8.1.3 Provision of Mobile Equipment and Related Services

Last updated on: 08/30/2012

Formerly Known As Policy Number: 81.3

This guide memo outlines policy on the provision of Equipment/Services. The policy requires that the employee’s supervisor approve the Stanford business need for Equipment/Services. The policy establishes the responsibilities of the employee and the department regarding any personal use of Equipment/Services. Schools and departments may adopt stricter provisions. The policy sets further requirements regarding the use and maintenance of Equipment/Services.

Authority:
Approved by the Vice President for Business Affairs and Chief Financial Officer.

Applicability:
This policy applies to all individuals who are provided with or are reimbursed for expenses relating to mobile phones, tablets (iPad), and like equipment (“Equipment”), and communications services (e.g., cellular and data services and Internet services) in support of such equipment (“Services”) by Stanford. The policy also applies to supervisors and managers who approve these arrangements.

Group or shared Equipment/Services such as those used for rotating on-call contact are exempt from this policy.

Mobile equipment expenses are not normally chargeable to federally-funded sponsored projects or to state-funded projects subject to OMB Circular A-21 (Research Policy Handbook 15.4 [1], Section A2, A3). The Office of Sponsored Research must approve exceptions when a proposal is submitted.

1. Background

The use of mobile phones, tablets, and similar devices, and related communication services by Stanford employees in the course of their work is common. Stanford often provides these devices to employees to improve communication, productivity and work efficiency, to facilitate telework, working between multiple campus locations and to otherwise enhance the contributions of employees. Stanford policies generally require University property to be used only for Stanford business use. However, this policy recognizes that a portion of the use of Equipment/Services may be for non-business use, such as personal phone calls or emails.

As Internet service is a nearly ubiquitous household utility, similar to basic telephone service and electricity, the University does not provide reimbursement for home Internet connectivity. Employees who are required to have home Internet service to fulfill job requirements and for whom purchasing the service is a significant financial hardship may request an exception to this policy. Exceptions must be approved by the responsible Vice Provost, Vice President, Dean, or his/her designee based on business necessity and demonstrated
2. Stanford Business Use

a. Stanford Business Use Required
Stanford's resources are constrained by donor, sponsor and budgetary restrictions. Expenditures for Equipment/Services must follow a strict approval process, tied to demonstrated business need, rather than as compensation in the form of the latest technological gadget. Frequent turnover of such Equipment is discouraged. The employee's supervisor will determine and approve the Stanford business necessity for providing Equipment/Services to the employee, based upon the employee's job duties, budget availability and local policy, custom and practice. Simple convenience is not a criterion for a cell phone allowance. The approval process will include a review of all aspects of the Equipment/Services insuring that they are provided at a minimum cost to Stanford consistent with the Stanford business requirements of the employee. The supervisor will determine the minimum cost Stanford IT plan available, and the appropriate level of Equipment to be provided, considering the features needed for the business use. When a Stanford IT plan is not appropriate, the department may provide a tax-free stipend in the employee's paycheck to support the business use of employee-provided Equipment/Services. The "other recurring pay" should be no higher than the approximate cost of the anticipated Stanford business use of Equipment/Services with the maximum stipend being $25 per month.

b. Supervisory Approval
The supervisor (or school designee) must approve the provision of the Equipment/Services, following their normal School or Department practice for documentation of pre-approval of a business expense. A template that may be used for documentation is available at Stanford's Gateway to Financial Activities [2]. Annual review of the necessity of Equipment/Services provided to a supervisor's staff is strongly encouraged.

c. Business Necessity
Stanford business necessity occurs when one of these factors is present:

- It is vital for the mobile employee to be in constant touch with the office, lab or medical facility.
- The employee is responsible for emergency preparedness and must be available and on-call around-the-clock for a specific business period.
- A group of employees has the need for group or shared Equipment/Services such as rotating on-call contact.
- The employee does not have access to a landline or other communication device when doing a substantial portion of his or her job and communication with the supervisor or other Stanford business parties is required.
- The employee's job effectiveness will show a significant increase through the use of Equipment/Services.
- The Equipment/Services eliminate or reduce the need for the employee to go back and forth to the office, consistent with University goals to reduce traffic, benefit the environment and increase employee productivity.
- Provision of Equipment/Services is the most cost-effective way to meet the business communication requirements of the mobile employee.
- The Equipment/Services are necessary to support an off-site office, which is the employee's principal office for their Stanford work.

