

Financial Services*University Accounting Services***Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions (Scenario-Based Guide)**

These FAQs are intended to assist with determining whether state-side funding can be used to support hospitality related expenditures.

Employee-Only Events

Q1: I am a supervisor and would like to host a lunch meeting (12-1PM) for the staff within my department/work location to discuss our goals for the month. Can I use state funds to pay for hospitality for this meeting?

A1: No, hospitality cannot be provided to employees from the same work location unless the meeting is lasting longer than 4 hours and employees are expected to work through the meal period. This scenario does not meet the criteria.

Q2: I am hosting a one-day effective leadership training for employees from different work locations. It is an all-day training session on campus with a consultant providing a presentation during the lunch hour. I would like to provide lunch to the training attendees, so we may continue working through the lunch hour. Can I use state funds to pay for this meeting?

A2: Yes, since the event has a university business purpose, hosts employees from different work locations, the meal is an essential part of the event (scheduled speaker during the meal period and the meeting is longer than 4 hours) and hospitality provided is infrequent in occurrence (12 times or less per calendar year per group or committee).

Q3: I am on travel status and would like to provide hospitality to my colleagues, who are also on travel status, after an event. I am having a meeting that includes my staff and some employees from another work location. I have arranged to have dinner brought in, since it was not provided during the event, and it is more cost effective to do so. Can I use state funds to provide hospitality?

A3: Yes, since the majority of attendees are on travel status, and it is more cost effective to provide hospitality versus a meal.

Q4: I am hosting a half day meeting for employees that concludes around 1 p.m. I would like to provide box lunches for the participants to return to their desks to eat. Can I use state funds to provide hospitality?

A4: No, the University does not pay for meals for staff during a normal workday unless the meeting is longer than 4 hours and the employees are expected to work through lunch. Additionally, alternate work schedules can be accommodated to allow staff to take their lunch hour after the conclusion of the meeting. Therefore, when alternative work schedules are available, no lunch may be provided.

Q5: I am a division AVP, and I would like to host a reception for the length of service awards presentation for retiring staff. I would like to provide attendees with light refreshments, may I use state funds to pay for this?

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A5: Yes, light refreshments and awards related to a length of service reception for employees separating with at least 5 years of service may be paid for using state funds.

Q6: My division will be working on Friday (eve), Saturday, and Sunday to help during Commencement weekend. The employee volunteers are expected to work more than 6 hours outside their normal work schedules each day. Can we use state funds to purchase food for the staff?

A6: Yes, this is allowed if the employees are expected to work more than 6 hours outside of their normal work schedule. Therefore, if their normal work schedule is M-F 8am-5pm, working 6 or more hours after 5pm on Friday and 6 or more hours on Saturday and Sunday would allow for food to be provided using state funds.

Q7: My college is organizing a fundraising event through the Foundation, with the goal of fundraising for the college and extending the brand to the community. Can the department purchase a table as a sponsorship at the event with state funds?

A7: No since the University is not an official host of the event this would not be permissible under the hospitality procedures. Furthermore, sponsorships cannot be paid for with state funds, as it is seen as a donation or a gift of public funds, which is not allowed by the CSU.

Q8: We would like to sponsor an event of a local Not-for-Profit, in exchange for our logo on the event flyers, table, etc. Can we use state funds for this sponsorship under the hospitality procedure?

A8: No, state funds cannot be used to sponsor an event of another organization under the hospitality procedure since we are not the official host, and a sponsorship is not considered a hospitality type expense. Sponsorships cannot be paid for with state funds, as it is seen as a donation or a gift of public funds, which is not allowed by the CSU.

Q9: Our department is hosting a professional development event for all faculty and staff and would like to obtain an entertainer (magician, dancers, DJ, etc.) for the event to keep the crowd "happy" and engaged in between event activities. Is this permissible under the hospitality policy?

A9: No, this expense does not serve a business purpose as it is only for entertainment and not an integral part of the event.

Q10: Our department is hosting a 2-day coaching workshop. In attendance, there will be 14 faculty, 1 staff and an outside facilitator (vendor). The 14 faculty and 1 staff person are from the same department and are not expected to work through the lunch period. Can hospitality be provided for this event using state funds?

A10: No, although there is an outside facilitator involved in the event, they are acting in a vendor capacity (i.e., as a guest speaker, facilitator, consultant) and are not considered a participant in the event; therefore, employees from the same work location cannot use state funds to pay for hospitality expenses for this event.

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Events Including Non-Employees and/or Students

Q11: Our department is hosting a “holiday celebration” that will include alumni/donors and will also recognize a lecturer for 30 years of service. The event invitation includes 14 faculty/staff and 4 alumni. Can the department use state funds to pay for hospitality related to the event?

