



**WHATCOM COUNTY**  
**EXECUTIVE ORDER 97-03**

**Non-Travel Food and Beverage Policy**

**WHEREAS**, a County policy has been developed that establishes guidelines and procedures for providing food and beverages to employees (which are not covered under the Employee Travel Policy), volunteers and citizens engaged in County business or in activities that recognize performance of services to the County by its employees, volunteers or citizens, and certain other expenses.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, by virtue of the power vested in me by the Home Rule Charter for Whatcom County, I hereby order, effective immediately, adoption of the attached "In-County" Food, Beverage and Lodging Policy.

**Dated this** 26th **day of February, 1997.**

**Pete Kremen, Whatcom County Executive**

# **WHATCOM COUNTY NON-TRAVEL FOOD AND BEVERAGE POLICY**

## **I. GENERAL**

### **A. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and procedures for providing at County expense, food and beverages to employees, volunteers and citizens engaged in County business or in activities that recognize performance of services to the County by its employees, volunteers or citizens, and for travel and lodging expenses, under certain circumstances, for employees or volunteers engaged in County business.

Reimbursement or payment will be made only for expenses incurred. Department heads and employees of Whatcom County are expected to exercise prudent judgement when incurring allowable costs under this policy.

This policy sets the minimum standards. Department heads may set additional restrictions for their departments within the guidelines of this policy, but may not change the rates of reimbursement.

**NOTE:** The intent of this policy is not to discourage employee-sponsored events.

### **B. Definitions**

1. **Light Refreshment** - For the purpose of this policy, a "light refreshment" is an edible item that may be served between meals. Examples of such items are doughnuts, cookies, fruit or cheese, etc.
2. **In-County** - Refers to employees not on travel status.
3. **Volunteer** - Person who without compensation, performs some duty that is sponsored by and/or provides benefit to the County.

## **II. SCOPE**

This policy applies to all Whatcom County departments.

## **III. POLICY STATEMENT**

### **A. Beverages and Light Refreshments**

Serving of beverages and light refreshments to employees, volunteers or citizens at County-sponsored meetings and events is allowed under certain conditions with appropriate approvals, as outlined in this policy. This authority is not intended for use with the normal daily business of employees or officials, but rather for special situations or occasions outlined herein.

### **B. Volunteer and Employee In-County Meals**

It is recognized that County business is often conducted using volunteers who without compensation, work on public programs, serve on citizens' committees or assist public officers and employees. Payment of meals for such volunteers is allowed within the guidelines contained in this policy. Payment of employees' "incounty" meals (employees not on travel status) is also allowed within the guidelines contained in this policy.

**C. Other Allowable Expenses (non-meal)**

It may be appropriate at times to pay for or reimburse employees or volunteers for non-meal, in-county expenditures. At the request of a department head and with Executive pre-approval for such, employees or volunteers engaged in official County business may incur costs for travel and/or lodging that is payable by the County within the guidelines contained in this policy.

**IV. GUIDELINES**

**A. Beverages and Light Refreshments**

**1. Criteria for authorizing beverages and light refreshment expenditures:**

- a.** Beverages and/or light refreshments may be served or made available during an event or meeting which is County sponsored, where the purpose of the event or meeting is to conduct County business, provide formal training that benefits the County (i.e., employee training sessions; volunteer training sessions; new employee orientation; County ad-hoc groups formed with non-employee members; special project learns) or provide recognition of employee, volunteer or citizen performance of duty to the County; and
- b.** Actual cost of the beverages and/or light refreshments are itemized by invoice or receipt; and
- c.** Written approval for expenditure and serving of beverages and/or light refreshments is obtained from the department head before the event, EXCEPT for employee or volunteer "recognition" events where Executive approval is also required prior to expenditure.

