Services when paying an outside caterer directly (Spend Category: 3317)

My department is hosting a conference. Does the business meals policy apply?

A conference is a large, formal meeting with a clearly defined agenda where attendees register for the event. Expenses associated at conferences hosted at Brown are charged to Conference Expense: Spend Category 3130. The Business Meals and Hospitality policy does not apply.

Related Policies

- Brown University Alcohol and Other Drug Policy
- Event Planning
- Travel Policy: Air Travel
- Travel Policy: Ground Transportation
- Travel Policy: Lodging
- Travel Policy: Miscellaneous Expenses
- Travel Policy: Senior Staff Travelling Together
- Travel Policy: Travel and Business Meals
- Travel Policy: Traveler and Approver Responsibilities
- Visitor Travel Reimbursement

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