

## Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances

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WTA: Withholding Tax Allowance

[FTR Amdt. 70, 63 FR 15983, Apr. 1, 1998; 63 FR 35538, 35539, June 30, 1998, as amended by FTR Amdt. 2007-05, 72 FR 61540, Oct. 31, 2007; FTR Amdt. 2010-05, 75 FR 63104, Oct. 14, 2010]

### APPENDIX E TO CHAPTER 301—SUGGESTED GUIDANCE FOR CONFERENCE PLANNING

#### TERMS

**Conference:** A meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium or event that involves attendee travel. The term “conference” also applies to training activities that are considered to be conferences under 5 CFR 410.404.

**Milestone 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 overall 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 one year 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., schedule, exhibits, speaker.
- Making suggestions as to who should attend.
- Serving as communications link between planners and participants.
- Evaluation and follow-up.

#### *Milestone 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. Examples include:

- Planning committee meetings.
- Preparation of mailing lists.
- Letters 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.
- Exhibits.
- Budget.
- Printing requirements.
- Signage.

- Conference information packages.
- Scheduling photographer (if planned).
- Use of agency seal and conference logo.
- Handicapped requirements.
- Planning of meals and refreshments, 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:

(a) Identify essential elements of a conference which typically include, but are not limited to:

- Sleeping rooms and 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 space, 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 guarantees 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.

(b) Determine costs:

- *Procurement.* All agreements and decisions should be written and agreed to by the agency-contracting officer before being sent to the facility. Bring contracting officer into the process early.

- *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 fee.* Generally, the registration fee 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, publications, and materials. Anything directly relating to the conference, except liquor, can be included in the fee. To estimate the 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 attendee from a training or registration fee, or directly by the agency.

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### 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, transportation, and other.
- Accessibility by car or air.
- Whether recreational 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.* Excellent for very large meetings, trade shows and exhibits; 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 numerous breakout sessions 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 increase the chances of getting the date you want. However, 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 honored?
  - Safe, e.g., FEMA-approved?
  - Is there on-site security personnel?
  - Easily reached from an airport or by car?
  - Clean?
  - Well run, e.g., does the staff seem to be competent and responsive?
  - Laid out in a functional way?
  - Large enough to supply the number of sleeping rooms required?
  - Set up to provide necessary conference registration equipment?
  - Handicapped accessible?
- (b) Parking:
- Is it adequate?
  - How close to the facility is it?
  - Is it secure and safe?

- Is the cost separate?

#### (c) Sleeping rooms:

- Will the facility make the reservations, or are you responsible for making the reservations for participants?

- What are the facility's registration rules?

- What are departure rules?

#### (d) Functionality of meeting rooms:

- Is appropriate space available?
- What costs are involved?
- Is needed equipment available (*i.e.*, for conference registration, faxes, phones, computers, copiers)? Do not rent equipment unless it is absolutely unrealistic to bring your own.

- Are rooms designated for agency use for the duration of the conference?

- Are there columns that can block views?

- Are ceilings high enough for audio-video equipment?

- Are rooms suitable for both classroom and/or theatre setups?

- Are there windows? Shades?

- Are there manually-controlled thermostats?

- Are rooms handicapped accessible?

- Where are electrical outlets?

- Can the rooms be darkened?

- Would it be more economical to bring audio-visual equipment?

- Does the facility want meeting schedules and room layouts in writing in advance of the conference?

- If necessary, can the rooms be entered the evening before for an early setup?

- Will the facility arrange for room setup if given a layout?

- What set-up costs are included?

- What are departure rules?

#### (e) Exhibits:

- If exhibits are planned, is suitable exhibit space available?

- Are easels available at no cost?

- What are the put-up and takedown times?

- What costs are involved?

- What about pre-delivery and after-conference arrangements?

- If exhibits are shipped, know where and to whom they are to be sent.

- If you are bringing large exhibits, determine location of loading dock, appropriate entrances and elevators.

- Are there additional handling fees?

- Check hotel policy on posting, size and appearance of signs.

### FOOD AND DRINK

#### *Meals*

- You can not generally use appropriated funds to pay for meals for employees at their official stations.

- Employees on TDY travel may be served meals but cannot be reimbursed for those provided at Government expense.

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- You should clarify in advance the appropriate per diem reduction(s) of meal(s) allowance(s) for TDY travel.
- You may pay, or reimburse an employee for meals as necessary expenses incident to an authorized training program (under the Government Employees Training Act (GETA) at 5 U.S.C. 4104(4)), if a determination has been made that essential training will be conducted during the meal.
- Work closely with the hotel to plan quality menus that fit within authorized per diem rates.
- Clarify and agree in advance to the number of meal guarantees.
- Ensure that gratuities and service charges are added to the cost of each meal, and determine the method of billing to be used (e.g., signed guarantee, collected meal tickets, or actual quantities consumed).
- Confirm menus.

