

Business Meals (On Site or Dine Out) – Effective 11/04/2023

Business meals are allowable for physician recruitment purposes and for the **RARE (quarterly or less)** business meeting that has a legitimate research, education or RIVR operations purpose, (e.g., conferences, workshops, grand rounds, symposia, board meetings, fundraising and public relations). Meals must be incidental to the business of the event. The primary purpose of the meeting is to disseminate technical information,

education, or the general administration of RIVR. There must be an organized presentation during the meal or a clearly established business reason. **Meals to boost employee morale and performance, routine VAMC staff, committee or department meetings, informal colleague networking, and recurring training do not meet the RARE criteria to qualify for meal reimbursement. The occasional light refreshment (donuts, bagels, cookies, ice cream) is allowable.**

Education vs Training

Education (reimbursable): *acquisition of new broad knowledge and learning.*

Training (not reimbursable): *practical guidance to teach or improve specific skills for your job.*

RIVR follows IRS guidelines that state business meal expenditures must not be lavish and extravagant and allows **\$65** per person per meal (including tip). Alcohol and entertainment expenses are NEVER covered.

Pre-approval of support for all business meals is required. The types of meetings that may be eligible for RIVR support are too numerous to list and the characteristics of appropriate meetings may vary. Factors that RIVR will consider when evaluating a meeting for support include:

- Whether at least one speaker makes a research presentation or presents new educational instruction.
- Whether there is a guest speaker (Non-Richmond VAMC or NPC employee) and/or non-VAMC personnel are in attendance.
- Frequency of similar meetings that involve the same personnel.
- Whether the meeting involves at least one individual who is being recruited to conduct research or education at the VAMC.
- If the meeting is expected to last more than 2 hours or extend through a normal mealtime.
- Regardless of the type of meeting, the documentation listed on the following page is a requirement for RIVR support. **Both a Pre-Event and Post Event RIVR “Business Meal Form” must be turned in along with the**

reimbursement form.

For a meal to be eligible for RIVR support:

For a legitimate Research related meeting:

You cannot be reimbursed for a training meeting that is considered part of your normal job activity or a routine staff meeting. However, a meeting that involves a **research presentation** or **new educational instruction related to research** can be covered. For a technical scientific presentation, the event must be open to non-research personnel such as residents, etc.

Accompanying documentation should include:

1. Purpose of the meeting: The request must include an explicit statement about the research rationale for the event (the meeting's research related purpose and how it will further VA research).
2. When applicable: Guest speaker name and relevant position (the guest speaker cannot be a Richmond VAMC or RIVR employee).
3. The program provided to attendees or the detailed agenda/topic of discussion.
4. Attendees invite.
5. Location and time of event.
6. Roster of attendees.
7. When appropriate, the requested funding should tie to an approved research project

For a legitimate Educational meeting/program not related to research:

You cannot be reimbursed for a training meeting that is considered part of your normal job activity or a routine staff meeting. However, a meeting that involves **new** educational instruction (ideally, involving a guest speaker, who cannot be a Richmond VAMC or RIVR employee) can be covered.

Accompanying documentation should include:

1. The educational activity itself must be first approved by the Richmond VAMC Educational Committee.
2. The purpose of the meeting: An explicit statement of the purpose and how the program will further the VAMC's and/or VA education and training mission.
3. When applicable: Guest speaker name and relevant position (the guest speaker cannot be a Richmond VAMC or RIVR employee).
4. The program provided to attendees or the detailed agenda/topic of discussion.
5. Attendees invite.
6. Location and time of event.
7. Roster of attendees.

For a legitimate RIVR business event:

Appropriate events include, but are not limited to retreats, board meetings, business meetings, investigator meetings as well as fundraising and public relations.

1. A request must include an explicit statement of how the meeting will further RIVR's ability to facilitate research, education, or NPC operations.
2. If applicable: a Guest Speaker's name and relevant position. (The guest speaker cannot be a Richmond VAMC or RIVR employee).
3. The program provided to attendees or the detailed agenda/topic of discussion.
4. Attendees Invite.
5. Location and time of event.
6. Roster of attendees.

***See Appendix C: Pre-Event Meal Form
Post-Event Meal Form***