

APPENDIX R: CONFERENCES

PART 1: CONFERENCE PLANNING POLICY ([FTR Part 301-74](#))

A. Authority. OMB Bulletin No. 93-11, dated 19 April 1993, To The Heads of Executive Departments and Establishments, Subject: Fiscal Responsibility and Reducing Perquisites, Attachment 5.

B. Policy. ([FTR §301-74](#)) The public interest requires that the Services/DoD Components exercise strict fiscal responsibility when selecting conference sites. Accordingly, the Services/DoD Components must select conference sites that minimize conference costs. When Service/DoD Component representatives attend conferences sponsored by others, the Service/DoD Component must keep its representation to a minimum consistent with serving the public's interest.

C. Scope and Coverage. This guidance applies to all Executive Departments, agencies and the Services that sponsor conferences or pay for travel to conferences. In addition to conference travel by members and employees, this guidance applies to conference travel paid for persons invited to travel in support of Gov't programs.

D. Definitions

1. Conference: A meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium or event that involves attendee travel. Also applies to training activities that are conferences under [5 CFR 410.404](#). ***NOTE: This does not include regularly scheduled courses of instruction conducted at a Gov't or commercial training facility.***

2. Conference costs: All costs paid by the Gov't for a conference, whether paid directly or reimbursed by a Service/DoD Component. See par. F. Examples include:

a. Attendee's travel costs (i.e., travel to/from the conference, ground transportation, lodging, meals and incidental costs);

b. Attendee's time costs (i.e., the cost of attendee's time spent at the conference and traveling to/from the conference);

c. Meeting room and audiovisual costs;

*d. Conference registration fees (with or without furnished meals other than refreshment/snacks);

e. Speaker fees;

f. Conference related administrative fees; and

g. Similar costs.

3. Site: Refers to both the geographical location and the specific facility selected.

E. Actions Required. When planning a conference, the Service/DoD Component ([FTR §301-74.3](#)) must:

1. Determine which conference expenditures provide the greatest Gov't advantage by:

a. Ensuring appropriate management oversight of the conference planning process,

b. Performing cost comparisons of the size, scope, and location,

c. Determining if a Gov't facility is available at a lesser rate,

d. Considering conference alternatives, e.g., teleconferencing,

- e. Maintaining written documentation of the alternatives considered and the selection rationale used, and
 - f. Minimizing cost by exercising strict fiscal responsibility in determining the best site.
2. Minimize the conference administrative costs,
 3. Minimize the attendees' travel costs,
 4. Minimize the attendees' time costs,
 5. Use Gov't owned/Gov't provided facilities as much as possible,
 6. Identify ways to save costs in selecting a particular conference site (e.g., lower off season rates), and
 7. Develop and establish internal policies that ensure these standards are met.

NOTE: An individual must have the requisite contracting authority to obligate the Gov't ICW conference arrangements.

F. Cost Considerations. When planning a conference, the Service/DoD Component should consider all Gov't paid direct and indirect conference costs. Conference costs to be considered include:

1. Travel and per diem expenses,
2. Rent of rooms for official business,
3. Usage of audiovisual and other equipment,
4. Computer and telephone access fees,
5. App A1 for light refreshments definition. For DoD policy regarding the use of appropriated funds to purchase food; see DoD, Office Of General Counsel (Fiscal) memorandum, 1 Sep 05, subject: Use of Appropriated Funds to Purchase Food at Conferences, Meetings, and Events. Questions about the DoD policy should be referred to OSD General Counsel (Fiscal).

NOTE: Light refreshments (including a continental breakfast) paid for by the Gov't are a deductible meal if is served at a meal time (e.g., breakfast - 0600-0800).

6. Printing,
- *7. Conference registration fees,
8. Ground transportation, and
9. Attendees' travel and time cost.

G. Cost Comparisons. When planning a conference, Services/DoD Components must do cost comparisons to ensure the Gov't's greatest benefit. Cost comparisons include:

1. Determination of lodging adequacy at the established per diem rate,
2. Overall convenience,
3. Fees,
4. Meeting space availability,

5. Equipment availability (e.g., audiovisual, fax),
6. Commuting or travel distance of most attendees, and
7. Other conference expenses.

