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Republic of the Philippines
BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO
Ministry of Finance, and Budget and Management
Bangsamoro Government Center, Rosary Height VII, Cotabato City

BANGSAMORO BUDGET CIRCULAR

No. 2024-0171

26 Jumada Al-Awwal 1446
28 November 2024

TO : **All Heads of Ministries, Parliament, and Offices of the Bangsamoro Government, Accountant, Budget Officers; and All Others Concerned**

SUBJECT : **GUIDELINES ON THE PAYMENT OF COMMUNICATION EXPENSES OF CERTAIN GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL OF THE BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO**

1.0 BACKGROUND

MFBM is cognizant of the importance of communication for delivering accurate, timely, and relevant information, and importance of access to communication services in the efficient performance of the government's mandates, functions and services. Hence, MFBM has been providing funds for allowable communication expenses to certain positions.

With regard to mobile telecommunication services, MFBM has allowed Ministries, Offices, and Agencies (M/O/As) to implement under differing policies to efficiently provide this essential communication service, e.g., procurement via public bidding of institutional/enterprise postpaid accounts from a public telecommunication entity or provider, or on a "pay-first, reimburse-later" basis, and the like. Furthermore, the M/O/As have also adopted varying maximum reimbursable ceilings and/or rates in their respective policies/guidelines on communication expenses.

Following the National Government's lead on appropriate, equitable and prudent use of funds, the Bangsamoro Government will adopt the prescription of guidelines on the payment of communication expenses of certain BARMM personnel.

2.0 PURPOSE

This Circular is being issued to provide the guidelines on the payment of communication expenses incurred by authorized officials and employees in the

Bangsamoro Government in the performance of their official duties and responsibilities.

3.0 SCOPE AND COVERAGE

3.1 This Circular shall cover the communication expenses incurred locally and/or internationally by authorized officials and regular employees of the M/O/As in the Bangsamoro Government in the performance of their official duties and responsibilities.

On the other hand, consultants and experts hired for a limited period to perform specific activities or services with expected outputs, as well as those hired on a contract of service and/or job order basis, shall not be entitled to the payment of communication expenses.

3.2 In crafting their respective internal policies on the payment of communication expenses, the M/O/As concerned shall emphasize the need to ensure the judicious and prudent use of government funds and that there is no duplication of similar or related expenses for the purpose, subject to existing budgeting, accounting and auditing laws, rules and regulations.

4.0 DEFINITION OF TERMS

4.1 **Communication expense** refers to the costs incurred for the availment and use of mobile telecommunication services in aid of the performance of official duties and responsibilities, covering services generally available to the public, such as calls, text messages, internet connectivity/data, and roaming services for voice calls, data, and text messages for work-related matters, in the case of foreign travels.

4.2 **Designation in an Acting Capacity** refers to the imposition of additional and/or higher duties to be performed by a public official/employee which is temporary and can be terminated anytime at the pleasure of the appointing officer/authority. This entails not only the exercise of ministerial functions attached to the position but also the exercise of discretion since the person designated is deemed to be the incumbent of the position.

4.3 **Electronic receipt** refers to evidence of receipt of payment in the form of an electronic document. For the same to be acceptable, the electronic receipt shall abide by pertinent issuances of the Commission on Audit (COA).

4.4 **Mobile service provider** refers to a public telecommunication entity or a virtual network operator, or any entity that provides mobile telecommunication service to subscribers.

