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Business Expense Policy Initiative [1]

Introducing a Smarter Approach to University Expense Policies

Clearer decisions. Stronger stewardship. Easier administration.

Targeted Go-Live: January 1, 2027

Finding the right guidance for university business expenses is about to get easier! The University of Colorado is introducing a new Business Expenses Finance Procedural Statement (FPS), effective January 1, 2027. The new policy brings together guidance from several existing policies and procedures, making it easier to understand what's allowable, how to properly document expenses, and which approvals are needed.

Webinar

Training video coming in December

Why We Refreshed Our Approach

Sensitive Expenses

Insights from multi-campus audits and feedback from staff across the system revealed a clear opportunity to improve how policy works in practice:

- **From Scattered Rules to One Centralized Hub:** Guidance for sensitive expenses, official functions, recognition, gift cards, and alcohol used to live across separate policies and forms—creating unnecessary "Which policy do I look at?" moments. We have consolidated these rules into a single, cohesive hub with direct links to campus-specific procedures, Administrative Policy Statements (APSs), and Procurement Service Center (PSC) guidance.
- **From Rigid Checklists to a Decision Framework:** The former Sensitive Expenses policy relied heavily on a static Yes/No matrix that struggled to keep pace with modern work environments. Our new model pairs clear category rules and real-world examples with a repeatable judgment framework so you can evaluate both everyday and gray-area scenarios with confidence.
- **From Downstream Cleanup to Upstream Clarity:** By integrating expense types, account codes, and documentation requirements directly into Concur and CU Marketplace workflows, we are eliminating duplicate forms and unnecessary blanket approvals.

What’s New in the Business Expenses Policy

1. One Policy Hub

Common business expense rules—including Official Functions, Recognition & Training, Gift Cards, and Alcohol—now live together in one streamlined policy. Where local campus rules, sponsor restrictions, or PSC procedures apply, they are clearly linked right where you need them.

2. A Repeatable Decision Framework

Instead of memorizing lists of exceptions, every transaction is guided by two simple tools:

- **The 8 Tests of Propriety:** Eight foundational questions confirming that an expense is for official University business, in CU’s best interests, reasonable in cost, free of conflicts of interest, and beneficial to the unit charged.
- **The "Outsider" Lens:** A practical stewardship check for gray areas—asking whether a reasonable outsider would view the purchase as an appropriate use of University funds if publicly reported.

3. Five Steps: Decide Before You Spend

The refreshed approach shifts critical checks upstream so there are no surprises during reconciliation:

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Purpose

What University objective are we accomplishing?

