USC University of
Southern California

Research Compliance Guidance: Business Purpose

General

- Clearly articulate the benefit to the project of a charge – for example, relate it to a particular research aim.
- For charges near end dates:
  - Consider whether other projects will benefit and if so, allocate the charge accordingly
  - Provide justification for why charge is needed close to end date
- On Major Research Instrumentation Awards (MRI), consider obtaining a no-cost extension if instrumentation will not be complete before end date and there is a programmatic need to extend the project.
- For equipment upgrades to existing equipment that is still functional but obsolete, clearly articulate the benefits to the project that justify the upgrade.
- For meals, list all attendees and specify relationship or benefit to award.

USC Expense Business Purpose and Approvals policy:
https://policy.usc.edu/expense-business-purpose-and-approvals-expenditures/

Travel-specific considerations

- Discuss benefit to project of all travel in business purpose and include travel in annual and final progress reporting. If applicable, relate travel to publications from collaborations.
- If the specific trip was not budgeted, provide additional justification.
- For business mixed with personal travel:
  - For air fare, document what flight would have costed if for business only and charge lowest fare
  - Per diems only allowed for days related to the business purpose
- Travel with two or more business purposes and a gap in between:
  - For air fare, document what flight would have costed to travel twice
  - Per diems only allowed for days related to the business purpose
- For research collaborations (particularly international collaborations), document each day of research collaboration (e.g., agendas, notes, summaries) and identify collaborators.
- For significant re-budgeting, provide documentation in Budget Reallocation module in Notes/Comments section justifying why the additional travel is necessary.

USC Travel policy: https://policy.usc.edu/travel-expenditures/