

# West Virginia University/Research Corporation

## Cell Phone Stipend Guidelines

**Effective Date:** November 10, 2015

**Revision Date:** January 1, 2017

**Purpose:** The revised cell phone policy is meant to ensure a consistent, efficient and fair process for employees whose job responsibilities require regular phone and/or data connectivity.

**Scope:** This plan applies to all West Virginia University (WVU) and West Virginia University Research Corporation (WVURC) employees.

**Allowances:** Cell phone allowances are treated as non-taxable compensation and are processed through the WVU/WVURC University payroll systems. These stipends are provided to employees for business use and are therefore not considered compensation. Employees who receive a cell phone allowance must subscribe directly with cellular service providers and pay the providers directly, unless external regulatory requirements dictate that phones must be provided by the University. WVU/WVURC will not be responsible for procuring any personal cellular services except where regulated. The cell phone allowance rates are based on contracted prices obtained from the University's preferred vendor, US Cellular. However, employees may use the carrier of their choice.

**Oversight Responsibility:** Deans/Directors of the associated areas shall be responsible for oversight and approval of each employee's allowance request. Overall program responsibility resides with WVU Procurement, Contracting and Payment Services.

**Eligibility Guidelines:** Allowance requests will be considered for approval based on business need, not an employee's position or longevity. An EBO-based annual review shall be conducted to include an assessment of each authorized employee's need for cellular access for business purposes, as duties and responsibilities can change over time. The responsibility for determining business need, justification, and for supplying funding will rest with the employing unit. The cell phone may be charged directly to a sponsored award (grant) only under the following conditions:

- It is essential and directly allocable to the project
- The cost does not exceed the equipment capitalization cost per unit (currently \$5,000)
- It is included in the proposal's detailed budget and budget justification with an explanation of how the device is essential to the project, and
- The device itself is internally tracked by the responsible department maintaining effective care, custody and control of the device.

The cellular phone allowance is intended for professionals who are on-call or frequently work outside of normal office locations, and who need cellular access to fulfill their job duties. The stipend is also intended for critical decision-makers who are expected to be able to perform their duties during crisis situations. The stipend is not intended for convenience or casual use.

Employees who are approved for a cellular phone allowance and work less than 12 months per year will be issued a stipend based upon their contract dates. If it is determined that the employee is due the allowance for the entire year, the amount due for their off-contract time period will be distributed over the actual months they are on contract.

**Allowance Amount:** The cellular access allowance is intended to cover the cost of an individual's basic phone and data plan for business needs. Three levels of allowances are available:

- \$25 per month stipend (Example: based on the cost of an unlimited talk, text and 1GB of data plan from US Cellular) Note: This is the stipend amount, not the amount of the plan.
- \$50 per month stipend (Example: based on the cost of the unlimited talk, text and 6GB of data plan at US Cellular) Note: This is the stipend amount, not the amount of the plan.
- \$175 per month stipend (Example: based on the cost of an International Plan)

**Cellular Access Allowance Request:** Approved employees should complete and return a signed authorization form ([Stipend Form](#)) to their respective EBO for verification and payroll processing. The EBO then forwards the approved form to appropriate payroll office for processing and implementation.

Note: Employees receiving the Cellular Access Allowance can procure service from the carrier of their choice; however, the allowance will only be based on the aforementioned allowance rates and are dependent upon the level of service needed.

**Employee Responsibility:** Upon approval, the employee is responsible for arranging their own cellular phone service. As a convenience, WVU has negotiated a new arrangement with US Cellular where WVU/WVURC employees can enjoy the following benefits:

- A 25% discount off all current and future Consumer Rate Plan offerings
- Contract buyout up to \$350 per subscriber line, when subscriber line is new to US Cellular
- 25% off accessories list pricing

All current cell phone allowance stipends will expire with the December 31, 2015 paycheck and will be replaced with the newly requested stipends. The employee is responsible for working with US Cellular to revise their current contract and take advantage of the revised pricing.

For employees that currently receive cell phone allowance stipends, their respective EBO's will be reviewing and submitting the new stipend amount. For employees requesting stipends after the initial conversion, they will need to complete the "WVU/WVURC Cell Phone Stipend Authorization Form" and obtain approval from their respective EBO's.

US Cellular will provide a dedicated account team to assist you with facilitating phone training for new users, fulfilling orders, delivering or shipping equipment, answering questions regarding products and services and other field support.