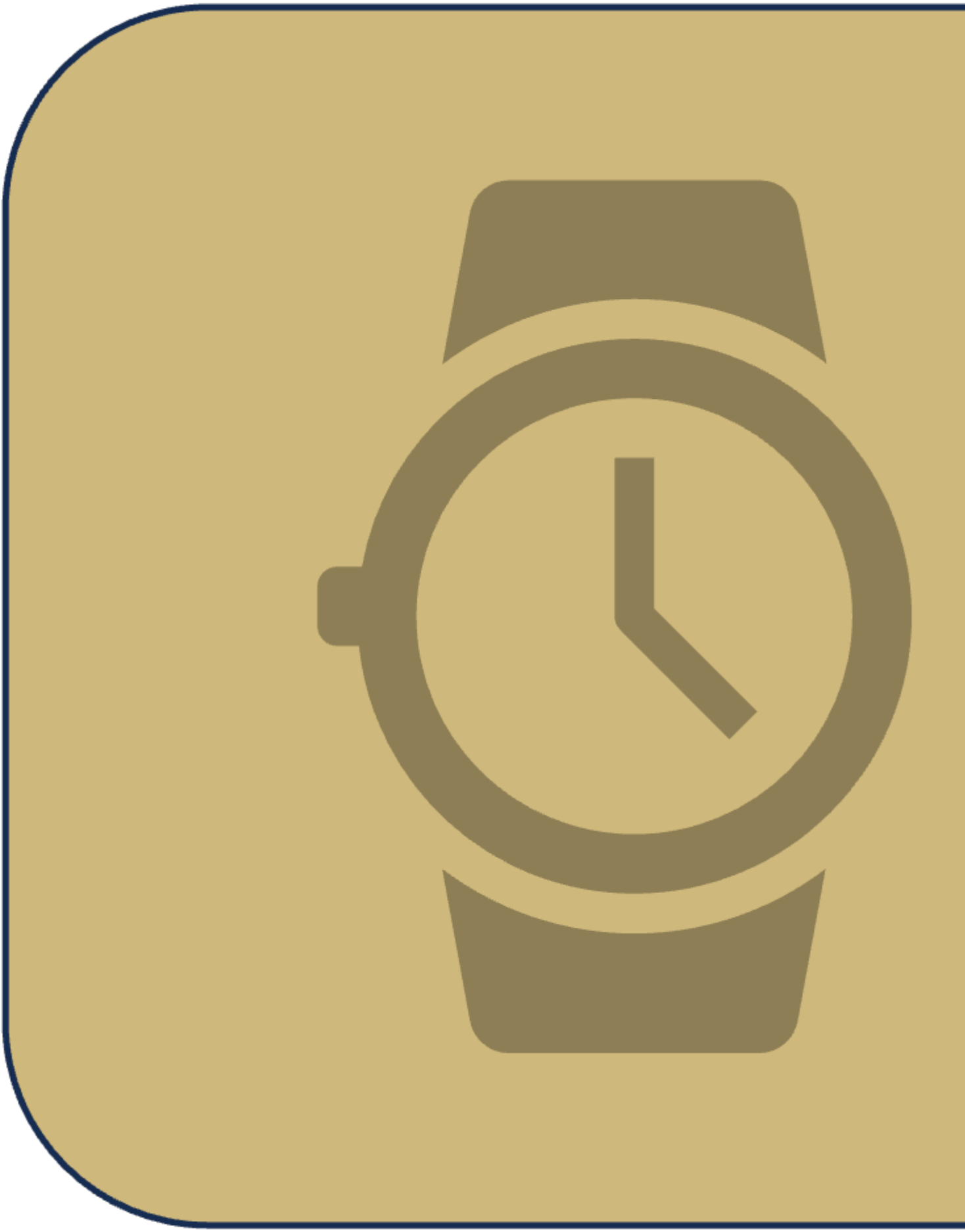
4. Clear Answers for Modern Work

The updated policy directly addresses high-impact scenarios that previously caused confusion:

- I**nternal Meetings & Virtual Attendees:** Clear distinctions between routine staff meals (typically not allowable) and critical/strategic meetings (may be allowable within per diem limits), plus explicit guidance that University funds cannot be used to provide meals to virtual participants.
- **Remote Work & Personal Locations:** Direct rules clarifying allowability for computing equipment, shipping to home addresses, and non-allowable home office expenses like furniture, utilities, and personal internet.
- **Recognition, Flowers & Gift Cards:** Purpose-driven rules that remove automatic officer-approval bottlenecks for goodwill flowers, while clearly outlining tax-reporting thresholds for employee and non-employee awards.

What This Means for You

- **Employees & Purchasers:** Spend less time searching for rules and filling out redundant forms. Start with your business purpose, check allowability before you buy, and let Concur or CU Marketplace guide your documentation.
- **Department Approvers:** Review transactions with clearer standards, better system routing, and explicit alignment between expense types and required documentation.
- **Finance & Support Teams:** Deliver consistent guidance across units while reserving formal escalation channels for true policy exceptions.



Timeline & Resources

Preparing for January 1, 2027: The refreshed Business Expenses policy and updated system workflows will take effect on **January 1, 2027**. Between now and go-live, continue following current policies while reviewing the upcoming changes and attending campus training sessions.

Groups audience:
Controller
Right Sidebar:
FPS Initiative Campuses

Source URL:https://www.cu.edu/controller/business-expense-policy-initiative

Links
[1] https://www.cu.edu/controller/business-expense-policy-initiative