

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE INSTRUCTION 70-208

JULY 9, 2015

Financial Management Policy, NWSPD 70-2

GROUP TRAVEL/TRAVEL COORDINATION

NOTICE: This publication is available at: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/>

OPR: CFO2 (Y. Garnett-Singleton)

Certified by: CFO (M. Lovern)

Type of Issuance: Initial

SUMMARY:

The Group Travel/Coordination directive is a new NWS directive. This document is governed by the guidance and instructions outlined in the NOAA Departmental Group Travel guidance.

Signed

John E. Potts
Chief Financial Officer/Chief
Administrative Officer

June 25, 2015

Date

BACKGROUND

On September 21, 2011, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued Memorandum 11-35, "Eliminating Excess Conference Spending, and Promoting Efficiency in Government." In that memorandum, OMB instructed all agencies "to conduct a thorough review of the policies and controls associated with conference-related activities and expenses." In addition, Deputy Secretaries (or their equivalents) are required to review thoroughly the policies and management controls associated with conference-related activities and expenses in order to mitigate the risk of inappropriate spending.

OMB further expanded upon these efforts, with Memorandum 12-12, "Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations," issued May 11, 2012 which, "outlines a series of new policies and practices for conference sponsorship, hosting, and attendance to ensure that Federal funds are used appropriately on these activities, and that agencies continue to reduce spending on conferences where practicable." The policies and practices require:

- Senior level review of all planned conferences
- Senior level approval of all future conference expenses in excess of \$100,000
- Prohibiting expenses in excess of \$500,000 on a single conference
- Reporting publicly on all conference expenses in excess of \$100,000

In addition for fiscal year (FY) 2012, the Department of Commerce (DOC) received an appropriation provision requiring the Department to submit quarterly reports to the Inspector General on the costs and contracting procedures relating to conferences held by the agency during FY 2012 for which the cost to the Government was more than \$20,000.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy memorandum is to provide guidance to the National Weather Service (NWS) Group Travel/Conference POCs and to establish Conference approval levels and reporting requirements.

POLICY

Group Travel and Conference Packets must be forwarded to all 3 of the following email addresses:

NWS.Group.Travel.Conference@noaa.gov

Yvette.Garnett-Singleton@noaa.gov

Carla.Kirby@noaa.gov

All Staff Offices (SO) are required to obtain approval for all conferences. The approval levels for Group Travels/Conferences may be found using the following link:

<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/finance/GROUP.html>

Refer to: The Policy Memorandum & Conference & Group Travel flow chart

Preparation of the Conference Package helps to ensure that policies and procedures are being complied with in accordance with pertinent laws, regulations, and requirements. It also ensures that conference spending is appropriate and that proper controls are in place to mitigate the risk of inappropriate conference spending.

DEFINITION OF A CONFERENCE:

The DOC policy provides criteria for defining a conference:

1. The function is a meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium or event that involves federally funded attendee travel (non-local) [training activities that are considered to be conferences under 5 CFR 410.404 are also included in this definition] AND
2. Is sponsored by anyone Department of Commerce, other Federal entity, or non-Federal entity and;
3. The Agency will expend funds without consideration of fees, revenue, or gifts. In calculating expenses:
 - i. Do include all direct and indirect conference costs paid by the Government
 - ii. Do include the cost of all travel (but not local travel)
 - iii. Do not include funds paid under Federal grants to grantees
 - iv. Do not include costs to ensure the safety of attending government officials.
4. Brings together a group of government employees AND
5. Includes two or more of the following "conference" indicators:
 - a. The event has a brochure
 - b. The event has a published/distributed agenda
 - c. The event is marketed internally or externally
 - d. Attendees register for it
 - e. Is a widely gathered event
6. Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) meetings are not included in the definition of a conference.
7. Events that are fully funded by a grant are not included in the definition of a conference.

Please note that you should also submit information for any event-even if it does not fit the criteria above-if it may be sensitive in some way and/or could attract undesired media attention regardless of the amount of federal funds involved in the event.

If you have any questions on this matter, please contact Yvette Garnett-Singleton by telephone at 301-427-6927 or by email at Yvette.Garnett-Singleton@noaa.gov.