H. Conference Site Selection

1. Documentation. [\(FTR §301-74.19\)](#) The Service/DoD Component concerned must maintain a record of the cost of each alternative conference site considered for each conference sponsored or funded, in whole or in part, for 30 or more attendees. A minimum of three sites must be considered for the conference and the documentation must be available for inspection by the Inspector General's Office or other interested parties.
2. Locality Per Diem Rate. Selection of a location must be based on the established per diem rate. For a DoD-sponsored conference, close consideration should be made to co-locate the conference venue and the lodging facility thereby minimizing local travel costs."
3. Conferences Conducted in the District of Columbia. [\(FTR §301-74.17\)](#) Prior to scheduling, contact should be made with the GSA Public Buildings Service (PBS) of the National Capital Region to inquire about the availability of short-term conference and meeting facilities in the District of Columbia.

I. Requirements for Attendance, Sponsoring or Funding a Conference at a Place of Public Accommodation [\(FTR §301-74.14; 74.15\)](#)

1. Attendance at a conference must be authorized by an official designated through the Secretarial Process.
2. Sponsoring or funding a conference by a Service/DoD Component at a place of public accommodation must be authorized by an official designated through the Secretarial Process.
3. FEMA approved accommodations must be used when sponsoring or funding a conference, in whole or in part, at a place of public accommodation in the U.S. where applicable. The official designated by the Secretarial Process for authorizing the sponsoring and/or funding of a conference can make a written determination on an individual case basis that waiver of the requirement to use FEMA approved accommodations is necessary and in the public interest for a particular event.

J. Advertisement or Application Form for Conference Attendance. [\(FTR §301-74.16\)](#) Any advertisement or application for attendance at a conference sponsored or funded by a Service/DoD Component must include notice:

1. That attendees must use FEMA approved place of public accommodation unless a waiver has been issued as indicated in Part 11, item I3, and
2. Of the prohibition of use of non FEMA approved places of public accommodation to all non-Federal entities, e.g., contractors, to which the Service/DoD Component provides Federal funds.

K. Selection of Attendees. Services/DoD Components must establish policies that reduce the overall cost of attending a conference. The policies and procedures must:

1. Limit the Service's/DoD Component's representation to the minimum number of attendees necessary to accomplish the Service's/DoD Component's mission; and
2. Provide for travel expense consideration when selecting attendees.

L. Conference Administrative Costs. Conference administrative costs may not be included in an attendee's per diem allowance payment for attendance at a conference. Per diem is intended only to reimburse the attendee's subsistence expenses. Administrative costs must be paid separately.

M. Lodging Allowance

1. The lodging allowance is limited to the maximum locality lodging ceiling where the conference is being held regardless of rates established during conference planning. Effective 1 January 2014.
2. If the lodging rates established during conference planning are in excess of the locality per diem rate, the traveler should seek other lodging in the local area of the conference using a DTMO contracted CTO.
3. If the DTMO-contracted CTO cannot find suitable lodging within the maximum locality per diem rate, an AEA may be authorized under Ch 4, Part C by the person designated by the Service/DoD Component to authorize conference attendance.
4. An AEA must be approved on an individual basis and may not be a blanket authorization. **Note: For TDY travel commencing prior to 1 January 2014, lodging may be reimbursed at 125% of the maximum locality lodging rate until TDY terminates. For TDY travel commencing on or after 1 January 2014, lodging must be reimbursed not to exceed the maximum locality lodging rate unless an AEA is authorized/approved.**

N. Conference M&IE Rate

1. Light Refreshments. When the Gov't furnishes light refreshments at nominal or no cost to the attendee at times that are not meal times, no deduction of the attendee's M&IE allowance is permitted.

