

MS 729 Food and Refreshment Expenses

Effective Date: March 7, 2011

Responsible Office: OCFO

Supersedes: 03/01/96; MS 729, 3/22/84; MS 733, 4/24/73

Issuance Memo

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Attachment A Policy Guidelines for Purchase of Food and Refreshments

1.0 Policy

- (a) This Manual Section establishes the policy for the use of regular funds to purchase food and refreshments to be served to Volunteers, Trainees, staff and other attendees at Peace Corps events.
- (b) Peace Corps may pay for food and refreshments served to Volunteers and Trainees at a Peace Corps event.
- (c) Peace Corps may pay for food and refreshments served to attendees other than Volunteers and Trainees at a Peace Corps event if the approving officer determines that (i) the primary purpose of serving food and refreshments to those attendees at that event is to facilitate a necessary agency function, and (ii) serving food and refreshments to those attendees at that event would make a direct contribution to carrying out that function.

(d) Food and refreshments served at Peace Corps events must be modest in cost and presentation.

(e) Policy guidelines regarding the use of regular funds and representation funds for the purchase of food and refreshments served to attendees other than Volunteers and Trainees at various types of Peace Corps events are set forth in the attached Policy Guidelines for Purchase of Food and Refreshments (Policy Guidelines).

2.0 Authority

22 U.S.C. 2504, 22 U.S.C. 2509, 22 U.S.C. 2514, 5 U.S.C. 4109-4111 and 5 U.S.C. 4503

3.0 Definitions

Regular funds are appropriated funds other than representation or entertainment funds.

Refreshments include, but are not limited to, coffee, tea, soft drinks, and other beverages; donuts, bagels, and other pastries; cakes; fruit; cookies, chips, tea sandwiches, pizza and other light snacks.

Peace Corps events are meetings, conferences, receptions and other events related to Peace Corps programs or operations, including:

- Staff Conferences, Retreats and Meetings – The meeting, conference, or retreat is held for a non-routine or special purpose. Regular funds may not be used for food or refreshments at regular or routine staff meetings.
- Staff Award and Recognition Ceremonies – These are events where staff is honored or recognized for specific contributions or service to the Peace Corps.
- Training – An instructional course conducted by the Peace Corps, other government agencies or a private entity for staff, Volunteers, Trainees or outsiders.
- Cultural Awareness Ceremony – A program intended to advance Equal Employment Opportunity, cultural heritage or diversity objectives.
- Peace Corps Speakers Program – The formal series of lectures by outside speakers invited to speak to Peace Corps staff.
- Combined Campaign Fund Functions – Organized programs intended to encourage CFC donations by Peace Corps staff.

- Volunteer Recruitment Events – Any organized conference, meeting or outreach event having the objective of explaining Peace Corps programs or operations to potential Volunteers and promoting interest in volunteering with the Peace Corps.
- Volunteer Conferences, Meetings and Ceremonies – These are events which may have an informational or administrative purpose, held primarily for the benefit of Volunteers and Trainees; staff and outsiders may attend.
- Public Award Ceremonies – A ceremony that honors members of the public (other than staff or Volunteers) in connection with Peace Corps programs or operations.
- Public Meetings – A conference, meeting or other event intended primarily for the public, but may have staff or Volunteers in attendance, provided it involves a discussion or presentation about Peace Corps programs or operations and is not merely a protocol or social event.
- Peace Corps National Advisory Council Meetings – A meeting of the Peace Corps National Advisory Council established under Section 12 of the Peace Corps Act.
- Project Advisory Committee Meetings – A meeting of a project advisory group, whose membership consists of post staff, Volunteers, community members and host country agencies.

