



Buncombe County, North Carolina

Meals and Meeting Expense Policy

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1.0 Policy Information

Category & Subcategory:	Expense/Meals and Meetings	Original Effective Date:	4/10/2018	This Revision Effective:	4/10/2018
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Persons Affected:	Eligible Buncombe County Workforce
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Approvals:	Approved By:	County Manager	Approved By:	Assistant County Manager
	Date Approved:		Date Approved:	

Revision History

Effective Date	Version	Section	Summary of Changes	Author

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2.0 Introduction

Buncombe County’s policy on food purchasing is designed to ensure public funds used to purchase food for meetings is done so with thoughtful attention to cost effectiveness and appropriate scenarios.

3.0 Purpose

To establish a policy which establishes guidelines for the appropriate purchase of food for County activities and events. This policy does not address food purchases related to business travel. Refer to the County Travel Policy for this guidance.

4.0 Definitions

4.1 Food

Food refers to meals, snacks, and beverages.

4.2 Department Director

Director of a given department with authority to make budgetary decisions. Examples include Planning Director as well as elected officials who head departments, such as the Sheriff and Register of Deeds.

4.3 Designee

Staff member chosen by the Department Director to act on their behalf during their absence or at appointed time for certain duties or responsibilities.

5.0 Applicability

This policy applies to all Buncombe County departments, including staff support of boards or commissions during or outside of regular business hours. Department Directors may enact additional requirements dependent upon budget or resources available.

Exceptions – The County recognizes that there may be emergency or extenuating circumstances which merit provision of food for meetings, though not previously planned (e.g., extended public hearing on business-critical topic). These exceptions should be approved by a Department Director. In these situations, County staff should document and store description of the event and justification for the exception with the receipt or invoice for the purchase.

6.0 Roles and Responsibilities

This policy has been approved by the County Manager. The Finance Department has delegated authority for the management, storage, and communication of this policy.

7.0 Policy

When meetings of an administrative nature are held that are directly related to the business of the County, the cost of meals or light refreshments may be paid from budgeted funds with approval from a Department Director or their designee. Food and refreshments may be purchased with budgeted funds for one or more of the following purposes or activities: (the following are examples and not an exhaustive list):

- a. Meetings of the Board, advisory committees, public officials, and community members in supporting and collaborating in program success.
- b. Trainings, workshops, webinars and seminars.
- c. Countywide employee events (i.e. Employee Appreciation or United Way Campaign). Such events must be open to all County employees.
- d. Retreats of departments or other units, or events to recognize a class or unit of employee.
- e. Working lunches when that is the reasonable time available for all parties to attend the meeting.
- f. Meetings with community members regarding collaboration and partnership in the community.

Those planning for food expenses should consider the following principles:

- *Appropriateness:* Meals should be necessary and integral to the business meeting, not a matter of personal convenience. The provision of food for gatherings of employees on a daily basis is not considered an appropriate

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use of funds. Food may be provided at meetings of employees on an occasional basis. Staff lunches, where work can be conducted during other times of the workday, regular staff meetings, and personal celebrations (i.e., birthday, retirement, or baby shower celebrations) do not qualify as appropriate activities. Expenditures should be limited to food and non-alcoholic beverages.

- *Cost Effectiveness:* The expenditure of budgeted funds for food and refreshments should be cost-effective and reasonable. Generally, meal costs should be no more than local GSA per diem meal rates, and light refreshments should be no more than the cost of half of a lunch per diem per attendee. Breakdown of per meal rates can be found at the GSA site at: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates/meals-and-incidentals-expenses-mie-breakdown>. Those planning these events should get as close an estimate as possible to the actual number of expected attendees. If the meeting is scheduled more than two weeks in advance, ask for an RSVP and this should guide the purchase of food.
- *Documentation* – Meetings must have an agenda and an accurate attendance list should be submitted at the close of the meeting. This documentation should be attached to the receipt or invoice for such purchase and stored in an otherwise conspicuous location for access upon request. Refer to the Food Purchasing Procedure for specific direction.
- *Special Accommodations* – Dietary needs will be met with a one-week advanced notice and will be accommodated with the same consideration for cost effectiveness as outlined above.