DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY
195 ARMORY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON DC 20310-1125

May 15, 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS OF HEADQUARTERS,
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

SUBJECT: Conference Planning

The General Services Administration (GSA) published the enclosed new rule governing conference planning. Because conferences have different requirements than routine temporary duty (TDY) travel, GSA published the final rule to minimize overall Government expenses associated with conferences.

When planning a conference, you must continue to:

a. Consider alternatives to a conference such as teleconferencing. Identify opportunities to reduce costs in selecting a particular conference location and facility.

b. Maximize the use of Government-owned or Government provided conference facilities as much as possible. Determine if a Government facility is available at a cheaper rate than a commercial facility.

c. Minimize all conference costs, including administrative costs, conference attendees’ travel costs, and conference attendees’ time costs; and

d. Limit conference attendance to the minimum number of individuals required.

The above items are in DA Memo 1-17, Conference, Symposia, Seminars, and Meetings. DA Memo 1-17 will be updated to include that agencies sponsoring a conference will be allowed to provide light refreshments at no cost to conference attendees when a majority of attendees are in a travel status. Travel within an employee’s local commuting area does not satisfy the requirement to be in a "travel status." Consequently, we caution not to view this as carte blanche authority to purchase refreshments with official funds. Early and consistent coordination with your legal support staff remains essential to successfully planning and executing your conference.

My points of contact are Ms. Amy Coleman, SAAA-PP, (703) 697-3048, or Mr. Robert Richwine, (703) 683-6440.

Joel B. Hudson

Enclosure
GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

Federal Travel Regulation; Conference Planning

AGENCY: Office of Governmentwide Policy, GSA.

AUTHOR: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The General Services Administration (GSA) is amending the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) governing conference planning. Because conferences have different requirements than routine temporary duty (TDY) travel, GSA is providing specific guidance to minimize travel expenses and reduce agency costs by using the administrative offices of conference planning and processing.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This final rule is effective January 14, 2002.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jim Hulea, Travel Team Leader, Travel Management Policy Division (MT7), telephone 202-501-0483.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

A proposed rule with request for comments was published in the Federal Register on September 16, 1999 (64 FR 50851). All comments received were considered in the development of the final rule. GSA received a total of 170 comments from the Federal Government and the private sector. Of those, 171 expressed support of the proposed changes and five asked for clarification and/or offered suggested improvements.

What are the Significant Comments and Changes?

Comments and adopted changes are:

(1) Conference policy usage. A private sector organization stated that the proposed changes constitute "good, common sense." Additionally, it questioned whether it is prudent to include this level of detail in the FTR, since conference and convention organizations are confronted with a myriad of different circumstances, and some flexibility is needed. It also stated that when the FTR lists examples and costs, it is "not limited to " exploration tools to adopt rule compliance in line of judgment. While it is unclear what "cost compliance" is, GSA recognizes that some contractors mirror the FTR in developing their travel rules, but only Federal employees and agencies are subject to the FTR. No significant change, therefore, has been made to the FTR policy.

(2) Federal Management Regulation (FMR) covers the FTR. Because this policy encompasses a much broader range of agency expenses than the travel function, i.e., government, facilities, general and administrative services, an agency questioned why this guidance isn't issued as an FMR. This final rule focuses on the total costs involved in employee travel to conferences and, therefore, is appropriate as part of the FTR.

(3) Interagency Travel Management Committee (ITMC). One comment questioned how the ITMC will serve as a resource for planning a conference when it is not directly involved in making conference arrangements. GSA has organized the ITMC as a forum of approximately 200 federal travel policy and financial managers. Active communication and sharing of information will ease conference planning for those Federal agencies that have an inhouse need to plan a conference.

(4) Rules to co-sponsor a conference with an outside organization. One comment suggested that the final rule should address situations in which a Federal agency co-sponsors a conference with an outside organization. Depending on who the co-sponsor is, the conference planners may have to consider ethics guidelines, financial assistance regulations, and acquisition laws and regulations. For policy regarding acceptance of payments from a non-Federal source, GSA refers users to FMR Chapter 304 which is written in consultation with the Office of Government Ethics.

