Food Approval Policy and Process

UW Policy Sources:

- UW Finance: https://finance.uw.edu/food-approval
- School of Medicine Food Approval Guidelines: https://depts.washington.edu/uwsom/administration-and-finance/finance/financial-support-services/food-with-business-meetings

Overview:

Purchases of meals and light refreshments on UW budgets are only allowed under certain criteria, governed by University and Washington State policies. Restrictions are based on the event and funding source. Depending on the event, scenario, and budget type used to cover the expense, the Administrator may require a Food Approval Form (UoW 1798) from the requestor *prior* to the event. Reimbursement is not guaranteed if approval is not received prior to the event and/or University guidelines are not followed. When in doubt whether food/beverages are allowable at your event or on your specific budget, please contact the department Administrator Cindy Valerio at valerioc@uw.edu.

Most sponsored funds do not allow food/beverage expenses. The following resources may be helpful to review before purchasing food/beverages with the intent to have that covered by sponsored funding:

- Food Purchases on Sponsored Awards
- Consult with Department Grants Manager (Sarah Robinson) or Department Administrator (Cindy Valerio) as needed

Gift budgets are not discretionary budgets and therefore many of the same guidelines apply (must have an appropriate business justification; cannot be celebration events; meals must be within per diem, etc.)

During meetings or trainings, the senior person in the room should pay for the food/beverages and request reimbursement which is typically the faculty/PI or a full-time employee such as a lab manager. Please do not have students/trainees cover the expenses up front and request reimbursement. In some cases, you may be able to use the department Procard to cover the cost of ordered and/or delivered food. This should be arranged in advance with the Department Administrator, and only after the food event has been approved.

In most cases, food (meal and/or refreshment) purchases are only approved for meetings and training sessions, when the event must be conducted over the typical mealtime and to accommodate attendees. Having a meeting over the lunch hour for the sake of serving lunch is not a valid justification. Food for regularly scheduled meetings and receptions for new employees is not allowed. Examples of when food would be appropriate:

- All day or half day meeting/training session
- Meetings during lunch in order to accommodate student class schedule
- Light refreshments for meetings lasting 2 or more hours
- Lunch job interview or visiting guest seminar speaker lunch or dinner (this is typically coordinated by the admin/fiscal staff)

Celebrations: Food for celebrations (birthdays, holidays, new employee lunches, etc.) are not allowable expenses on most budgets, including food approved or gift budgets.

Alcohol: Any purchase of alcohol should be rare and infrequent (typically larger department wide events such as the fall retreat or year-end/holiday celebration). Alcohol can **only** be reimbursed from a department discretionary budget (not gift budgets) and r**equires advance approval from the Chair through the Department Administrator.** In general, alcohol purchases will not be approved for individual meetings or recognition events.

UW Guidelines for Food at Meetings or Trainings:

- The meal or light refreshments **must be an integral part** of an **official University meeting** or **formal training session**, such as a lunch speaker, or a half to full day meeting or training.
- Attendance by the individual(s) must be advantageous to the UW.
- The purpose of the event **must be to conduct official UW business** or to provide formal training to UW employees or non-instructional training to students.
- The meeting or formal training must be conducted at a location away from the place where the employee normally performs his/her work. Acceptable locations include meeting and conference rooms. Virtual meetings are not acceptable locations.
- Meals must not exceed the current per diem rate and will only be reimbursed at the per diem rate. These rates may vary year to year, but as of October 1, 2022, the lunch per diem rate in Seattle is $22.00 and dinner is $38 (including beverage, tax and tip).
- Catered meals must also follow the per diem meal rate.
- A meeting agenda or training schedule, a description of the event, a list of attendees, an itemized receipt of the expenses, and the Food Approval Form must be provided to the fiscal office for reimbursement.

UW Guidelines for Food/Refreshments at Recognition Events (not *Celebration Events):

- The event must include the formal presentation of a recognition award to one or more employees or students, such as successful completion of an extraordinary special project, acknowledgment of official University employment milestones (10+ years of service) or other outstanding achievement.
- *This does not include events such as birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, receptions of new employees, or an employee separating from a position or the UW. These are considered celebrations and are not typically allowable on state and gift budgets.
- Only light refreshments (not meals) may be served at the recognition event.

- For recognition of employees, the total amount expended per recognition award and event (including light refreshments), is limited to the monetary level authorized in RCW 41.60.150 which is $200 per individual or group receiving recognition.
- A description of the event, a list of attendees, an itemized receipt of the expenses, and the Food Approval Form must be provided to the fiscal office for reimbursement.

Food Approval Form (UoW 1798)

Reimbursement Process:

1. Gather the required documentation as outlined above.
2. Send reimbursement requests to Maddy Anderson, department Program Coordinator at mra29@uw.edu
3. Allow for at least 7 business days for reimbursements to be processed and approved.