

Collaborative Consumption Services Best Practices

1. Overview

Collaborative Consumption is the technical term that describes products and services offered to consumers by other consumers. Companies like Airbnb or Uber provide the intermediary service to connect the service provider with the traveler. The degree of risks associated with using these services or products are different from the degree of risks in using services or products offered by individual companies or corporations because the intermediary service company has less knowledge or control over the quality of the services being offered by the individual provider than does a direct producer of goods and services. The service providers may be largely unregulated; users may comment in social media on their experience that may warn future users, but the party having the bad experience is generally unprotected.

2. Potential Risks to the Individual Traveler or Service User

Below are examples of potential risks travelers need to be aware when utilizing collaborative consumption methods for travel.

A. Hospitality (Lodging)

- Safety standards of property may not be as regulated as corporate providers, resulting in a greater risk of bodily injury or personal injury because of defects in the premises, including lack of fire protection
- Less formal security measures could create a greater risk of personal harm such as assault or sexual assault by a host or other guest; assault from third party crime (break in, high-crime area)
- Claim against traveler alleging damages to premises or property
- Loss of prepaid funds if rental property is not habitable, not in the location advertised, not as described, etc., and other accommodations have to be arranged
- Cleaning standards, or lack thereof, may result in property with bedbugs, mold, etc.
- Inaccessible facilities for wheelchair users or those using other assistive devices

B. Transportation

- Bodily injury or personal injury because of a driving accident, including reckless driving
- Assault or sexual assault by a driver or other passenger (if ride share is used)
- Assault from third party crime (break in, high-crime area)
- Claim against traveler alleging damages to vehicle or property

C. Other Potential Risks

- Loss of funds due to false advertising, deceptive practices
- Identity theft
- Lack of ability to seek recourse for failure to deliver promised goods or services

3. Utilization of Hospitality Services (i.e. Airbnb, VRBO, HomeAway, 9flats, etc.)

If the use of a hospitality service is selected for business travel, then adhere to these parameters.

- A. Limit options to vacant apartments, houses or rental spaces. No extra bedroom or partial living space is permitted. For personal safety purposes, sharing overnight space with strangers is not allowed.
 - Facility must have the following:
 - Working smoke detectors
 - Facility should have the following as well:
 - Fire extinguishers that are properly charged
 - Exit diagrams that are posted
- B. A minimum of three (3) students per rental is highly recommended for safety and protection.

- C. Research selected hospitality service regarding how the service works and be informed of all the risks.
- D. Hospitality services may be paid with personal funds, however, University T-cards are recommended. It is important to note that USI is not the contracting party for any agreements (electronic or otherwise) with the hospitality service when using personal funds. Instead, the agreement must be between the service and the individual employee since it is the individual choosing this method of service.

4. Transportation Services (i.e. Uber, Lyft, etc.)

- A. Always check with local contacts as to the reputation of the company in the area.
- B. USI discourages the use of ride sharing in private vehicles with strangers.
- C. Students: Highly recommended to have a minimum of three (3) students per rental for safety and protection.
- D. All USI travelers are advised to research selected transportation service about how such service works and to be informed of all the risks.
- E. The rider should always take measures to verify that the person arriving is in fact the person from the company that the rider contacted prior to entering the vehicle.
- F. Transportation services may be paid with personal funds, however, University T-cards are the preferred method of payment. It is important to note that USI is not the contracting party for any agreements (electronic or otherwise) with transportation services when using personal funds. Instead, the agreement must be between the transportation service and the individual employee since it is the individual choosing this method of travel.