NOTE: Light refreshments (including a continental breakfast) are a deductible meal if is served at a meal time (e.g., breakfast - 0600-0800).

2. Meals Included in Registration Fee. When the Gov't furnishes one or two meals at nominal or no cost, or includes them in the registration fee, the proportional meal rate applies to members and employees for each day meals are furnished. See App R2, par. J for PMR computation examples. Since the AO may authorize the PMR or locality meal rate when the traveler is unable to eat the deductible meal due to medical requirements or religious beliefs (see par. 4205), every effort should be made to accommodate the traveler's requirements.

- O. Guidance for Conference Planning. Refer to [FTR, Chapter 301, Appendix E](#) for conference planning guidance procedures. This reference may be necessary to plan a successful conference.

APPENDIX R: CONFERENCES

PART 2: CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

- A. General. An employee and/or a member may attend and participate in conferences/meetings of recognized professional organizations to maintain and improve professional competency at Gov't expense (including TDY expenses), subject to the availability of funds and the employee's/member's work responsibilities.
- B. Authority. Title 5 USC §4110 and 37 USC §455 authorizes conference attendance expenditures for meetings concerned with the functions and activities of a Uniformed Service/DoD Component that contribute to improved conduct, supervision, or management of the Service's/DoD component's functions and activities and such expenses are authorized as necessary expenses. This authority applies to attendance at technical, scientific, professional, or similar private membership non-Federal societies and organizations ([38 Comp. Gen. 800 \(1959\)](#) and [55 Id. 1332 \(1976\)](#)). This authority is independent of the training authority included in par. 4955, and App R2, par. E5 unless it is administratively determined that training is the primary purpose of attendance at a meeting.
- C. Government Sponsored Conference. Attendance at Gov't expense may be authorized for the following:
1. Conferences sponsored or cosponsored by a Federal Agency at which a member's/employee's attendance is required in the performance of official duties;
 2. Conferences of state/municipals Gov't organizations, or of international agencies in which the Federal Government is officially participating, and the member's/employee's attendance is related to official duties or for the purpose of transacting Gov't business;
 3. Conferences of a group of individuals representing private interests, but convened for the purpose of transacting business directly related to the Service's/DoD Component's functions or activities and attendance is in the member's/employee's official performance; and
 4. Similar activities.
- D. Non-Government Sponsored Conferences
1. General. Conference attendance at non-Federal technical, scientific, professional, and comparable private membership organizations is subject to the conditions in App R1.
 2. Attendance and Approval Requirements. Attendee selection and approval is subject to Service/DoD Component regulations consistent with the regulations on acceptance of payment from a non-federal source for travel Expenses IAW the [Joint Ethics Regulation \(JER\), DoD 5500.7-R](#).
 3. Purpose. A member and/or an employee may attend conferences at Gov't expense to:
 - a. Further Service/DoD Component programs;
 - b. Present scientific and technical papers which further the development of the U.S. resources; and
 - c. Maintain an effective professional, scientific, technical, managerial, and supervisory workforce.
 4. Security. An appropriate security officer at the activity concerned should examine the security implications for attendance at all meetings and conferences conducted or sponsored by private or international organizations. A member/employee who attends such meetings must be briefed about security implications, when necessary, prior to attendance.

*E. Conference Registration Fees and Reimbursable Expenses

*1. When Travel Is Involved. Conference registration fees authorized in the travel order or approved on a travel claim voucher are reimbursable. The PMR applies on any day that the cost for one or two meals is included in the conference registration fee (see par. 4205). Information should be included on the travel order as to whether or not the conference registration fee includes charges for meals, and if so, the number of meals and the dates on which furnished. When the conference registration fee includes lodgings without charge, only the appropriate applicable [PMR](#) or TDY locality [M&IE rate](#) is paid.

*2. When No Travel Is Involved. The conference registration fee may be reimbursed when attendance is authorized for a conference in the local area that:

- a. Does not involve travel,
- b. Does not involve per diem, and
- c. For which a travel order is not issued.

