1. What are the responsibilities of the department in setting up a communication technology allowance for an employee?

The department is responsible for the following:

- Determining whether the employee meets eligibility requirements as identified in the Communication Technology Allowance Policy based on the employee’s position and job duties and responsibilities.
- Completing the Communication Technology Allowance Request Form describing what job responsibilities meet the eligibility requirements, determining the appropriate allowance amount using CTA and Reimbursement Procedures, and attaching a copy of the employee’s recent personal cellular service statement(s) substantiating the requested allowance.
- Obtaining required signature approvals for form.
- At least annually, or more frequently if the employee’s personal cell phone and/or data plan changes or if the employee’s job duties and responsibilities change, review and renew authorizations for communication technology allowances. Departments must review prior billing(s) to confirm monthly usage for on-going eligibility.
- In some cases an employee’s cellular service plan may extend across two University fiscal years. The department should establish a monitoring system to ensure approved allowances that extend beyond the University’s fiscal year-end get re-established in the payroll system.
- Terminating the monthly communication technology allowance to the employee upon termination, transfer, changes in job duties and responsibilities, usage, or device inactivation.

2. What are the responsibilities of the employee receiving a communication technology allowance?

University employees who qualify for and receive a communication technology allowance will be responsible for:

- Maintaining a valid cellular/data service provider plan.
- Acquiring and maintaining devices/equipment necessary in order to utilize his/her cellular/data service plan.
- Notifying his/her employing department within ten (10) days of the inactivation of his/her cellular/data service plan.
- Notifying his/her employing department within ten (10) days of when the device is no longer needed for the performance of the employee’s job responsibilities.
- Notifying his/her employing department within ten (10) days of a change to a significantly lower cost cellular/data service plan.
- Understanding that contracts entered into by eligible employees are personal cellular/data service plan contracts and are solely the responsibility of the employee, not the University.
• Understanding that the University has no obligation and makes no guarantees with respect to such service contracts and is not obligated to continue payment for any reason.

3. For employees who are provided with a University owned cellular phone and service plan are the responsibilities different for the department and employee?

Yes, they are different.

University employees responsibilities:
• Take appropriate and reasonable measures to safeguard devices against misuse, theft or other loss.
• Limit personal calls to only those that are urgent in nature. *Limit use of data plans on mobile computing devices to University business use.* (rev. 8/26/2010) ISU allows incidental personal use of communication devices/services provided such use does not interfere with University business operations or obligations and does not burden the University with additional communication service plan costs. Employees needing on-going access to communication technology for personal reasons must provide their own personal devices and plans.

Department responsibilities:
• Monitor and review monthly cellular/data service bills for personal calls.
• Seek reimbursement for personal calls at the plan’s per minute rate or the actual cost of the plan, whichever is greater.
• Maintain documentation that the monthly bills have been reviewed and reimbursement has been received for personal calls.

4. Can communication technology allowances be paid from sponsored funding? (e.g. 4xx, 6xx funds)

No, allowances cannot be paid from federally funded accounts, except where costs meet the definition of “unlike circumstances” and are allowable in accordance with OMB Circular A-21, Exhibit C and the university’s Sponsored Programs Costing Policy. In addition, the use of funds from sponsored accounts that are non-federal may also carry sponsor restrictions that do not allow these types of costs. Sponsored Programs Accounting should be contacted for any questions related to allowability.

5. How does a department determine an appropriate amount to be paid as a monthly cellular allowance?

The method of determination will depend upon the type of allowance and whether it is for cellular voice/text, ISP data, or wireless modem service. See Communication Allowance and Reimbursement Procedures for specific examples – http://www.controller.iastate.edu/controller/ctaproc.pdf.

6. How does a department pay an authorized employee for a communication technology allowance?
After determining the employee meets the rules for eligibility, completing the CTA request form, determining the appropriate allowance amount, and obtaining approval, departments should process an electronic payroll personnel action (EPA), coding the monthly allowance amount as additional compensation. Allowances should be established through the end of the current fiscal year. Approved allowances that extend over into the next fiscal year will need to be re-established in the payroll system after July 1st.

7. How will communication technology allowances be reported to the IRS?

The additional compensation for the communication technology allowances will be reported on employees’ W-2s and be subject to withholding taxes. This additional compensation will not be considered for other benefit calculation purposes.

