

**Administrative Policy No: 19.70.11**

**Subject:** Meals with Meetings

**Information Contact:** Office of Accounting Services  
Chief, (360) 664-5716

**Authorizing Source:** RCW [43.03.050\(3\)](#)  
State Administrative & Accounting Manual (SAAM)  
[70.15](#), Meals with Meetings

**Effective Date:** September 1, 2006

**Revised:** December 28, 2023

**Approved By:** **Original signed by Richard Pannkuk**  
Assistant Secretary / Chief Financial Officer  
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**Purpose**

This policy establishes the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) procedures for providing meals with meetings while conducting official state business.

**Scope**

This policy applies to all:

1. DSHS employees, officers, and volunteers.
2. Contractors that do not have specific contractual arrangements and are reimbursed under [chapter 10](#) and [chapter 70](#) of the *State Administrative and Accounting Manual* and the [DSHS travel rules and policies](#).

This policy does not apply to contractors reimbursed under specific contractual arrangements.

**Additional Guidance**

Department of Health - [Recommended food and beverages](#)  
DSHS administrative policy

18.86, Healthy eating and nutrition

[DSHS Forms Picker](#)

Form 17-186, Meeting expense pre-authorization

[Executive Order 13-06](#)

State Administrative & Accounting Manual (SAAM)

[10.10.10.a](#), Agency responsibilities

[10.40.50b](#), When may a traveler be reimbursed for Meal costs, eleven hour rule

[10.90.20](#), Reimbursement rates for lodging, meals and privately owned vehicle mileage

[70.15.10](#), Reimbursement for meals with meetings

## Definitions

**Eleven hour rule** is the rule that requires an employee to be in travel status for at least eleven hours to qualify for a meal reimbursement. This is for non-overnight travel on a scheduled work day, they have to be in travel status for at least 11 hours and during the entire meal period to qualify.

**Healthful options** means meeting the standard of the [Washington state healthy nutrition guidelines](#) and any federal health and sustainability guidelines.

**Meals** are regular occasions where food is served and eaten.

**Official state business** means activities performed by an official or state employee, authorized volunteer or contractor, work experience program participant, student or employee of another governmental jurisdiction as directed by their supervisor in order to accomplish state programs or as required by the duties of their position or office.

**Regular workplace** means the location where the state employee or state official normally performs their (excludes meeting and conference rooms).

**Volunteer** is a person who, of his/her own free choice, performs any assigned or authorized duties for the state or any agency thereof. A volunteer receives no wages and is registered and accepted as a volunteer by the state or any agency thereof, for the purpose of engaging in authorized volunteer service.

## Policy

RCW [43.03.050\(3\)](#) provides for reimbursement for meals for certain meetings. This includes conferences, conventions, and formal training sessions.

### A. DSHS may provide meals at certain types of meetings

1. The division director, or authorized designee, may authorize reimbursement for allowable cost of meals for elected and appointed officials, state employees, and volunteer regardless of travel status or the eleven hour rule.
2. DSHS may pay for meals with meetings when the individual is required to attend and when ALL of the following conditions are met. The:
  - a. Administration accounting office, supervisor, and division director (or authorized designee) approves payments, in writing, using form 17-186 or memorandum with equivalent information at least three working days advance of the meeting and where attendance by agency employee(s), official(s), volunteers and reimbursement for the meals is advantageous to the state.
  - b. Purpose of the meeting is to conduct official state business or to provide training to state employees, state officials, or volunteers.
  - c. Meals are an integral part of the business meeting or training. For example, It means that the meals are an essential part of the meeting. It means that the meeting has a specific agenda that requires a working meal, and that the meeting lasts for at least two hours during a normal meal time. It also means that the meal has a clear business purpose and is not a social occasion.
  - d. Meeting or training session takes place away from the employee's or official's regular workplace.
  - e. Cost of the meal per person does not exceed the authorized daily meal per diem amount for the location in which the event takes place.
3. When determining what food and beverages to offer as meals with meetings, the organizer of the meeting will provide healthful options and consider the [recommended food and beverages](#) provided by the Department of Health.

**B. Meals provided at meetings held or sponsored by non-state organizations**

The division director, or authorized designee, may approve reimbursement for the actual cost of a meal when the agency requires the employee to attend a meeting that is being held or sponsored by a non-state organization. The actual cost of the meal, as evidenced by a receipt, is eligible for reimbursement as long as the meal is an integral part of the meeting.

**C. DSHS must not incur expenditures for meals with meetings in the following situations:**

1. Employee or agency anniversaries.
2. Receptions for new, existing, or retiring employees or state officials.
3. Election celebrations.

4. Any “hosting” activities intended to lobby a legislator or a government official.
5. Social events.

**D. Documentation of approval and purchase**

1. Required documentation for meals with meetings includes:
  - a. A copy of the approved memorandum or form 17-186.
  - b. All original receipts.
  - c. A supporting document showing the purpose or accomplishments of the meeting.
  - d. A supporting document listing the names of the state organizations or people attending the meeting.
2. When the meeting attendee pays for the cost of their own meal and then seeks reimbursement from DSHS, the reimbursement must be processed via an A19 and must include all the required documentation (listed above).
3. Use account code **Sub Sub Object EA-A180** to process meals with meetings payment.