

State of Rhode Island  
Department of Administration

OFFICE OF ACCOUNTS AND CONTROL

<b>SECTION</b>	<b>POLICY/PROCEDURE NUMBER</b>		
	<b>A-36</b>		
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<b>Payments for Refreshments, Lunches, Dinners, Etc.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>/</b>	<b>May 1, 2016</b>

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***Background:***

The Office of Accounts & Control within the Department of Administration is primarily responsible for the issuance of policy regarding the circumstances under which the purchase of food and beverages is allowed.

***Guidelines for State Employees and General Officers:***

1. The State will pay for coffee breaks, snacks and reasonable in-house breakfasts, lunches and dinners in the following instances:
  - a. When non-public employees or board/commission members are asked to participate, without compensation by the State, in a meeting or discussion relating to an agency's plans, programs, policies, etc.
  - b. When volunteers are asked to provide assistance to any agency for the purposes of program planning, implementation, or award ceremonies (***coffee or nonalcoholic beverages/snacks only***).
  - c. When an agency has a program for (1) service awards, or (2) the introduction of a new department director only to staff (***coffee or nonalcoholic beverages/snacks only***).
  - d. When agency employees are being recruited or solicited to support a State sponsored non-profit community service program, e.g. State Employees Charitable Appeal (***coffee or nonalcoholic beverages/snacks only***).
  - e. When employees are asked by an agency to attend an off-location all-day (or days) workshop, seminar, conference, or retreat. This does not pertain to normally scheduled meetings that require the attendance of employees from multiple agencies. Examples of allowable instances would be a seminar scheduled at URI, Alton Jones or RIC campus for the employees of multiple divisions within an agency to have Customer Service training, or to listen to a speaker brought in to discuss new developments in a specialized field.
  - f. When employees from other agencies are asked by an agency to attend an on-site workshop, seminar, conference or symposium. This does not pertain to normally scheduled meetings that require the attendance of employees from multiple agencies (***coffee or nonalcoholic beverages/snacks only***).

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- g. When meetings are held by general officers and department directors or their designees with officers and directors of other states, other federal agencies and/or foreign governments. ***(The general officer and/or department director is held responsible for certifying the payment voucher containing the reason for the meeting with the names and titles of all persons attending.)***
- h. When meals and /or beverages are served at meetings attended by general officers and department directors or their designees and anyone with a direct financial interest in a decision those officers or directors are authorized to make, either individually or in participation with others. ***(The general officer and/or department director is responsible for preparing a memorandum explaining the circumstances of consuming the meals and beverages including the amount expensed. No alcohol beverages are allowed.)*** This policy applies to meals consumed before, during, or after the workday, outside of a state office (pursuant to Ethics Commission Regulation 36-14-5009).
- i. When a state-owned building, statue, park, land, etc. is dedicated for public use and the public is invited ***(coffee or nonalcoholic beverages/snacks only)***.
- j. When the public is invited to a ground-breaking ceremony related to the construction of a public facility or infrastructure ***(coffee or nonalcoholic beverages/snacks only)***.
- k. When the public is invited to the unveiling of official portraits of any Governor, Associate Justice, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, or other General Officer or public official ***(coffee or nonalcoholic beverages/snacks only)***.
- l. When an employee is invited to attend a meeting of a non-profit or community organization, i.e. an annual dinner meeting or a luncheon to present awards.

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2. The State will not pay for coffee breaks, snacks, breakfasts, lunches or dinners in the following instances:
  - a. When employees or board/commission members, who receive compensation from the State, meet on a regularly scheduled basis for the purpose of conducting State business. This includes any regularly scheduled meetings of compensated State employees that require the attendance of employees from multiple agencies, or instances where employees are required to work beyond their normally scheduled hours.
  - b. When employees are participating in personal improvement education or training programs on State time, or when such employees are participating on their own time, but with in-service training credits being an outcome.
  - c. When employees of an agency are having a leaving-for-other-service, retirement, or going-away, or other testimonial occasion for another employee.

***Alcoholic Beverages:***

The State will not pay for the purchase and/or consumption of, nor reimburse any employee, vendor/supplier, or other party for, any alcoholic beverages, including "non-alcoholic (low alcohol content) beverages.

***Exceptions:***

- Alcoholic beverages purchased for laboratory tests (including the State Police Training Academy)
- Alcoholic beverages (beer and wine only) purchased for individuals under State care, based on a doctor's prescription

***Purchases:***

Purchases should be made via the State of Rhode Island Division of Purchases business process, utilizing either a Purchase Order or a purchase card, where allowed. Employees are strongly advised against using personal funds and seeking reimbursement for purchases. If the employee's meal is part of a group and the cost of the employee's meal cannot be readily calculated by the dining facility or the meal sponsor, the employee should pay the average cost per meal. An explanation of the calculation should be provided in the explanatory memorandum (pursuant to Ethics Commission Regulation 36-14-5009).

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*In consideration of the above guidelines, one's interpretation should be on a strict, rather than loose, construction basis; and obviously, the objective should not be to rationalize ways and means for circumvention.*

***The above policies and guidelines do not apply to the Legislative Branch.***