*3. Limitation on Reimbursement for Meal Costs when Attending a Conference/Meeting Sponsored by a Service/DoD Component. The cost of each meal, whether included in a conference registration fee or contracted for separately, at a Service/DoD Component sponsored conference/meeting must be identified. The total amount paid by the Gov't for meals cannot exceed the locality meal rate prescribed for the TDY assignment location (if travel is involved) or the meeting location (when travel is not involved), unless AEA reimbursement for the meal(s) involved has been authorized/approved in accordance with Ch 4, Part C. When travel is involved, the maximum contracted amount for 1 or 2 meals cannot exceed the difference between the locality meal rate and the PMR.

4. Reimbursable Expenses. Independent charges/fees for light refreshments/snacks are not a reimbursable expense.

*5. Conferences/Training at the PDS. Payment of conference registration fees, meals, lodging, travel, and/or other expenses required for conferences/training at the PDS cannot be paid as travel allowances per 37 USC §404. Authority to pay related training costs at the PDS is in 10 USC §2013; 5 USC §4109; 42 USC §218a; and 14 USC §469. The costs must clearly be an integral part of the training ([39 Comp. Gen. 119 \(1959\)](#); and [B-244473, 13 January 1992](#)). When training events require subsistence costs at the PDS, authority for training expense payment is made through the training and/or comptroller personnel using the above legal authority. ***This payment is not a travel and transportation allowance and these regulations are not the authority for the payment.***

Charges/fees for light refreshments/snacks are reimbursable ONLY when included as part of the conference registration fee.

F. Membership Fees and Dues. The Secretary Concerned or DoD Component Head may pay membership fees or dues from appropriated funds when the membership is in the Gov't's interest and the membership is in the Service's/DoD Component's name (e.g., Defense Travel Management Office). See [31 Comp. Gen. 398 \(1952\)](#); [33 id. 126 \(1953\)](#).

G. Entertainment Expenses. Entertainment expenses for social events and other personal expenses not directly required by official duties are not reimbursable.

*H. Advance Payment of Discounted Conference Registration Fee ([FTR §301-74.25](#))

*1. General. It is a general practice for conference planners to offer discounted "early bird" conference registration fees, which are available in the months prior to the beginning of the conference. If a GTCC IBA is to be used to pay this fee, to take advantage of such specials, a traveler should be given oral or written order to

register early, charge the conference registration fee to the GTCC IBA, and claim reimbursement for the discounted conference registration fee as soon as a written order to attend the conference has been generated. When the authority to register early is oral, the written order must reference the oral authority for the early conference registration. This does not prevent other payment methods for advance conference registration fees (e.g., Gov't purchase card (not a GTCC)).

*2. Traveler is Unable to Attend an Event for which Reimbursement Was Made (adopted from [FTR §301–74.26](#)). In any case in which a traveler is unable to attend an event for which a discounted conference registration fee was paid and reimbursed in advance of the event, the traveler must seek a conference registration fee refund and repay the advance with any refund received. If no refund is made, the Service/DoD Component concerned must absorb the advanced payment as a preparatory travel expense if the traveler's failure to attend the event was caused either by a decision of the Service/DoD Component concerned or for a reason beyond the traveler's control that is acceptable to the Service/DoD Component concerned, e.g., unforeseen illness or emergency. *If no refund is made, and the traveler's failure to attend the scheduled event is due to a reason deemed un-excusable by the Service/DoD Component concerned, the traveler must repay the amount advanced.*

I. Government Accountability Office Guidance Concerning Reasonable Conference Costs Including Meals and Light Refreshments at a Formal Conference. Following is the Digest portion of the GAO Decision ([B-300826, 3 March 2005](#)) rendered to the National Institutes of Health concerning reasonable conference costs.