8. If the employee’s monthly contract service plan rate goes up or, for example, data services are added to a voice plan, can the department change the amount of the allowance during the year?

Yes, if a substantial change is necessary, the department can process a new communication technology allowance request form, obtain appropriate documentation, approvals and process a new electronic personnel action through payroll to revise the allowance amount. Adjustments may not go back more than 60 days from the date the payroll action is initiated.

9. The policy applies only to Professional and Scientific, Faculty, and exempt Merit employees not covered by the AFSCME bargaining contract. What about non-exempt Merit employees?

When communication technology is determined by the employing department to be needed, departments can continue to provide non-exempt Merit employees with University-owned cellular devices for business purposes.

10. Can a department authorize a stipend for less than 12 months if the department has a need to pay for services on a short-term basis?

Yes.

11. If an employee terminates, will the department be required to do anything to stop communication technology allowance payments from being paid as additional compensation?

Yes, the department must indicate under the Special Conditions section of the employee’s Electronic Personnel Action that the communication technology allowance (additional compensation) is being terminated also. THIS IS NOT AUTOMATIC. In situations where the employee terminates his/her employment in the middle of the month, the department should pro-rate the allowance to be paid.

12. If an employee qualifies for both cellular voice and one of the data services, can approval for both be processed on one Communication Technology Allowance Request Form?
Yes.

13. **Do eligible employees have to complete a new Communication Technology Allowance Request Form each year?**

Yes, the approval is only valid for one (1) year from the final approval date. Departments are responsible for setting up payroll allowances for only the one year time period that has been approved. For example, an allowance is approved for one year starting November 1st. The employing department will initially set up the allowance for the November through June time period and then again when the new fiscal year starts, from July through October.

14. **Are there any circumstances where an employee may be reimbursed for equipment costs related to their Communication Technology Allowance?**

No. The employee is solely responsible for having equipment to utilize cellular voice and/or data services related to their Communication Technology Allowance.

15. **What does the department do if an employee isn’t eligible for a Communication Technology Allowance and uses minutes on their personal cell phone to conduct University business? The employee wants reimbursement for a percentage of their personal bill and the minutes used did not cause the employee to exceed their monthly minute plan.**

In such cases where the employee’s monthly minute plan is not exceeded and there is no additional documented cost incurred by the employee in making such calls, no reimbursement will be made. See Communication Technology Allowance and Reimbursement Procedures for specific details - http://www.controller.iastate.edu/controller/ctaproc.pdf.

16. **Can the amount of the communication technology allowance be “grossed up” for payroll taxes?**

No. The amount of the allowance may include the proportionate share of taxes billed by the cellular service provider but should not include an amount for personal payroll taxes.

17. **How is this policy beneficial to the University?**

The amount of paper work and audit of communication technology reimbursement requests will be decreased from a monthly review and payment through the employee reimbursement system to an annual review and automated monthly payment through payroll. The new policy allows employees the freedom to combine both their personal and business usage into one phone.

Currently the Internal Revenue Service is auditing universities for communication device usage to determine if there is personal use of institutionally provided communication devices. This policy should align our institution with the IRS regulations related to communication device usage.
18. The Open Records Law currently applies to University owned contracts. Will my personal phone now be subject to Open Records since I am using it for business?

The University would expect (but could not absolutely guarantee) that personal phone records ordinarily would not be subject to open records requests. In the event an actual lawsuit would be filed, all phones could be subject to discovery and disclosure.

19. What are departmentally owned contracts with pooled minutes?

Some departments find it most cost effective to purchase a cellular service plan and phones with pooled minutes. A pooled minute plan allows any of the phones on the plan to use minutes in the pool. Departments may choose to use a pooled minute plan where phone(s) rotate amongst employees who are covered by a bargaining unit and/or are on-call duty or serving on a rotating shift. Employees covered by bargaining units are not eligible for a communication technology allowance because of labor agreement rules. Departments must track when an employee is in possession of each department owned phone. Other departments may choose to assign both phones and minutes to specific individuals. In both situations, personal use of departmental-owned phones is not allowed except in the case of a personal emergency.

20. If for any reason the department determines an employee no longer requires communication technology devices for business, can the department pay any penalties incurred by the employee when s/he either 1) decreases his/her monthly minutes for lack of the business requirement or 2) cancels his/her contract all together.

No. The University is not responsible for the penalties incurred in either of these situations.