d. Personal Use of Equipment and Services
Provided that the Stanford business need for the service is significant and consistent over a substantial period
of time, the personal use of Equipment/Services is not otherwise limited. However, the department and the employee's supervisor reserve the right to suspend provision of Equipment/Services in the case of excessive personal use.

3. Proper Use and Selection

a. Mobile Equipment and Service Selection
The supervisor will determine the minimum cost Stanford IT plan available, and the appropriate level of Equipment to be provided, considering the features needed for business use. When a Stanford IT mobile program plan is not appropriate, the department may provide a stipend in the employee’s paycheck to support the business use of the employee-provided Equipment/Services.

b. Use and Protection of University Provided Equipment and Services
Equipment paid for by Stanford is the property of the Stanford department that paid for it. When an employee leaves Stanford or transfers from one department to another, Equipment furnished to the employee must be returned to the issuing department. It is expected that Equipment paid for by Stanford, where appropriate and feasible, will be in the possession of the employee at all times and be functional during the employee’s business day. Employees must take all necessary measures to protect the Equipment from theft or damage.

c. Laws and Policies Regulating Use of Equipment
The employee will be solely responsible for understanding and complying with all applicable laws and University policies relating to the use of Equipment/Services, including highway safety laws relating to cell phone and PDA usage, copyright laws, ergonomic use guidelines, privacy and security protocols and University export control and data security policies. See Guide Memo 6.3.1[3]: Information Security.

d. Preference for Stanford IT-provided Equipment/Services
It is the responsibility of employees and their supervisors to make sure that Equipment purchased is appropriate for the technical support capabilities of the School or Department. Stanford IT-provided Equipment/Services should be used in nearly every case. The accumulation of campus-wide purchases enhances the buying power of Stanford IT and generally provides the lowest prices possible. A large common pool of Equipment is also easier for the University to maintain and account for.

e. Further Requirements of Particular Schools and Departments
Schools and Departments may establish local policies and procedures to further regulate or restrict the provision of Equipment/Services in their own units, if the University-wide policy is also followed.

4. Implementation and Exceptions

a. Mobile Equipment and Services
If the supervisor has determined that the Stanford IT mobile program plan is not appropriate for the Equipment/Services required by an employee based on business necessity, the department may provide a stipend in the employee’s paycheck to support the business use of employee-provided mobile Equipment/Services.

b. Administration of the Mobile Equipment/Services Paycheck Stipend
To receive a paycheck stipend, the Department HR Administrator may enter an employee cell phone supplement using the Supplemental Pay Webform with the Earnings Code of ‘CEL’. The supplement may be entered to continue indefinitely, however, the business need for mobile Equipment/Services should be reviewed periodically by each employee’s manager, or other financial staff in the business unit. Employees may be approved to receive a stipend of up to $25 monthly.

c. Internet Services
If the supervisor has determined that the employee is required to have home internet service to fulfill job requirements, and it has been determined that it is a financial hardship for the employee to do so, the department may provide a stipend in the employee's paycheck to support the business use of home internet services.

d. Administration of the Home Internet Equipment/Services Paycheck Stipend
With approval from the responsible Vice Provost, Vice President, Dean, or his/her designee, an employee who is required to have home Internet service to fulfill job requirements and who has demonstrated financial hardship may receive a paycheck supplement. A template that may be used for documentation is available here [4].

Upon approval, the paycheck supplement may be requested by contacting HR Transaction Services at hractions@stanford.edu [5]. The request should include the employees name, employee ID number and evidence of approval. Supplements must be reauthorized each fiscal year, following the same request process. Employees may be approved to receive a supplement of up to $35 monthly.