- 4.5 **Officer-in-Charge (OIC)** refers to the designation wherein the officials or employees enjoy limited powers, confined to functions of administration and ensuring that the office continues its usual activities.
- 4.6 **Official receipt** refers to paper-based evidence of receipt of payment for disbursements where the payee/recipient is a business establishment required by the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) to issue official receipts for its collections. It may be in the form of cash receipt tape generated by a cash register with the BIR seal.
- 4.7 **Invoice** refers to the written account (printed or electronic) evidencing the sale of goods, properties, services, and/or leasing of properties subject to Value Added Tax issued to customers or buyers in the ordinary course of trade or business, whether cash sales or on account (credit) or charge sales. It shall be the basis of the output tax liability of the seller and the input tax claim of the buyer or purchaser.
- 4.8 **Postpaid subscription** refers to the mobile subscription wherein service is provided by virtue of a prior arrangement with a public telecommunication entity, and the end-user thereof is billed at the end of the monthly billing cycle according to the use of mobile service.
- 4.9 **Prepaid mobile plan** refers to the mobile subscription wherein credit is purchased in advance of service use, which may be paid upfront in-store, online, or through an auto-charge feature. The purchased credit is used to pay for mobile phone services at the point the services are accessed or consumed.
- 4.10 **Public telecommunication entity** refers to any person, firm, partnership or corporation, government or private, engaged in the provision of telecommunication services to the public for compensation.
- 4.11 **Roaming service** refers to the mobile subscriber's ability to automatically make and receive voice calls, send and receive data including short messaging service or access other services outside the range of its home network while connected to another available mobile network whether inside or outside the country.

5.0 ALLOWABLE COMMUNICATION EXPENSES

- 5.1 Officials and employees of M/O/As with the following salary grades (SGs) shall be allowed a maximum monthly communication expense, regardless of the actual amount incurred, in aid of the performance of their official duties and responsibilities:

SG	Maximum Monthly Communication Expense
Chief Minister or equivalent	₱8,000.00
Deputy Chief Ministers or equivalent	₱5,000.00
Deputy Speaker / Members of the Parliament / Ministers or equivalent	
Deputy Ministers / Bangsamoro Directors - General or equivalent	₱3,000.00
Directors III or equivalent	₱2,500.00
Directors II or equivalent	
Director I or equivalent	₱2,000.00
Chiefs of Division or equivalent	

In the case of officials or employees designated as Chief-of-Staff of the head of a M/O/As occupying a position not equivalent to any of the positions specified in the table above, the maximum allowable monthly communication expenses for said official/employee shall be the next lower rate following the maximum monthly communication expenses authorized for the head of the M/O/As concerned.

- 5.2 In the exigency of the service, specified employees in the M/O/As, if any, may be allowed communication expenses for official purposes, on the basis of a specific authorization by the Minister or Head of Office or Agency, except those occupying non-permanent positions, and those that do not have employer-employee relationship.

For this purpose, the specific authorization may be obtained through an appropriate request to the head of the M/O/As, setting forth the reasons and justifications to the effect that the duties and responsibilities of the employee entail expenses for communication services.

However, the allowable communication expenses to other authorized employees shall in **no case exceed the amount of P 1,500.00**, subject to the availability of M/O/As funds, and in line with the prudent use of government resources.

- 5.3 The communication expenses incurred may be from any of the existing mobile service providers in the Philippines, whether through postpaid or prepaid subscription, subject to the substantiation requirements as prescribed under item 7.3 of this Circular.

6.0 GENERAL GUIDELINES ON THE REIMBURSEMENT OF COMMUNICATION EXPENSES

6.1 Communication expenses incurred locally

- 6.1.1 A rationalized scheme on the reimbursement of communication expenses of authorized officials and employees shall be based on the number of days of actual work performance on workdays in a month, as follows:

Total Number of Days of Actual Work Performance in a Month	Communication Expense for the Month
1 to 5	25% of the monthly communication expense
6 to 11	50% of the monthly communication expense
12 to 16	75% of the monthly communication expense
17 and more	100% of the monthly communication expense

6.2 Communication expense incurred during official foreign travel

- 6.2.1 In the case of official foreign travels, the official or employee concerned may claim for the reimbursement of additional communication expenses incurred in excess of the allowable rate prescribed in item 5.1, based on the actual amount of communication expenses incurred, reckoning from the date of departure from the Philippines up to the date of return from the said foreign travel, subject to the submission of additional supporting documentary requirements under item 7.3 of this Circular.

