

Conference Costs Fact Sheet



Prior Approval

To conduct or host a conference as a grant recipient of OJP funds, you must ensure that it is consistent with its approved grant budget and is reasonable and necessary to achieve the goals and objectives of the grant.

According to 2 CFR 200.432, a conference is defined as “a meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium, workshop or event whose primary purpose is the dissemination of technical information beyond the grant recipient entity and is **necessary and reasonable** for successful performance under the Federal award.”

Prior approval is required for cooperative agreement recipients or federal procurement contractors. Conferences conducted by grant recipients do not require prior approval. However, grant recipients must ensure compliance with limitations and cost thresholds for the following:

- Meeting room and audio/visual services (Lesser of \$25 per day per attendee or \$20,000)
- Logistical planners (Lesser of \$50 per attendee or \$8,750)
- Programmatic planners (Lesser of \$200 per attendee or \$35,000)
- Food and beverage; refreshments (Generally not allowed)

OJP Checklist

OJP developed a checklist of nine questions (right) to clarify what constitutes a conference/event, and what qualifies as an operational meeting or technical assistance. If a cooperative agreement recipient or federal procurement contractor answers “no” to all nine questions, then prior approval is not required. If they answer “yes” to one of the questions, then prior approval is required.

1. Is the cost of the event greater than \$20,000?
2. Are there meeting room costs?
3. Are audio/visual costs greater than \$25 per attendee or more than \$1,000 in total?
4. Are there any food and beverage costs?
5. Did the request for the meeting come from multiple jurisdictions or agencies?
6. Are there trinkets being purchased?
7. Is there a formal published agenda?
8. Are formal discussions or presentation panels planned?
9. Are there logistical planning costs beyond incidental internal administrative costs necessary to arrange travel and lodging for a small number of individuals (e.g., planning/managing attendee registration and/or travel)?

Costs and Expenses

Conferences costs and expenses must be allocable, reasonable, and necessary and should be associated with planning, hosting, sponsoring, or otherwise holding any conferences.

Recipients should always consider whether there are more effective or efficient alternatives, such as virtual events (e.g., webinars and video conferences), which can accomplish the desired results at a lower cost. Every effort should be made to conduct conferences via webinar, teleconference, or video conference. In-person, face-to-face conferences should only be held when necessary and no other option exists. In addition, grantees should consider how a meeting or conference will be perceived by the public as a good use of taxpayer dollars.

The most common conference costs and expenses are:

- **Air travel to/from conference**—All costs, including baggage fees, related to common carrier transportation to and from the conference location paid with OJP funds.
- **Audio/Visual equipment and services**—Total cost limit is \$25 per day per attendee, not to exceed \$20,000.
- **Conference meeting space**—Must stay within the cost limitation threshold on meeting space, audio/visual equipment and services, and conference planning.
- **Indirect costs/overhead rates**—Should be associated with direct costs necessary to plan and hold a conference. Also, must be included in all conference reporting.
- **Local transportation**—Includes rental car, mileage to-and-from the airport or the conference (if local), and taxi charges.
- **Lodging**—OJP recipients must use either the Federal (preferred) or recipient's organizational per diem rate.
- **Logistical conference planner**—Total cost limit is \$50 per attendee, not to exceed \$8,750.
- **Meals and incidental expenses (M&IE)**—All conference attendees must ensure that any provided meal is deducted from their claimed M&IE.
- **Meals and refreshments**—Generally unallowable unless the recipient obtains written prior approval from OJP. This applies to contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements.
- **Other costs**—All "other" costs must be itemized on the Conference and Events Submission Form.
- **Printing and distribution**—Every effort should be made to provide conference materials to participants electronically or via print-on-demand services/options.
- **Programmatic conference planner**—Total cost limit is \$200, not to exceed \$35,000.
- **Staff time associated with planning and holding a conference**—Recipients should consider procuring logistical conference planning services when in-house expertise is unavailable or when such services would result in lower overall costs to the federal government.
- **Trainers, instructors, presenters, or facilitators**—Includes all trainer and speaker fees.