Decision

Matter of: National Institutes of Health - Food at Gov't-Sponsored Conferences

File: B-300826

Date: March 3, 2005

DIGEST

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) may pay for legitimate, reasonable conference costs, including meals and light refreshments, of a formal conference pertaining to Parkinson's disease subject to the conditions outlined herein. A formal conference typically involves topical matters of interest to, and participation of, multiple agencies and/or nongovernmental participants. In addition, other indicators of a formal conference include registration, a published substantive agenda, and scheduled speakers or discussion panels. An Agency hosting a formal conference may consider the cost of providing meals and refreshments to conference attendees an allowable conference cost as long as:

- (1) Meals and refreshments are incidental to the conference,
- (2) Attendance at the meals and when refreshments are provided is important for the host Agency to ensure full participation in essential discussions, lectures, or speeches concerning the purpose of the conference, and
- (3) The meals and refreshments are part of a formal conference that includes not just the meals and refreshments and discussions, speeches, or other business that may take place when the meals and refreshments are served, but also includes substantial functions occurring separately from when the food is served.

The NIH conference here satisfies these three criteria. Without statutory authority to charge a fee and retain the proceeds, NIH may not charge a registration or other fee to defray the costs of providing meals or light refreshments. An appropriation establishes a maximum authorized program level, and an Agency, without specific statutory authority, may not augment its appropriations from sources outside the Gov't.

In applying this decision, NIH should develop an Agency policy specifying the types of formal conferences at which NIH may consider providing food. NIH also should develop procedures to ensure that the provision of meals and refreshments meet the criteria listed above.

We (GAO) expect Agency counsels, as well as certifying officers, Agency auditors, and Inspectors General, to apply these criteria. To the extent that Agency officials are uncertain as to the applicability of the criteria in particular circumstances, they may request a decision from this office, pursuant to [31 USC §3529](#), before proceeding.

J. PMR Computation Examples. The following example shows how to compute the PMR and a PMR voucher. PMR is an amount based on the locality meal rate and the GMR. Please check App A1, for the current GMR.

1. The PMR example uses the Standard CONUS M&IE rate of \$46 and the Standard GMR of \$13.85 to compute the PMR amount. The \$46 consists of \$41 for meals and \$5 for incidental expenses. **Disclaimer: The numbers in this example are for illustrative purposes only.**

Example computation rules: the PMR is an average of two rates – (1) the locality meal rate and the GMR which are added, (2) averaged and rounded up to the nearest dollar. To compute the Proportional M&IE rate, (3) add the appropriate incidental expense rate, and (4) the total becomes the proportional M&IE amount.

NOTE: The meal rate ONLY, and not the entire M&IE rate, is used to compute the PMR. The appropriate incidental expenses rate is added to the PMR to create the proportional M&IE rate.

Step 1	Add the locality <u>meal rate</u> and <u>GMR</u>	$\$41 + \$13.85 = \$54.85$
Step 2	Divide Step 1 total in half (rounded to the next highest dollar)	$\$54.85 \div 2 = \27.42 (Rounded to \$28)
Step 3	Add Step 2 total to the CONUS incidental expense rate	$\$28 + \$5 = \$33$
Step 4	Proportional Meal and Incidental Expense Rate	\$33

2. PMR Voucher Computation Example: A traveler is TDY for 3 days to a conference at a CONUS location (Standard CONUS per diem rate applies). Lodging is \$55/night and GMR is \$13.85. Gov't furnished meals are not available for the first and last day; however, two Gov't meals are available for the second day. The AO authorizes a PMR of \$28 for the second day. **NOTE: Gov't dining facility/ mess deductions are not taken for the arrival and departure travel days (see pars. 4065-4080).**

ITINERARY:		
Day 1	Depart Residence/Arrive TDY	
Day 2	TDY	
Day 3	Depart TDY/Arrive Residence	
REIMBURSEMENT:		
Day	Computation	Total
Day 1	$\$55 + [(\$46 \text{ (M\&IE)} \times 75\%)] =$	\$ 89.50
Day 2	$\$55 + \$28 \text{ (PMR)} + \$5 \text{ IE} =$	88.00
Day 3	$\$46 \times 75\% =$	34.50
TOTAL		\$ 212.00