

AURA NSF Funded Centers
Working and Committee Meal Policy

I. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines concerning the use of Contract, unencumbered income source or Management Fee funds for the provision of refreshments and meals at scientific, technical, or administrative meetings or reviews that are hosted, sponsored, or co-sponsored by AURA and its Centers.

II. Applicability

This Policy sets out the circumstances under which food and beverages may be provided at meetings, and the cost limitations that apply to those expenditures. Budgetary considerations should be borne prominently in mind when planning such events to determine the feasibility and prudence of expending federal funds to pay for food and beverages. Except as provided in this Policy, federal funds are not to be used to provide food and beverages.

III. Definitions

Refreshments The term “refreshments” refers to light snacks and beverages customarily available during morning and afternoon meeting breaks that are a scheduled part of the meeting agenda. Contract funds may be used for the provision of light refreshments (plus associated costs for service and labor) for beverages such as coffee, tea, juice, or soft drinks, and light snacks such as donuts, bagels, muffins, fruit, cookies, or chips. The amount and variety of the refreshments provided should be no greater than what is appropriate for the expected number of attendees.

Meals – Working Meal – Contract, Award or Management Fee funds may be used for a working meal in accordance with the General Rules above only when the official responsible for the funds being utilized formally documents that the meal is integral to the event, and it is impractical for attendees to seek refreshments or meals elsewhere without missing important event information.

Business Meals – A Business Meal is defined as a business-related meal that is not part of a formal contract or cooperative agreement sponsored event or committee dinner.

Cost per person – In expensing to contracts, grants or cooperative agreements, the cost of food per expected attendee should not exceed the applicable per diem rate under the GSA (Federal Travel Regulation) for Meals (excluding Incidental Expense) at the location of the meeting. Labor, delivery, and other non-food costs associated with the meal may be charged to contract funds on an apportioned basis based on the allowable portion of the food costs. Any costs above the applicable per diem must be paid through use of either Management Fee (Center Director approval required) or Unencumbered Income Sources (with prior approval by the AURA President or his/her designee). Note: the maximum cost of Committee Meals that may be expensed to contracts, grants or cooperative agreements may be up to 150% of the per diem rate.

IV. General Rules for Working Meals

- A. Management fee can be used for some working meals or social activities. Please refer to the management fee award letter issued to your center.
- B. The meal cost must be clearly justified and documented in accordance with the guidance set forth herein. A Working Meal Approval Form may (optional depending on Center Director's choice) be completed and submitted for approval. For reimbursement, attach the following documentation in Reqless:
 - Signed Working Meal Approval Form (if applicable)
 - All itemized receipts
 - Agenda of event
 - Sign in sheet of all attendees
- C. The principal purpose of the meeting must be for the dissemination of technical or programmatic information, and the meeting must have a formal agenda.
- D. Food and beverages are necessary when there is a need to cover essential material in a limited time period, and due to the overall length of the event, it is impractical for attendees to seek refreshments or meals elsewhere without missing important event information (e.g., discussions, lectures, speeches).
- E. Working sessions must immediately both precede and follow the time when refreshments or meals are provided and must encompass a total of four hours minimum.
- F. AURA staff members who are stationed locally at the site of the meeting and not on travel status must be a full and integral participant in the meeting in order for those staff members' meals to be deemed allowable.
- G. If the meeting is sponsored by an AURA Center, to qualify for utilization of CA or contract funds for meal cost expensing, at least half of the total number of attendees must be from outside AURA and, if affiliated with AURA or an AURA contractor, must also be on official travel. If more than half of attendees are local, AURA management fee (if approved) or unencumbered income sources may be used to fund the local attendee meal costs. Prior approval must be received from the AURA President or his/her designee for payment through Unencumbered Income Sources.
- H. In no event may Contract, Award or Management Fee funds be used for the provision of alcoholic beverages. **NOTE** : The provision of alcoholic beverages in conjunction with a working meal makes the entire cost of the meal and the alcohol unallowable.

V. General Rules for Committee Dinners

- A. The meal cost must be clearly justified and documented in accordance with the guidance set forth herein. Required documentation is:
 - Itemized receipts

- Agenda of event, and
- List of all attendees

- B. The cost of food per expected attendee should not exceed the applicable cost per person, as described in Section III. Definitions.
- C. AURA staff members who are stationed locally at the site of the committee meeting and not on travel status must reimburse AURA for the cost of their meal unless otherwise approved by the Center Director. In such approved circumstances, Management Fee or AURA Corporate Unencumbered Income Sources must be utilized in accordance with the relevant associated guidelines. Use of AURA Corporate Unencumbered Income Sources requires prior approval by the AURA President or his/her designee.
- D. Any alcoholic beverages must be billed on a separate receipt and charged to AURA unencumbered income sources.

VI. General Rules for Business Meals

- A. Business Meals, as defined in Section III, are typically ad hoc in nature. Example: A Center Director decides to take a colleague from another Observatory to dinner.
- B. Management Fee may be used to fund the meal costs so long as the criteria outlined in the Management Fee guidelines are met. If these meal costs do not meet these criteria, prior approval must be received from the AURA President or his/her designee for a charge to Unencumbered Income Sources.
- C. If the AURA staff member is on official travel, their portion of the meal cost may be charged to the contract or CA to the extent of the per diem allowance.
- D. Any alcoholic beverages must be billed on a separate receipt and charged to an AURA unencumbered income source.