(5) Conference Information Package. The third sentence of Appendix E to Chapter 401, "Conference Information Package," states that "You should finalize the package and send it to the printer at least 6 weeks in advance of the starting date." It was suggested that this is an ideal but unrealistic time frame for preparing materials since many conferences need to be planned with only one month's notice. GSA agrees, and has amended the sentence to allow the time frame as an option.

(6) Light refreshments. To eliminate the possibility of agency or individual abuse, specific guidelines were requested to define "light refreshments." While GSA does not want to limit access to a specific menu of refreshments (limited only as a refreshment, not intended to serve as a meal), §301.74-10 is revised to add a suggested list of food items. The serving of light refreshments for conference attendees during morning, afternoon and evening breaks, authorized by 5 U.S.C. 5707, is a common business practice and should not be prohibited for Government-sponsored conferences.

(7) Retention of records. One comment recommended that this rule set a threshold based on number of attendees for the retention of records. The comment stated that without a specific guideline, any event of whatever size that had one or more attendees in travel status would appear to be subject to the record retention requirements. Such an all-inclusive rule would run counter to the overall Federal goal of reducing unnecessary paperwork and would have an apparent benefit for small events. GSA agrees, and has revised §301.54-10 to require records for such conferences the agency sponsors or funds, in whole or in part, for 10 or more attendees. The National Archives and Records Administration issues the General Records Schedule to provide Governmentwide authority to destroy records consistent with general or limited retention requirements of the National Government.

The General Accounting Office has responsibility for approving the disposal of certain Federal records, including those relating to claims or demands by or against the Government, and these records are subject to a separate set of record retention and disposal guidelines to ensure adherence for the retention of records. GSA suggests that agencies contact their agency records officers.

E. Executive Order 12986

GSA has determined that this final rule is not a significant regulatory action for the purposes of Executive Order 12986 of September 30, 1993.

C. Regulatory Flexibility Act

This final rule is not required to be published in the Federal Register for notice and comment; therefore, the Regulatory Flexibility Act does not apply.

D. Paperwork Reduction Act

The Paperwork Reduction Act does not apply because this final rule does not impose any new information collection requirements, or the collection of information from record keepers, contractors, or members of the public which require the approval of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs under 5 U.S.C. 551.
§301-74.03 Conference planning

Subpart A—Agency Responsibilities

Note to Subpart A. Use of premises "we", "we", and "that" refers throughout the
Subpart to the agency.

§301-74.1 What policies must we follow in planning a conference?

(a) Determine all conference costs, including administrative costs, conference attendees travel costs, and
direct costs. Conference attendees also contribute to the costs. Conference planners should ensure that
conference costs are justifiable. Conference planners must ensure that conference attendees pay for
costs in a manner that is consistent with the conference's budget and financial policies. Conference
planners must also ensure that conference attendees are aware of conference costs.

(b) Determine whether to use Government-owned conference facilities or to use private conference
facilities. Conference planners should consider the availability of Government-owned conference
facilities as well as the costs associated with private conference facilities. Conference planners
should also consider the convenience of the conference location and facility, the availability of
convenience of the conference location and facility, and the availability of facilities and supplies.

(c) Determine whether to use Government-owned conference facilities or to use private conference
facilities. Conference planners should consider the availability of Government-owned conference
facilities as well as the costs associated with private conference facilities. Conference planners
should also consider the convenience of the conference location and facility, the availability of
convenience of the conference location and facility, and the availability of facilities and supplies.

§301-74.2 What costs should we consider when planning a conference?

