

# Group Meal Guidelines

(*Earth & Environmental Systems Institute*)

## General Guidelines

The purchaser of the group meal must complete a [group meal form](#) listing those in attendance, the specific business purpose, and other details. Itemized receipts are required for all group meals.

It is very important to adhere to the set State College meal per diem rates:

- Breakfast: \$13.00
- Lunch: \$15.00
- Dinner: \$26.00
- Incidentals: \$5.00

The \$5.00 incidentals may be included when calculating per person expense limits for group meals. For example, per person cost for dinner in State College should never exceed \$31.00/person (\$26.00 + \$5.00). **This amount includes tax & gratuity.**

We understand it may be difficult to communicate this restriction to visitors, but all Penn State employees in attendance must abide by the predetermined per person expense limit for the meal. The purchaser of the group meal is responsible for knowing the rates and communicating them to the other attendees.

The following expenses are **unallowable and non-reimbursable** on general and research funds:

- Alcohol
- Entertainment Fees (e.g. cover charge)
- Meal expense for a child or spouse/partner (unless they are a Penn State employee **AND** have a valid business purpose for attending)

## Group Meals during Travel

It is best to avoid group meals while on travel status as it is assumed that all attendees are on travel status and their meal per diem will be reimbursed accordingly. There are cases where this is not true and group meals are allowable (please ask if you are in doubt). If a group meal is deemed allowable, the per person expense **cannot** exceed the meal per diem rate for the area.

## Group Meals on Restricted (Research) Funds

Group Meals are typically not permitted on restricted funds (unless specifically approved in sponsored award) and always raise a red flag to auditors.

They may be allowed on a case-by-case basis as long as the meal is at the meeting location, during the meeting (working meal). Breaking from a meeting on campus and going to a restaurant away from the meeting location (i.e. off-campus) is considered "Entertainment" and should not be charged to Restricted Funds. When in doubt, please ask!

**NOTE:** Cost Share funds follow the same rules and restrictions as the sponsored funds for research projects. If a group meal is not allowable on research funds it is also not allowable on the corresponding cost share funds.

## Per Diem Rates

[Continental United States \(CONUS\) Rates](#)

[Outside Continental United States \(OCONUS\) Rates](#)