

Assessing Your Telecommunications Needs and Selecting Services

This guide assists campus units in assessing their telecommunications requirements and selecting the most appropriate services for staff and operational needs, aligning with the university's transition towards efficient and cost-effective communication solutions like softphones and Google products.

Overview

The university is strategically moving away from traditional landlines, prioritizing softphone technology and Google products to streamline communication, enhance efficiency, and reduce costs. To facilitate this transition, procurement and reimbursement processes are being simplified. Units are now required to assess their telecommunications needs to ensure they effectively support staff and operational requirements.

This guide provides a framework for colleges, faculties, departments, units and staff to review and assess their telecommunications needs. By carefully considering individual and unit requirements, we can ensure units and staff have the right communication solutions for achieving their mandates while reducing costs. The information herein will guide your assessment process.

Key principle: to help reduce costs to your department, individuals should utilize one communication device or service whenever possible. Cell phones, being the most expensive option, should only be secured if it is required by the staff member to perform their duties.

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Decision-making framework

When evaluating telecommunications needs, begin with the lowest-cost, institutionally preferred solutions and only progress to higher-cost services if the staff member's work requirements justify it.

1. Start with Google Tools: if these tools meet the staff member's communication needs as required by their role, no further service is required.
2. If Google Tools are insufficient, consider a softphone: a softphone service should be the first paid option when a dedicated university phone number is necessary. This is the university's default method for delivering telephone services.
3. Progress to desk phones or cellular services only when justified: higher-cost options such as desk phones and mobile phone allowances should only be selected if a verified operational need cannot be met through softphone services.

Use the following checklist to evaluate the most appropriate telecommunications service for each staff member or unit need:

Option	Description	Monthly Cost	When to Use	Level of Approval Required
Google products (Email, Google Chat, Google Meet)	Standard digital communication tools (asynchronous email, instant messaging, and video conferencing)	Free	<input type="checkbox"/> Suitable for staff whose communication needs are met through email, chat, or scheduled video calls <input type="checkbox"/> Ideal for internal campus coordination <input type="checkbox"/> No requirement for dedicated equipment or a phone number	No additional approval
Jabber Softphone	Software-based phone service providing a university number on	\$18/month basic service (includes	<input type="checkbox"/> Required when a dedicated university phone number is needed for incoming/outcoming call	Supervisor or Unit Manager

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	personal or work devices (e.g., laptop, smartphone)	voicemail, voicemail to email service and call display)	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff can use existing devices (no physical phone needed)	
Deskphone (includes softphone features)	Physical phone installed at desk, plus softphone access	\$28/month	<input type="checkbox"/> Suitable for staff with hybrid work setups who require a desk phone <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended for shared lines, public convenience phones, emergency points, and door intercoms <input type="checkbox"/> Necessary for multi-user lines (softphone not supported for shared CCID use)	Supervisor & Department Head (depending on use case)
Cellular Device & Plan	Mobile phone allowance based on usage tier and institutional necessity	Tier 1: \$25/month (voice/text only) Tier 2: \$50/month (basic smartphone with data) Tier 3: \$85/month (full reimbursement)	<input type="checkbox"/> Justified only for off-campus mobility, safety, or after-hours access <input type="checkbox"/> Tier 1: low usage, basic communication needs <input type="checkbox"/> Tier 2: moderate usage, regular access to data <input type="checkbox"/> Tier 3: high usage, critical roles or on-call support <input type="checkbox"/> Selection based on actual role requirements, not features	Supervisor, Director, and Budget Approver

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Unit vs Individual-Based Service

Determine service type:

Unit-based services: a shared line tied to a program, department, or publication (e.g., main office number, support line)	Individual-based services: a personal number assigned to a staff member for direct communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• generally long-term and should be attached to the Unit for billing/tracking.• review regularly to confirm continued business need and value• submit any change orders as required (contact IST Telecommunications team for support or guidance)• may include safety/risk lines or shared access lines not tied to individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• should be terminated immediately when the staff member leaves• do not retain inactive services for future hires – activations are quick and cost-effective• services are linked to the user's CCID to support future automation (e.g., alerts when staff leave, billing)



User Profile Considerations

Evaluate the individual's role before assigning phone services:

- Do they need to be reached by phone directly?
 - If duties involve regular real-time communication, a phone may be needed. If not, email or Google Chat may suffice.
- Is this person highly mobile? Applies to users frequently on the move throughout the day and must be reachable anytime. Hybrid work arrangements alone **do not** qualify.
- Is this person in a public-facing role? Required for fixed-location staff interacting with the public (e.g., service counter for the recreation facilities, front desk etc.)
- If the person works from home or in a hybrid fashion, do they have high-speed Internet at the off-campus location? Reliable high-speed internet access at home allows for effective communication via Google Suite products or a softphone, potentially negating the need for a separate mobile device.

Please reach out to IST to discuss if any of the suite of solutions can help your unit work more flexibly and effectively.