(a) Determine all conference costs, including administrative costs, conference attendees travel costs, and
direct costs. Conference attendees also contribute to the costs. Conference planners should ensure that
conference costs are justifiable. Conference planners must ensure that conference attendees pay for
costs in a manner that is consistent with the conference's budget and financial policies. Conference
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should also consider the convenience of the conference location and facility, the availability of
convenience of the conference location and facility, and the availability of facilities and supplies.
As part of the cost comparison, you must use the established per diem rate for the locations for which you are comparing costs.

What can we do if we cannot find an appropriate conference facility at the chosen locality per diem rate?

While it is always desirable to obtain lodging facilities within the established lodging portion of the per diem rate for the chosen location, it may not always be possible. In negotiating lodging rates with the property in the chosen location, you may exceed the established lodging portion of the per diem rate by up to 25 percent under §§ 301-74.8 and 301-74.9, if necessary. This will provide flexibility in selecting an appropriate property at the most advantageous location. It will also permit agencies to reimburse their employees' subsistence expenses by using the conference lodging allowance method as prescribed in § 301-74.8 for a Government sponsored conference and in § 301-74.9 for non-Government sponsored conferences, rather than the actual expense method prescribed in subpart D of part 301-11 of this chapter.

What is the conference lodging allowance?

The conference lodging allowance is a pre-determined maximum allowance of up to 25 percent greater than the applicable locality lodging portion of the per diem rate. Under this reimbursement method, employees will be reimbursed the actual amount incurred for lodging up to the conference lodging allowance.

Who may authorize reimbursement of the conference lodging allowance for a Government sponsored conference?

The approval authority for the conference lodging allowance is the Government agency sponsoring the conference. The sponsoring agency will determine the appropriate conference lodging allowance, up to 25 percent above the established lodging allowance for the chosen location, and that rate shall be allowable for all employees of any agency authorized to attend the conference. The determination must be made by a senior agency official at the sponsoring agency.

Who may authorize reimbursement of the conference lodging allowance for a non-Government sponsored conference?

The travel approving official of a Government employee authorized to attend a non-Government sponsored conference may authorize the employee to be reimbursed for lodging expenses incurred up to the conference lodging allowance rate.

May the conference lodging allowance exceed 25 percent above the per diem rate?

No, the conference lodging allowance may not exceed 25 percent above the applicable locality lodging per diem rate.

May we provide light refreshments at an official conference?

Yes. Agencies sponsoring a conference may provide light refreshments to agency employees attending an official conference. Light refreshments for morning, afternoon or evening breaks are defined to include, but not be limited to, coffee, tea, milk, juice, soft drinks, donuts, bagels, fruit, pretzels, cookies, chips, or muffins.

May we use both the conference lodging allowance method and the actual expense method of reimbursement concurrently?

No. You must use only one reimbursement method per day in accordance with § 301-74.4 of this chapter.

May we include conference administrative costs in an employee's per diem allowance for attendance at a conference?

No. Per diem is intended only to reimburse the attendee's subsistence expenses. You must pay conference registration fees separately, either directly or by reimbursing employees who pay such expenses and submit travel claims.

Are there any special requirements for sponsoring a meeting at a hotel, motel or other place of public accommodation?

Yes. When you sponsor or fund (see 35 U.S.C. 222a), in whole or in part, a conference at a place of public accommodation in the United States, you must provide an approved accommodation (see § 301-74.15 of this title), except as provided in § 301-74.14. This provision also applies to the Government of the District of Columbia when it spends Federal funds for a conference and any non-Federal entity which uses Government funds to sponsor or fund a conference.

May we waive the requirement in § 301-74.14?

Yes, if the head of your agency makes a written determination as to whether the waiver of the requirement to use approved accommodations is necessary in the public interest for a particular event. Your agency head may delegate this waiver authority to a senior agency official or employee who is given waiver authority with respect to all conferences sponsored or funded, in whole or in part, by your agency.

What must be included in any advertisement or application form relating to conference attendance?

(a) Any advertisement or application form for attendance at a conference described in § 301-74.14 must include:

(1) Notice of the prohibition against using any Federal approval of public accommodation for conferences;

(2) Notice that the conference lodging allowance applies to Federal attendees, if applicable.