A11: No, this event includes a donor appreciation, holiday celebration and a staff appreciation component, using state funds for this event will not be allowed for several reasons: 1) donor appreciation events require that the preponderance of attendees of such event be donors and alumni versus faculty/staff; 2) holiday celebrations are not considered a valid business purpose; 3) although a few donors were in attendance, this does not support that the primary purpose of the event was for networking or recognition.

Q12: A guest speaker will be presenting on campus during an event and will be staying at a hotel the night of the event to fly out the next morning. Can we provide a meal to the speaker for dinner after the event using state funds under the hospitality policy?

A12: No, vendors cannot be provided a meal since this is considered additional compensation.

Q13: We would like to provide hospitality (working meal, light refreshments, etc.) to our departments external reviewers who will be on campus for two days for the program review. The external reviewers’ schedule is very tight, and we are providing them with a working meal to have the reviewers work through lunch. Providing lunch would give the reviewers the opportunity to continue to work, which means they would not need to be here more than the original two days that were initially planned. Can we use state funds to pay for this working lunch meal?

A13: Yes, hospitality may be provided in this situation since not providing hospitality may prolong the review time and reviewers working through lunch is a savings to the University for costs of lodging, etc.

Q14: An external review of our department is scheduled to be a full day event (7:30 am to 6:00 pm) where hospitality will be provided (assume the event meets the criteria of the hospitality procedure). However, our department would like to host a welcome dinner the night prior to the external review with the external reviewers and faculty/staff involved in the review, can we use state funds to pay for the hospitality provided the day prior to the event?

A14: No, hosting a dinner the night before would be considered a separate event that would need to be assessed on a standalone basis and cannot be combined with the main event. Additionally, the welcome dinner would not be considered a valid business purpose.

Q15: I am the department chair, and I would like to host a recognition lunch for students who completed an internship with a government agency as part of their curriculum. I would like to discuss their experience during the internship. Can I use state funds to pay for this?

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A15: No, if the event is exclusive to a select few students, the event must be for the recognition of achievements above and beyond what is commonplace in a university setting. Since this internship is built into the curriculum, it is not considered an achievement above and beyond what is expected for a student in the same program.

Q16: I am a department chair and would like to host a recognition event for a group of students who are in my undergraduate program who participated in a national competition and finished in the top 3 competing teams in the nation. Can I provide hospitality to recognize these students (using state funds) and present their journey to other students in the program with interest in the competition?

A16: Yes, based on the information outlined above, this appears to be recognition for an achievement above and beyond what is commonplace in the program. Additionally, the students' experiences are being shared to motivate other students to engage in similar activities.

Q17: Our department is hosting an alumni panel where our students can ask questions and network with distinguished alumni. After the panel we are taking some of the alumni and faculty to dinner to continue our conversation. Can we use state funds to pay for the dinner after the event?

A17: No, hospitality provided at a different location after the event has ended will not be reimbursed. Also, if the hospitality is only provided to an exclusive group and the hospitality is not made available to the original attendees of the event, hospitality will not be reimbursed.

Q18: A student club is hosting an event that is part of the campus business week, could we use state funds to provide hospitality?

A18: No, we cannot pay for student club hosted events with state funds. In this scenario we are not the official host, therefore we cannot provide hospitality.

Gifts, Promotional Items, Awards, and Other

Q19: I would like to purchase campus branded shirts for my department staff. The shirts are not part of a department uniform, but they could wear the shirt at campus events. Can I use state funds for this?

A19: No, as the purchase described cannot be excluded as a de minimis fringe benefit to the employees. The shirts are not a uniform, where they are a condition of employment, and they cannot be adaptable to general usage as ordinary clothing since they have the campus branding.

Q20: Are graduation sashes, cords, or medallions allowed to be purchased for students with state funds, and are they considered hospitality?

A20: State funds cannot be used to pay for graduation sashes, cords, or medallions for simply graduating, as this is a standard accomplishment in a university setting. It is not considered an exemplary accomplishment. The sashes/stoles are personal items and considered gifts since they are something that is commonplace in a commencement ceremony vs an award that is for an achievement of something above and beyond graduation (i.e., making it on the dean's honor list).

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Q21: I am a dean of a college and would like reimbursement for my regalia purchase for graduation. Can state funds be used for this reimbursement, and is this considered hospitality?

A21: No, this is not considered hospitality. Additionally, state funds cannot be used to reimburse for the purchase of regalia for graduation, as the purchase of regalia is a personal expense and cannot be reimbursed using state funds. State funds can, however, be used to reimburse or pay for rental cost associated with regalia.