Provided, that the availment of such is done while carrying out official duties and responsibilities. Provided further, that the actual communication expenses incurred for the said foreign travel shall not exceed one hundred percent (100%) of the prescribed rate of communication expenses in item 5.1 of this Circular, regardless of the duration and frequency of travel of the official/employee concerned.

- 6.3 The payment of communication expenses in excess of the allowed maximum monthly expense shall be shouldered by the official/employee concerned.

Further, the mobile device/cellphone unit included under a postpaid subscription, if any, shall be placed under the ownership of the official/employee concerned.

6.4 Officials/Employees Designated in OIC/Acting Capacity

6.4.1 In the case of a personnel who is designated **as OIC** or designated in an **acting capacity** to a position allowed to incur communication expenses per item 5.1 hereof, the following guidelines shall be observed:

- a) If the period of the initial month of designation is **fifteen (15) calendar days or less**, the personnel shall not be allowed to incur the allowable maximum monthly communication expense for the position that he/she is designated to, subject to actual work performance as provided under sub-item 6.1.1 hereof.
- b) If the period of the initial month of designation is **sixteen (16) calendar days or more**, the personnel shall be allowed to incur the allowable maximum monthly communication expense for the position that he/she is designated to, subject to actual work performance as provided under sub-item 6.1.1 hereof. However, it is understood that the personnel concerned shall no longer be allowed to avail the communication expense allowed for his/her previous or original position.

6.4.2 Those designated as OIC or in an Acting Capacity to positions in internally-created organizational units whose staffing is not authorized by MFBM, and thus considered as ad hoc arrangements, shall not be entitled to the reimbursement of communication expenses.

6.5 Officials/Employees Engaged in Projects

In the case of projects which already cover the communication expenses of officials/employees concerned, the payment of communication expenses shall be guided by the following:

6.5.1 Officials/employees enumerated in item 5.1 who are also engaged in a project funded by the Philippine Government, regardless whether through the National Government or the Bangsamoro Government, shall not be entitled to communication expenses charged against the funds allotted for the project;

- 6.5.2 In the case of projects funded by foreign and/or development partners, the officials/employees concerned may have the option to choose whether to avail the reimbursement of communication expenses under the M/O/As available funds or under the funds allotted for the project; and
- 6.5.3 No official/employee shall be allowed to claim for the reimbursement of communication expenses from both the M/O/As available funds and the funds allotted for the project.
- 6.6 For purposes of computing the communication expense of promoted employees, proportionate amount of communication expense shall be determined in accordance with Items 5.1 and Sub-Item 6.1.1 of this Guidelines.
- 6.7 For purposes of this Circular, the following instances shall be construed as actual work performance:
- 6.7.1 Public holiday falling on a working day;
 - 6.7.2 Compensatory time-off in accordance with Civil Service Commission (CSC)-DBM Joint Circular No. 2, s. 2004, as amended;
 - 6.7.3 Forced or mandatory leave in accordance with CSC Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 41, s. 1998;
 - 6.7.4 Special Emergency Leave for employees affected by natural calamities or disasters, provided it is covered by a specific directive/resolution from the Office of the President, the CSC, or any competent authority;
 - 6.7.5 Suspension of work as declared by competent authority;
 - 6.7.6 Incurred undertime per CSC MC No. 17, s. 2010; and
 - 6.7.7 Flexible work arrangements in accordance with CSC MC No. 6, s. 2022.
- 6.8 For purposes of reimbursement of communication expenses, the following leaves, notwithstanding that such are paid and are authorized time-off from work, shall not be construed as actual work performance, regardless of the allowed number of days:
- 6.8.1 Vacation Leave with pay;
 - 6.8.2 Sick Leave with pay;
 - 6.8.3 Special Leave Privileges in accordance with CSC MC No. 41, s. 1998, as amended;
 - 6.8.4 Paternity Leave in accordance with CSC MC No. 5, s. 2021;
 - 6.8.5 The additional seven (7) days allocated by a female employee to the child's father from her maternity leave in accordance with CSC MC No. 5, s. 2021;