(b) In addition, any executive agency, as defined in 5 U.S.C. 105, shall notify all non-Federal entities to which it provides Federal funds of this prohibition.

What special rules apply when a conference is held in the District of Columbia?

In addition to the general rules provided in this part, the following special rules apply:

(a) You may not directly procure lodging facilities in the District of Columbia without specific authorization and appropriation from Congress (see 40 U.S.C. 34); and

(b) Any short-term conference meeting space you obtain in the District of Columbia must be procured under 41 CFR 101-17.101-4.

Note to § 301-74.17(a): This provision does not prohibit payment of per diem to an employee authorized to obtain lodging in the District of Columbia while performing official business travel.

What policies and procedures must we establish to govern the selection of conference attendees?

You must establish policies that reduce the overall cost of conference attendance. The policies and procedures must:

(a) Limit your agency's representation to the minimum number of attendees necessary to accomplish your agency's mission; and

(b) Provide for the consideration of travel expenses when selecting attendees.

What records must we maintain to document the selection of conference attendees?

For each conference you sponsor or fund, in whole or in part, for 30 or more attendees, you must maintain a record of the cost of each alternative conference also considered. You must
consider at least three sites. You must make those records available for inspection by any user of the Inspector General or other interested parties.

Subpart E—Conference Attendees

Note to subpart E: Use of “we,” “you,” and their variants throughout this subpart refers to the agency.

§ 301-74.21 What is the applicable M&IE rate when meals or light refreshments are furnished at nominal or no cost by the Government or are included in the registration fee?

When meals or light refreshments are furnished at nominal or no cost by the Government or are included in the registration fee, the applicable M&IE rates will be calculated as follows:

(a) If meals are furnished, the appropriate deduction from the M&IE rates must be made (see § 301-74.10 of this chapter).

(b) If light refreshments are furnished, no deduction of the M&IE allowance is required.

§ 301-74.22 When may an employee, attending a conference, be authorized the conference lodging allowance?

An employee, authorized to attend a conference, may be authorized the conference lodging allowance as prescribed in §§ 301-74.8 and 301-74.9.

§ 301-74.23 Is the conference lodging allowance an actual expense reimbursement?

No. The conference lodging allowance is a separate method of reimbursement for lodgings expenses.

§ 301-74.24 When should actual expense reimbursement be authorized for Conference Attendees?

If the conference lodging allowance is inadequate, you may authorize actual expense reimbursement under § 301-75.320 of this chapter in lieu of the conference lodging allowance method.

4. Chapter 301 is amended by adding Appendix E to Chapter 303.

Appendix E to Chapter 303—Suggested Guidance for Conference Planning

Twelve Items

Conference: A meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium or event that involves attendee travel. This term “Conference” also applies to training activities that are considered to be conferences under 5 CFR 414.404.

Conference lodging allowance: The rate that is up to 25 percent above the established lodging for three meals Milieu schedule. Deadlines, which need to be reached in a progressive and orderly manner. Planner. The person designated to oversee the conference.

Planning Committee: Operational group significantly contributing to a conference’s success and able to fully reflect the needs of both the agency and the attendees.

Getting Started

Depending on the size, type, and intended effect of the conference, start planning a minimum of six months in advance. Designate a planner and a planning committee.

Planning Committee

Functions typically include, but are not limited to:

- Establishing a set of objectives.
- Developing a theme.
- Making recommendations for location, agenda, dates, and logistics, e.g., schedules, activities, speaker.
- Making suggestions as to who should attend.
- Serving as communications link between planners and participants.

Milestones Schedule

(a) Develop a milestone schedule, which is essential to conference planning, by working backward from the beginning date of the conference to include each major step.