### BREAKS AND REFRESHMENTS

Breaks should last no longer than 30 minutes and take place between meeting sessions. The following should also be considered when planning for refreshments:

- Keep in mind that everyone does not drink coffee or tea.
- You should clarify and agree in advance that coffee and pastries, if appropriate, are purchased by the gallon and dozen.
- Try to avoid a per person charge.
- Negotiate the cost into the contract.
- Be conservative in your estimates. There are seldom 100 percent of the conference participants attending any one function.
- If coffee, soft drinks, and water are not included in the fee, are they available "at cost" to the attendee?

### ACCOUNT RECONCILIATION

It is important to request that the hotel bill be prepared in a logical and chronological sequence, and that backup data accompany the bill. Generally, the hotel will complete its accounting of the conference within two weeks of the conclusion.

### NOTIFICATION

#### *Announcement and/or Invitations*

Announcement of the planned conference should be made as early as possible, even one year in advance; invitation letters, 8 weeks in advance. They should include, but are not limited to:

- Point of contact name and telephone number.
- Registration form, card, or Internet address (include space for identifying handicapped requirements).
- Registration instructions.
- Registration deadline date.
- Detailed area map and driving instructions.

- Information on traffic patterns to avoid rush hour delays.
- Promotional brochures from the facility.
- Layout of facility including telephone numbers.
- Breakdown of costs showing any difference from travel versus training object classes, particularly meal costs, so that proper reimbursement can be made.
- Agenda with a list of speakers and topics.
- Activity schedule for spouses, domestic partners, and guests (all charges or costs attributed to spouses, domestic partners or guests must be borne by the individual attendee (not reimbursable by the Government)).
- Provide a sample travel voucher.

### *Confirmations*

You should:

- Decide on the speaker(s) and the message you wish to be conveyed and obtain early commitment(s) in writing.
- Confirm conference dates/times/topics/arrival and departure times with speaker(s) and any other special guests at least 30 days in advance.
- Conduct a final planning committee meeting to confirm all plans.
- Confirm photographer's schedule.
- Confirm hotel plans at least one day in advance.

### FACILITY PROCESS

#### *Check-In and -Out*

Streamline the process:

- Will the facility need additional personnel?
- Is electronic one-stop processing available?
- Is luggage storage and shuttle service available?
- Arrange parking for any special guests.
- Provide signage.

### REGISTRATION PROCESS

Registration is generally the attendees' introduction to the conference. Give it special attention by:

- Using directional signs.
- Placing especially attractive or important exhibits nearby.
- Planning for late arrivals.
- Using state-of-the-art processing.
- Checking out the registration capabilities of using GSA's electronic SmartPay System.
- Providing for handicapped attendees.

### CONFERENCE INFORMATION PACKAGE

Each registrant should be given a conference information package. Used regularly

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during the conference, the conference information package should be accurate, beneficial, and reflect detailed information on a daily/hourly basis. If time allows, you may want to finalize the package and send it to the printer at least 4 weeks in advance of the starting date. The program will be widely used, so you may want to print twice as many copies of the program as you have expected attendees. The information package, for example, may contain:

- A list of everything in the package.
- A “welcome” letter.
- A schedule.
- Workshop agendas.
- Discussion of exhibits.
- Panelists’ information.
- Photos and biographies of speakers/special guests.
- Facility layout and list of services available.
- Identify designated smoking areas.
- Special events.
- Message center information.
- Area map.
- Other pertinent material.

NOTE: Use of agency seal and conference logo may be considered for the conference package. However, the decision to use such items is strictly the judgment of agency officials.

### MISCELLANEOUS

#### *Suggested Room Coordination*

Plan ahead to setup:

- Staff room to handle core of activities;
- Meal functions;
- Exhibit rooms, and
- Meeting rooms—

Theatre or auditorium for lectures; Facing speaker when note taking is important; Square or U-shaped style for discussion/interaction; and Banquet or roundtable for discussion.

#### *Keeping in Touch*

Plan for:

- A message center to be set up in a central location for special announcements and telephone messages.
- How to reach whomever at all times—use beepers and walkie-talkies.
- Clear identification of conference staff.

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- Accommodation of physically impaired attendees with sign language or other special needs.

### *Mementos*

Appropriations are not available to purchase memento items for distribution to conference attendees as a remembrance of an event. Two notable exceptions to the memento or gift prohibition are under training and awards. Work closely with appropriate agency officials to make final determinations.

### RESOURCES

The following resources may be of assistance in planning a conference:

- An agency contracting officer;
- Travel Management Centers;
- Interagency Travel Management Committee members (a forum of agency travel policy managers—for member identification, contact your agency’s administrative or financial office);
- State Chambers of Commerce or Visitors Bureaus;
- Local chapters of the Society of Government Meeting Professionals; and
- Private industry conference planners.

### CONCLUSION

#### *Process:*

- Questionnaires, which may provide invaluable feedback about the success of your conference.
- Training certificates.
- Thank you notes to participants, facility personnel, speakers, printers, photographers, and other special contributors.
- Summary to acknowledge the accomplishments, and to convey the information discussed to a wider audience, may be an excellent promotional tool.

NOTE TO APPENDIX E: Use of pronouns “we”, “you”, and their variants throughout this appendix refers to the agency.

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