- 6.8.6 Parental Leave to Solo Parents in accordance with CSC MC No. 8, s. 2004;
- 6.8.7 Leave for Victims of Violence Against Women and their Children in accordance with CSC MC No. 15, s. 2006;
- 6.8.8 Special Leave Benefits for Women under RA No. 9710 in accordance with CSC MC No. 25, s. 2010;
- 6.8.9 Maternity Leave in accordance with CSC MC No. 5, s. 2021;
- 6.8.10 Maternity Leave for female employees who qualify as solo parents and are thus entitled to an additional fifteen (15) days of Maternity Leave under RA No. 8972 or the Solo Parents' Welfare Act of 2000;
- 6.8.11 Rehabilitation Leave in accordance with CSC-DBM JC No. 1, s. 2006, as amended;
- 6.8.12 Study Leave under CSC MC No. 21, s. 2004; and
- 6.8.13 Adoption Leave in accordance with CSC MC No. 5, s. 2021.

7.0 DOCUMENTARY REQUIREMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES FOR PROCESSING CLAIMS FOR PAYMENT OF COMMUNICATION EXPENSES

- 7.1 Requests for payments of communication expenses shall comply with the fundamental principles of government financial transactions and the prescribed documentary requirements.
- 7.2 For purposes of availing the payment of communication expenses under this Circular, the M/O/As officials and employees shall register or enroll only one (1) mobile number, which will be considered as the official/employee's official number. Said mobile number must be submitted to the M/O/As Administrative Service (or equivalent office/unit) for record and information purposes.

In line with the scope of the Data Privacy Act¹, Government officers and employees are advised to exercise prudence and caution in making their decision to whether or not submit their personal contact numbers as official number for purposes of claiming communication allowance.

- 7.3 The processing of requests for the payment for communication expenses shall be supported by a self-certification that the communication expenses incurred were official in nature and necessary to the performance of official duties and responsibilities (sample self-certification attached as Annex A).
 - 7.3.1 In addition to the self-certification, the following documentary requirements shall be required for certain cases, whichever is applicable:

¹ Republic Act No. 10173 dated August 15, 2012, An Act Protecting Individual Personal Information in Information and Communications Systems in the Government and the Private Sector, Creating for this Purpose a National Privacy Commission, and for Other Purposes, otherwise known as "Data Privacy Act of 2012."

- a) Approved Travel Order and Certificate of Travel Completed, in case of claims for additional communication expenses incurred beyond the maximum allowable amount during official foreign travels.

In this case, the M/O/As Administrative and/or Finance Service (or equivalent office/unit) may require supporting document(s) related to the communication expenses incurred for official foreign travel, such as, but not limited to, monthly bill/statement of account, official/tape/electronic receipt/invoice, and reimbursement expense receipt.

- b) Certification from the parent M/O/A that it is not providing for the communication expenses incurred by the official/employee, in the case of an official/employee on detail/secondment to another M/O/A. Said certification shall be issued once by the parent M/O/A and shall form part of the documentary requirements to be submitted by the concerned official/employee to the recipient M/O/A upon his/her assumption to duty.
- c) Certification to be issued by the parent M/O/A prior to the start of the project implementation, indicating that the communication expenses incurred is to be charged under the M/O/A available funds or funds allotted for the project, in case of official/employee engaged in projects.

- 7.4 The M/O/As Administrative and/or Finance Service (or equivalent office/unit) shall process the claims for payment upon receipt of the complete documentary requirements.

8.0 FUNDING SOURCE

- 8.1 The amounts required for the payment of communication expenses of M/O/As officials and employees shall be charged against the respective available "**Communication Expense**" under the Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE).