Reference Sheet for Account Allocations for Working Meals, Committee Meals and Other Related Expenses

Account to Charge:	Center Cooperative Agreement Accounts	AURA Management Fee Account (if approved)	AURA Unencumbered Income Account	
TYPE OF EXPENSE				Notes
Working Meals	X (per diem value)			Must meet Working Meal Policy. If the value of the per-person meal significantly exceeds per diem, the difference goes to the Unencumbered Income Account, which requires Center Director Approval.

Staff Training				
Onsite staff Meals		X (per diem value)		Must meet Working Meal Policy. If the value of the per-person meal significantly exceeds per diem, the difference goes to the Unencumbered Income Account, which requires Center Director Approval.
Offsite staff Meals (less than 50 miles from Center Location)		X (per diem value)		
Offsite staff Meals (more than 50 miles away from Center location)	X (per diem value)			
Committee Meetings - Includes AURA Oversight Committees, Visiting Committees, TAC meetings etc.				
Light Refreshments	X			
Lunch	X (per diem value)			Must be equivalent to per diem value for local meals. Values in excess of per diem must include supporting documenting. Values in excess of 150% of per diem will be considered excessive and charged to unencumbered and require approval of the Center Director.
Dinner for non-staff committee members	X (per diem value)			
Dinner for staff committee members	X (per diem value)			
Dinner for local staff			X	Must be approved by the Center Director

Account to Charge:	Center Cooperative Agreement Accounts	AURA Management Fee Account (if approved)	AURA Unencumbered Income Account	
Recruiting Meals				
Onsite staff Meals		X (per diem value)	X	Must be equivalent to per diem value for local meals. Values in excess of per diem must include supporting documenting. Values in excess of per diem will be considered excessive and charged to unencumbered and require approval of the Center Director.
Offsite staff meals		X (per diem value)		
Dinner for Candidate - on Travel	X (per diem value)			
Dinner for Staff		X (per diem value)		
General Staff Meeting Meals			X	
Special Staff meetings (<i>All Hands, etc.</i>)	X			Must have an agenda. Light refreshments only; e.g. punch and cake
Staff Planning Retreats				
Onsite Meals		X (per diem value)		Must have agenda and list of attendees Must be roughly equivalent to per diem value for local meals. Values in excess of per diem must include supporting documenting. Values in excess of 300% of per diem will be considered excessive and charged to unencumbered and require approval of the Center Director.
Offsite Meals - greater than 50 miles from the Center location	X (per diem value)			
Meals for Non-staff attendees such as facilitators	X (per diem value)			

Account to Charge:	Center Cooperative Agreement Accounts	AURA Management Fee Account (if approved)	AURA Unencumbered Income Account	
Other Employee Gatherings				
Birthday and Retirement Celebrations			X	
Holiday Parties			X	
Childcare			X	
Award Ceremonies - General				
Value of Monetary award	X			Must not exceed policy per awardee and approved by Center Director
Light refreshments	X			
Event gifts: up to \$5 per employee		X		
*Event gifts: \$5 to \$20 per employee		X		
*Event gifts: Over \$20 per employee			X	
*Meals of Awardee		X (per diem value)		Must be roughly equivalent to per diem value for local meals. Values in excess of per diem must include supporting documenting. Values in excess of 150% of per diem will be considered excessive and charged to unencumbered and require approval of the Center Director.
*Meal for Awardee Supervisor		X (per diem value)		
Meals for other staff			X	
Meals and gifts for family members			X	

*Special Rules for Award Ceremonies for Chilean Staff

Other Miscellaneous				
Get Well/bereavement flowers		X		Nominal Value less than \$100 per staff person
Employee Relations gifts		X		T-shirts, mugsnominal value less than \$20 per staff person
Retirement Gifts		X		Nominal Value less than \$100 per staff person
Alcohol			X	When incurred at the same time as a meal, charges for alcohol must be assigned to a separate receipt.

AURA Management Fee Accounts

LSST	A-MF010-000
Gemini	A-MF004-000
NOAO	A-MF002-000
NSO	A-MF003-000

AURA Unencumbered Income Account

LSST	A-A7007-000
Gemini	A-A7004-000
NOAO	A-A7002-000
NSO	A-A7003-000
CAS	A-A7008-000
HR	A-A7009-000



WORKING MEAL APPROVAL FORM

CENTER INFORMATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
Center: _____ Date (s) of event: _____ Location: _____ Number of attendees: _____	SPONSOR POC: Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____
REIMBURSEMENT IS REQUESTED FOR	CONTACT INFORMATION
<input type="checkbox"/> LUNCH \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> DINNER \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> SNACK \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> BEVERAGES \$ _____ EXPECTED COST: \$ _____	ADMINISTRATIVE POC: Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____
DESCRIPTION OF EVENT	
PURPOSE OF EVENT	
OTHER INFORMATION	APPROVAL FOR THIS EVENT
For reimbursement, attach the following documents in REQLESS: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All Itemized Receipts 2. Agenda of Event 3. Sign In Sheet of all Attendees 4. Signed Working Meal Approval Form 	Approval and Charge Number: Acct: _____ X _____

Change Log

Date	Description	Published Version
18 Feb 2016	Clarified reference marked with asterisk	2
18 July 2018	Edits to clarify meal limits and use of MF	