

Mobile Communications Equipment and Data Service Plans

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why the revision to the current guidelines?

The University Vice Presidents determined a review should be made of the fiscal procedures related to the approval, acquisition and use of such devices and services. A working committee was charged to develop revised guidelines with the goal of improving fiscal accountability within the context of today's public perception of such expenditures. Also, advances in technology necessitated expansion of the guidelines to include equipment and data services not previously covered.

2. Who is eligible to be reimbursed for personally-owned mobile communication devices and related services?

A limited number of employees with job responsibilities requiring essential and significant use of such services and authorized by their supervisor/fiscal agent will be eligible for a monthly stipend subject to senior administrative approval. **Both** of the following qualifications must be met:

1. The employee performs essential work in one of the following functional areas:

- *Advancement*
- *Information technology*
- *Public safety and essential services*
- *Faculty or staff who frequently travel on University business*

2. The employee's job requires significant use of mobile communications equipment and/or Internet service plans.

3. What is meant by essential and significant use?

Essential use applies to employees whose job duties fall within one of the listed functional areas above and require communication or connectivity during off hours or away from connected work stations.

Significant use pertains to use of mobile communication or connectivity that is frequent or extensive and much greater than occasional use.

Both of these requirements must be met in order to qualify for a stipend payment under the revised procedures.

4. What is the maximum amount of stipend that can be received?

The annual per employee stipend amount cannot exceed \$900 and is limited as follows:

- Up to \$500 per year – for mobile communications equipment and any related service plan (see definition) only; or
- Up to \$500 per year – for Internet service plan (see definition) only; or
- Up to \$900 per year – maximum per employee for both mobile communications equipment (including any related service plan) and Internet service plan.

5. If I am provided a stipend payment, are there any restrictions for making personal calls?

No, the benefit of personally owning your mobile communication equipment and plans and receiving a reimbursement for a portion of the cost is that it can be used both personally and for business without restrictions or the need to provide a detailed account of usage.

6. Does this policy/procedure cover acquisition and use of equipment such as laptops and iPads?

No. Devices that do not require a service contract to operate are not considered mobile communications equipment and can be acquired within regular University procurement and equipment use policies. However, related internet service plans acquired for use by these devices are governed within this policy.

7. How do you request a monthly stipend payment?

A *Mobile Communication Stipend Request* form must be completed by each employee requesting a monthly stipend. The request must be authorized by the employee's supervisor, fiscal agent (if different than supervisor), and approved by a senior administrator (President, Vice President or Athletic Director) and then forwarded to Human Resources for processing. Form can be found [here](#).

8. How will I receive my stipend payment?

The monthly stipend payment will be included as part of your regular paycheck at the end of each month regardless of whether you are paid on a semi-monthly or monthly basis.

9. When will phone stipends renewed on 7/1/13 end?

Current cell phone related stipends will only be in effect through 12/31/2013 and will automatically be terminated by Human Resources. Any previously approved stipends cannot be "grandfathered" to remain in effect.

Anyone qualifying for a stipend under the revised guidelines must submit a new *Mobile Communication Stipend Request* with applicable senior administrative approval before 1/10/2014 to be effective beginning in January, 2014.

10. Is payment of a stipend considered taxable compensation?

Yes, the University is required to include the amount of stipend payments in the taxable wages reported on an employee's W-2. However, employees may be able to claim offsetting business related expenses on their personal tax returns. Stipend payment amounts cannot be grossed up to cover any applicable taxes.

11. Does a new stipend request form have to be submitted at the beginning of each fiscal year?

No. Once the stipend has been approved and processed by HR, it will continue until the employee is no longer eligible to receive the stipend due to a change in job duties or termination. At the end of each fiscal year, HR will send supervisors a list of their employees currently receiving stipends for verification that they should continue.

12. How do you cancel a monthly stipend payment if an employee's job duties change and they are no longer eligible?

The employee's supervisor should complete a *Mobile Communication Equipment and Related Services Cancellation Request* form and forward it to Human Resources for processing. Form can be found [here](#).

13. How do you change the amount of a monthly stipend?

A new *Mobile Communications Equipment Request* form must be completed and approved with the new effective date and revised amount.

14. Can units request an exception to the maximum annual dollar amount for stipends?

No. Stipends are not intended to cover the full cost for personally owned mobile communications devices or for Internet service. It is assumed there is both personal and business use of the devices or services.

15. What about mobile communication and data/internet charges incurred during business travel for the University?

Mobile communication and data/internet business expense incurred while in travel status will continue to be reimbursed through the travel reimbursement process. The policy for travel reimbursements can be found at <http://travel.illinoisstate.edu/reimbursements/>.

16. Are departments permitted to provide University owned mobile communication devices and related data services to their employees?

No. University owned mobile communication equipment and related service plans cannot be purchased and assigned directly to individuals. The guidelines do permit departments to purchase mobile communications equipment and related service plans for groups of employees who will share the equipment for University business purposes.

17. What does it mean to provide mobile communications equipment and related service plans for groups of employees for University business purposes? How are groups different than individuals?

Group equipment is not assigned to any one specific individual, but is used by various individuals at different times. For example, some employees in service units with multiple shifts, such as Facilities or Housing, need to be able to communicate with their central offices as they go from location to location conducting their work. In the case of group equipment, the employee turns in the mobile communications equipment at the end of the shift to be used by the next employee on the shift. Such phones typically do not leave the campus, although there may be situations in which it is necessary.

18. How does a department acquire University owned mobile communications equipment?

All purchases of equipment and services for group use must be coordinated through the Administrative Technologies Business Office, in accordance with their established procedures. Departments are responsible for identifying and requesting equipment and services that meet their business needs in the most economical fashion, including, for example, the purchase of pagers. They also must monitor the use of group equipment and related services to ensure that they are used for only University business.

19. What do I do with the University owned phone/equipment that is currently assigned to me for individual use?

If the current contract for the service expires prior to 1/1/2014 (including contracts continuing on month-to-month basis), you should do one of the following:

- a) Turn in to the Administrative Technologies Business Office for reassignment as group phone/equipment, or
- b) If needed as group phone/equipment within your department, contact the Administrative Technologies Business Office to have it reassigned as group phone/equipment. Identify the employee assigned responsibility for management of the phone/equipment use.

If the contract for service expires after 1/1/2014, you are permitted to continue individual use of the phone/equipment until the expiration of the contract (including those converting to month to month basis). At the time of expiration, turn in phone/equipment to Administrative Technologies for reassignment as noted above.

20. Can I purchase my old phone/equipment from the University?

No. All University purchased equipment is state property and will be repurposed for University use or transferred to the Illinois Department of Central Management Services.

21. What if I have questions that are not addressed in the FAQ?

Additional questions may be submitted to fiscalproc949@ilstu.edu.