In case of deficiency in the provision of "Communication Expense" in the M/O/As budget, the M/O/As may modify objects of expenditures within the MOOE items within an activity or project, subject to the rules on modification in allotment, except those under Mandatory Expenditures cited under the General Provisions of the General Appropriations Act of the Bangsamoro (GAAB) which may only be modified in the last quarter of the year, after taking into consideration the M/O/A's full year requirements, pursuant to applicable provisions of the GAAB and subject to the Priority in

the Use of Savings provision. Provided, that this grant shall have no option for any case of MOOE deficiency to be later covered through augmentation.

The modification shall be supported with an accomplished Modification Advice Form duly signed by the approving authority or his/her designated representative.

9.0 RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

9.1 M/O/As are required through their Administrative and/or Financial Services to institute their respective internal implementing rules, guidelines, and/or procedures following the general guidelines prescribed in this Circular. The M/O/As shall submit copies of their internal implementing rules/guidelines/procedures on or before March 31, 2025.

9.2 The responsibility and accountability in the payment of communication expenses shall rest upon the heads of M/O/As and other officials and employees concerned.

Further, it is the responsibility of the same officials and personnel to ensure the judicious and prudent use of government funds and that no similar or related expenses shall be allowed for the same purpose.

Hence, erring officials and employees shall be held accountable for any reimbursement of communication expenses made not in accordance with the provisions of this Circular, without prejudice to the refund of any excess or unauthorized payments.

9.3 All pertinent provisions of this Circular shall be subject to existing budgeting, accounting and auditing laws, rules and regulations.

10.0 TRANSITORY PROVISIONS

10.1 In cases where there is an ongoing contract for institutional postpaid accounts with a specific telecommunications provider, the termination of existing lines/accounts shall ensue upon the end of contract with the said provider, in accordance with the provisions thereof.

Accordingly, the procurement of enterprise postpaid subscription shall no longer be allowed once the existing contracts for the purpose are terminated.

10.2 All M/O/As with existing internal policies on the payment of communication expenses shall be allowed to adopt the same until December 31, 2024. Accordingly, said M/O/As, beginning January 1, 2025, shall immediately adopt the provisions of this Circular.

11.0 RESOLUTION OF ISSUES

Requests for clarifications or proper interpretation, and other relevant substantial issues and concerns, which may arise or which may be encountered in the course of the implementation of this Circular, shall be referred to the MFBM for resolution.