Milestones include:

- Planning committee meetings.
- Preparation of mailing lists.
- Letter of invitation.
- Designation of speakers.
- Confirmation letters to speakers.
- Confirmation with site selection official.
- Preparation of agenda.
- Preparation of specification sheet.
- Location and date selection.
- Exhibit.
- Budget.
- Catering requirements.
- Signage.
- Conference information packages.
- Scheduling photographers (if planned).
- Use of agency with and conference logo.
- Handicapped requirements.
- Inspection of venue with reimbursements, if appropriate.

(b) Establish completion dates for each major step.

(c) Update and revise the schedule as needed.

 specification Sheet

A detailed specification sheet is necessary to:

- Identify essential elements of a conference which typically include, but are not limited to:
  - Sleeping rooms on-site; food services. It is generally best to estimate on the low side for the number of sleeping rooms and meals to be prepared. Facilities, unless there is only limited available sizes, are usually prepared to increase the number of sleeping rooms and meals; however, they discourage—and in some cases penalize—you if the sleeping room and meal guarantee are not met.
  - Meeting rooms.
  - Exhibit facilities.
  - Audio-visual equipment and support services.
  - Miscellaneous support services.

- Sleeping rooms with amenities, e.g., Internet access, data ports, conference call, and voice mail.
- Procurement: Bring contracting officer into the process early. All agreements and decisions should be written and agreed to by the agency contracting officer before being sent to the facility.
- Government per diem rates. The government per diem rate applies to Federal attendees. Application of it to non-Federal attendees is at the discretion of the property and conference negotiator.
- Registration fees. Generally, the registration covers all direct expenditures of agency funds for planning and organization of a conference, e.g., meeting room accommodations, meals, light refreshments (if appropriate), speaker fees, publication of programs, and other directly relating to the conference, except lodging costs. Any costs included in the registration fee must be estimated in the registration fee; otherwise, the estimated registration fee, divide the proposed budget by the estimated number of attendees.

Budgeting

Decide how the conference expenses (other than sleeping room accommodations and individual meals) will be paid, i.e., by the attendees from a training or registration fee, or directly by the agency.

Conference Site Selection

Minimize total costs, all factors considered.

Geographic Location

In determining where to locate the conference, consider:

- Targeted audience.
- Total costs, including per diem, travel, transportation, and other.
- Accessibility by car or air.
-Whether technological activities are necessary.
- The expense of desired facility (significant savings can be achieved in off-season periods).

Types of Facilities

- Federal Government. Use Government-owned or Government-provided conference facilities to the maximum extent possible.
- Convention centers. Exclusively for large meetings, include shows and exhibit, usually located near a large number of hotels.
- Colleges and universities. Many have good meeting facilities and can offer sleeping accommodations when school is not in session.
- Hotels. Commercial facilities that may be used to meet all conference needs or just the room night needs.
- Conference centers. Dedicated meeting facilities, good for smaller meetings when conference rooms and other services are planned.

Date Selection

For availability and economical reasons, the best months are April, May, September, October, and November. You should book the facility as early as possible to ensure there is no competition for the facilities. However, you should pay particular attention to commitments for September or October due to fiscal year budget considerations.
Considerations When Choosing a Site
(a) Is the facility:
  - Cost effective, e.g., are Government rates
    considered?
  - Safe, e.g., is it FEMA-approved?
  - Is the on-site security presence
    accepted by all participants?
  - Will the staff seem to be
    competent and responsive?
  - Is it located in a functional way?
  - Is it large enough to accommodate the
count of sleeping rooms required?
  - Is it up to provide necessary conference
    regulations equipment?
  - Is the facility accessible?
  - Is it accessible to attendees?
  - Is it easy to find?
  - Is it secure and safe?
  - Is it close to the facility?
  - Is it cost effective?
(b) Parking:
  - Is it accessible?
  - Is it secure and safe?
  - Is it close to the facility?
  - Is it large enough to accommodate
    the number of vehicles required?
  - Is it located in a functional way?
  - Is it large enough to accommodate
    the number of vehicles required?
(c) Sleeping rooms:
  - Is the facility accessible to attendees?
  - Is it close to the facility?
  - Is it secure and safe?
  - Is it close to the facility?
  - Is it large enough to accommodate
    the number of vehicles required?
  - Is it located in a functional way?
  - Is it large enough to accommodate
    the number of vehicles required?
  - Is it close to the facility?
(d) Functionality of meeting rooms:
  - Is the facility accessible to attendees?
  - Is it close to the facility?
  - Is it secure and safe?
  - Is it close to the facility?
  - Is it large enough to accommodate
    the number of vehicles required?
  - Is it located in a functional way?
  - Is it large enough to accommodate
    the number of vehicles required?
(e) Conference registration, taxes, licenses, permits, etc.:
  - Is the facility accessible to attendees?
  - Is it close to the facility?
  - Is it secure and safe?
  - Is it close to the facility?
  - Is it large enough to accommodate
    the number of vehicles required?
  - Is it located in a functional way?
  - Is it large enough to accommodate
    the number of vehicles required?
  - Is it close to the facility?