**NOTE:** This authority is prohibited for "hosting" social events, anniversaries of agencies, individual employment anniversaries, receptions for new, existing, and/or retiring employees, etc. However, under the provisions of RCW 41.60.150, the County may incur expenditures for beverages and light refreshments as part of recognition awards. Such expenditures must not exceed the limit established in RCW 41.60.150. This limit is currently \$1 00.

**2. Non-allowable expenditures:**

- a. Alcoholic beverages.
- b. Water cooler or bottled water service.

**B. Volunteer and Employee In-County Meals**

**1. Criteria for authorizing payment of volunteer meals:**

- a. Meals may be provided to volunteers during County-sponsored meetings or events, where the purpose of the meeting or event is to conduct official County business or provide formal training that benefits the County. Written Executive pre-authorization is required.
- b. Meals may be provided to volunteers in times of necessity when the conducting of official County business requires volunteers to work through their normal meal period. Written Executive pre-authorization is required.
- c. Meals may be provided to volunteers if upon a sponsoring department head's written recommendation, special recognition of a volunteer's performance of service to the County is warranted and appropriate. Situations that warrant special recognition may vary. Written Executive pre-authorization is required.

*Examples: (1) A department head buys lunch for a panel of professionals who provided their expertise or services for a day to the department at no charge.  
(2) A department head honors department's volunteer clerical workers by taking them to lunch annually.*

**2. Criteria for authorizing employee in-county meal expenditures:**

- a. Meals may be provided to employees during the course of County sponsored meetings or events where the purpose of the meeting or event is to conduct County business, or during formal training that benefits the County. Written department head pre-authorization is required.
- b. Meals may be provided to employees during times where necessity for conducting County business requires employees to work through their normal meal periods (in addition to or instead of their regular working hours). Written department head pre-authorization is required.

- C. Meals may be provided to employees during County-sponsored events for special recognition of that employee's performance of service to the County. Written Executive pre-authorization is required.
- d. Meals may be provided to employees when their participation is required to facilitate recognition of a volunteer's performance of service to the County. Written Executive pre-authorization is required.

*Example: A department head assigns a supervisor to take their department's volunteer out to breakfast in a show of appreciation for his or her many hours of the volunteered service. Both the supervisor's and the volunteer's meals are reimbursable.*

- e. Food and beverages may be provided to members of special project teams (employees and/or volunteers) during County-sponsored events, in recognition of significant achievements. Written Executive pre-authorization is required.

*Example: "Pizza & pop " are provided by sponsoring departments to ABC Safety Team during a special meeting (either on or off-site), in recognition of successful completion of the team's year-long project.*

- f. Food and beverages may be provided to employees and their families during annually occurring County-sponsored event (traditionally referred to as the "County picnic"), in recognition of employees' collective and/or individual performance of service to the County. Written Executive pre-authorization is required.

**3. Criteria for authorizing payment of other expenditures (non-meal):**

- a. Reimbursement for travel and/or lodging may be provided to volunteers if expenditures for such are incurred during the course of conducting official County business or for formal training that benefits the County. Written department head and Executive pre-authorizations are required.
- b. Under emergency conditions, providing lodging to essential employees may be necessary, if in conducting essential County services it is necessary for those employees to remain overnight at an accessible site and extreme road conditions make it dangerous for the employee to travel to or

from home. In such cases, the County Executive may authorize expenditure for employee in-county overnight accommodations.

*Example: During a severe weather storm-For the purpose of getting essential employees to work and maintaining the County's accessibility to them, road crew workers living in heavily affected areas may be provided motel accommodations.*

#### **4. Expenditure Limits:**

Meals, travel and lodging costs shall be limited to the actual cost, not to exceed the maximum allowances set forth in the Employee Travel Policy. Per diem rate exception: Actual meal cost shall be paid in full for banquet type events where there is a set rate for each attendee. Receipts are required.

Note: Alcoholic beverages are not allowable expenditures. Gratuities (tips) up to 15% of the pre-tax meal amount are allowed in addition to the per diem rate for meal reimbursement.