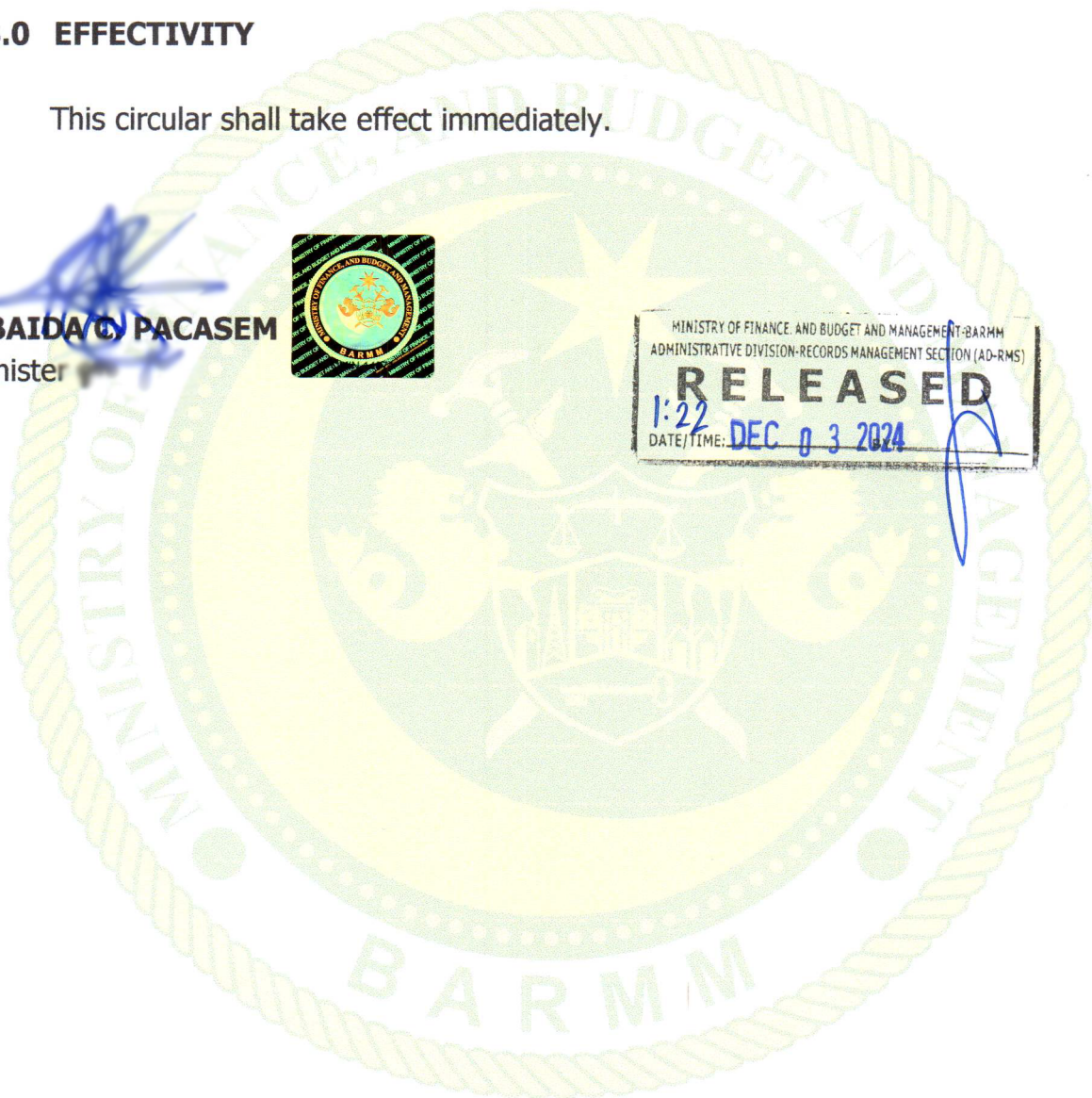
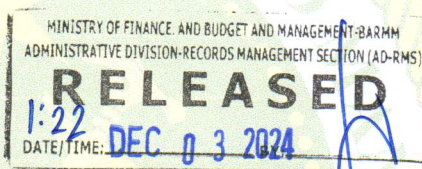
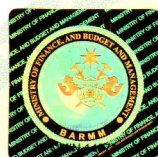
12.0 UPDATING AND REVIEW

The guidelines prescribed under this Circular shall be periodically reviewed and updated, as necessary, in accordance with subsequent policies on the matter.

13.0 EFFECTIVITY

This circular shall take effect immediately.


UBAIDA C PACASEM
Minister



Annex A — Sample Self-Certification

[Ministry / Office / Agency Logo]

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that communication expenses incurred in the total amount of ₱_____ for the period covering _____ were all official in nature and necessary to the performance of official functions.

This certification is issued to support the reimbursement of said expenses.

(NAME OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL/EMPLOYEE)

(POSITION/DESIGNATION)

Noted by²:

(NAME OF IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR)

(POSITION/DESIGNATION)

² Exception to having their self-certifications noted by their Immediate Supervisor are the following: a. Chief Minister or equivalent, b. Deputy Chief Ministers or equivalent, and c. Deputy Speaker/Members of the Parliament/Ministers or equivalent.