Food and Drink
Meals:
  - You are not responsible for providing meals;
    you are responsible for providing meals
    for attendees at their own expense.
  - You should consider a banquet or other
    hospitality event to enhance the experience.
  - You should consider providing a welcome
    breakfast for attendees.
  - You should consider pre- and post-conference
    hospitality events to enhance the experience.

Breaks and Refreshments:
Breaks should last no longer than 30 minutes
and take place between meeting sessions.

Accommodation:
It is important to request that the hotel
be prepared in a timely manner.

Account Reconciliation:
It is important to request that the hotel
be prepared in a timely manner.

Notification:
Announcement and/or Invitations:
Announcement of the planned conference
should be made as early as possible.

Conference Information Package:
Each registrant should be given a
conference information package.

Promotional brochures from the facility.

Facility Process:
Check-In and Out:
Streamline the process:
- Will the facility work additional
  personnel?
- Is it necessary to have additional
  personnel?
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

47 CFR Part 51

[CC Docket No. 86-147 and 96-98; FCC 96-388]

Deployment of Wireless Services Offering Advanced Telecommunications Capability

AGENCY: Federal Communications Commission

ACTION: Final rule

SUMMARY: This document adopts procedures to promote the availability of competitive broadband xDSL-based services, especially to residential and small business customers. This document amends the Commission’s unbundling rules to require incumbent LECs to provide unbundled access to a new network element, the high frequency portion of the local loop. This will enable competitive LECs to compete with incumbent LECs to provide xDSL-based services through telephone lines that the competitive LECs can share with incumbent LECs. The provision of xDSL-based service by a competitive LEC and voiceband service by an incumbent LEC on the same loop is frequently called “two-tone sharing.”

I. Introduction

1. The Commission adopts a Third Report and Order in CC Docket No. 86-147 and Fourth Report and Order in CC Docket No. 96-98, collectively “Third R&O” to promote the availability of competitive broadband xDSL-based services, especially to residential and small business customers. Specifically, the Commission amends the unbundling rules to require incumbent LECs to provide unbundled access to a new network element, the high frequency portion of the local loop. This will enable competitive LECs to compete with incumbent LECs to provide xDSL-based services through telephone lines that the competitive LECs can share with incumbent LECs. The provision of xDSL-based service by a competitive LEC and voiceband service by an incumbent LEC on the same loop is frequently called “two-tone sharing.”

2. In addition, the Commission adopts rules in this Order that apply to spectrum compatibility and noise levels. These rules will significantly benefit the rapid and efficient deployment of xDSL-based technologies. Specifically, the Commission seeks to encourage the voluntary development of industry standards while limiting the ability of any one class of carriers to impose unilateral and potentially anti-competitive spectrum management or compatibility rules on other xDSL providers. The spectrum policies adopted in this Order will ensure the compatibility of technologies and minimize the risk of harmful spectrum interference amongst transmission services. As such, these policies will ensure that American consumers will not face undue delay in receiving the benefits of technological innovation.