The fact that an event is listed above does not by itself mean that regular funds may be used to purchase food or refreshments for that event. In each case, the approving officer must, unless the food or refreshments are being served only to Volunteers and Trainees, make the determinations required by paragraph 1.0(c). If the approving officer is unable to make the determinations required by paragraph 1.0(c), it might still be possible to purchase food and refreshments for the event with representation funds (for events overseas), entertainment funds (for domestic events) or donated funds, to the extent that such funds are available. See the Policy Guidelines, MS 724 (Representation Allowances) and MS 725 (Entertainment Funds).

4.0 General Rules

Official Duty Station or Area – Under Peace Corps policy, regular funds may be used to purchase food and refreshments for Volunteers, Trainees or staff whether they are within or outside their official duty station or area. Consequently, it is permissible to use regular funds to pay for food and refreshments consumed at Peace Corps events that are held within the official duty area provided the other requirements of this policy (including the determinations required by paragraph 1.0 and the approvals required by paragraph 6.0) have been satisfied.

No Reimbursement by Attendees – If the requirements of this policy (including the determinations required by paragraph 1.0 and the approvals required by paragraph 6.0) have

been satisfied, Volunteers, Trainees, staff and other attendees who consume food and refreshments at a Peace Corps event are not required to reimburse the Peace Corps for the expense of such food and refreshments.

Attendees on Peace Corps Travel Orders – For attendees on Peace Corps travel orders, the per diem is adjusted for meals furnished by the Peace Corps. There is no adjustment to per diem for refreshments. The attendee is responsible for making adjustments on the Peace Corps travel voucher.

Public Protocol Events – Regular funds may not be used for food or refreshments at events with members of the public that are merely of a protocol or social in nature. Such events may only be funded with Representation Allowances (MS 724), Entertainment Funds (MS 725) or donated funds. See the Policy Guidelines.

Vouchering – Vouchers for food or refreshments served at Peace Corps events under this Manual Section must be signed by the approving officer and must include the following information:

- A description of the event, including location and date.
- The specific purpose of the event.
- Except in the case of food or refreshments served only to Volunteers or Trainees, a certification that the approving officer has determined that (a) the primary purpose of serving food and refreshments to the attendees at the event is to facilitate a necessary agency function and (b) serving food and refreshments to the attendees at the event would make a direct contribution to carrying out that function.
- Receipts for all expenditures.
- To the extent practicable, a list of attendees and their relation to the Peace Corps (e.g., Volunteer, Trainee, employee, personal services contractor, State Department employee, ministry official, etc.).
- Approving officers should contact Financial Management Officers (FMOs) before proceeding with any event involving food for attendees other than Volunteers/Trainees to assure what is planned is allowable. Approving officers may be responsible for repayment of any costs rejected by the FMO.

Alcoholic Beverages – See MS 646 Staff Alcohol Use for the rules on consumption of alcohol.

5.0 Funding

The cost of food and refreshments is funded from and managed as part of the post or operating unit's operating budget.

6.0 Approval

The use of regular funds to purchase food or refreshments under this Manual Section must be approved by an appropriate Peace Corps officer. The following officers are authorized to approve such an expenditure in the following circumstances:

- (a) Any use of regular funds to purchase food or refreshments to be served only to Volunteers and Trainees may be approved by the relevant Country Director.
- (b) Any use of regular funds to purchase food or refreshments to be served to attendees other than Volunteers and Trainees may be approved by an A Delegate or the relevant Country Director, but only if the use of regular funds for that purpose is permitted under the Policy Guidelines and any conditions set out in the Policy Guidelines for the use of regular funds for that purpose have been satisfied.
- (c) Any other use of regular funds to purchase food or refreshments under this Manual Section must be approved by the Deputy Director or the Chief of Staff.

These approval authorities may not be redelegated. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Associate Director for Volunteer Recruitment and Selection may redelegate to Regional Recruiting Office Managers the authority under this Manual Section to approve the use of regular funds to purchase food and refreshments for volunteer recruitment events provided that such redelegated authority is exercised under guidelines issued by the Associate Director for Volunteer Recruitment and Selection.

7.0 Effective Date

The effective date is the date of issuance.