

UW-Madison Guidance on Hosting Meetings/Conferences on Sponsored Projects

FINANCIAL MANAGERS MEETING,
AUGUST 11, 2015

Recent Federal Cases

General Services Administration conference: "lavish spending"

Dept. of Justice conference: "Muffin-gate"

Any changes that Federal agencies make flow down to recipients of their funds.

Agencies have been directed to tighten up on meeting and conference expenses and expect us to do so, as well.

OMB Circular A-21

32. Meetings and Conferences.

“Costs of meetings and conferences, the primary purpose of which is the dissemination of technical information, are allowable. This includes costs of meals, transportation, rental of facilities, speakers’ fees, and other items incidental to such meetings or conferences. But see section J.17 of this Appendix, Entertainment costs.”

Uniform Guidance

§200.432 Conferences.

“A conference is defined as a meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium, workshop or event whose primary purpose is the dissemination of technical information beyond the non-Federal entity and is necessary and reasonable for successful performance under the Federal award.

(emphasis added) Allowable conference costs paid by the non-Federal entity as a sponsor or host of the conference may include rental of facilities, speakers' fees, costs of meals and refreshments, local transportation, and other items incidental to such conferences unless further restricted by the terms and conditions of the Federal award. As needed, the costs of identifying, but not providing, locally available dependent-care resources are allowable. Conference hosts/sponsors must exercise discretion and judgment in ensuring that conference costs are appropriate, necessary and managed in a manner that minimizes costs to the Federal award. The Federal awarding agency may authorize exceptions where appropriate for programs including Indian tribes, children, and the elderly. See also §§200.438 Entertainment costs, 200.456 Participant support costs, 200.474 Travel costs, and 200.475 Trustees.”

Policy: 202-Meeting/Conference

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Statement of Policy:

To correctly handle expenses associated with an event, we strongly encourage the use of the Event Forms below. All policy requirements are addressed with the forms for your convenience. Please use these forms with all payment mechanisms, including requisitions, expense reports, Payment to Individual Reports, purchasing cards, etc.

Notes: State law prohibits the use of state agency funds for a number of purchases that might inherently be appropriate for fundraise or employee appreciation events (e.g. alcoholic meals that exceed state limits). Please see Purchasing Services Internal Policy and Procedures Number IPP-61, Request Contracting Guidelines – UW Foundation Cash Funds.

Note: Sponsored projects (e.g., fund 144 or 133) are subject to the terms and conditions of the specific award, as well as applicable program guidelines, which may restrict use of funds for certain meeting or conference expenses. See RSP guidance on meetings/conferences. Please contact the RSP accountant for your award with any questions.

Events-Meal Payment Form
For use with events that require payment/reimbursement for breakfast, lunch, or

Related Documents:

- 202 Individuals Not Employed By University/State Government
- UW-Madison Policy on the Purchase of Alcoholic Beverages
- UW System Reimbursable City and UW Sponsored Events
- UW System General Policy and Procedures/FIS
- System Financial Policy and Procedures Paper FIS Depreciated University Fees
- UW System Meeting/Hanging Guide
- UW Meeting/Conference Reimburse

Related Procedures/Policy:

- 202 A Meeting/Conference: Reimburses
- 202 B Meeting/Conference: Meal Expenses
- 202 C Meeting/Conference: Substantive Breaks

Note: Sponsored projects (e.g., fund 144 or 133) are subject to the terms and conditions of the specific award, as well as applicable program guidelines, which may restrict use of funds for certain meeting or conference expenses. See [RSP guidance on meetings/conferences](#). Please contact the [RSP accountant](#) for your award with any questions.

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https://www.rsp.wisc.edu/policies/meetings_conferences.html

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July 21st, 2015

An important consideration for meetings and conferences hosted by UW-Madison is the source of funds being used to pay for the event. If sponsored project funds are being considered to support a meeting or conference that UW-Madison is hosting, faculty and staff must remember that agencies may restrict use of their funds to pay for meeting or conference-related expenses.

When the Uniform Guidance was implemented on 12/26/2014, it contained updated guidance on conferences. The updated guidance specifies that a conference's "primary purpose is the dissemination of technical information beyond the non-Federal entity and is necessary and reasonable for successful performance under the Federal award." (emphasis added) ("Non-Federal entity" refers to UW-Madison.) Several agencies also have updated their guidance documents to clarify limitations placed on meeting or conference expenses. A handful of examples are listed in the table below. Please contact the RSP accountant for your award with any questions.

Examples of Agency Policies on Meeting/Conference Expenses (NOT a comprehensive list)

Agency/Guidance Document (Date)	Relevant Term
Dept. of Energy/Special Terms and Conditions for Use in Most Grants and Cooperative Agreements (February 2015)	CONFERENCE SPENDING (FEBRUARY 2015)
	• The recipient shall not expend any funds on a conference not directly and programmatically related to the purpose for which the grant or cooperative agreement was awarded that would defray the cost to the United States Government of a conference held by any executive branch department.

National Science Foundation

From *Grant Proposal Guide*, Chapter II.C.2.g.xii(b)

Meals and Coffee Breaks:

“No funds may be requested for meals or coffee breaks for intramural meetings of an organization or any of its components, including laboratories, departments, and centers...”

Dept. of Education

From Dept. of Education Terms and Conditions:

- Before deciding to use grant funds to attend or host a meeting or conference, a grantee should ensure that attending or hosting a conference or meeting is **consistent with its approved application** and is **reasonable and necessary to achieve the goals and objectives of the grant**.
- A grantee hosting a meeting or conference **may not use grant funds to pay for food** for conference attendees **unless** doing so is **necessary to accomplish legitimate meeting or conference business**.
- Grantees are strongly encouraged to contact their project officer with any questions or concerns about whether using grant funds for a meeting or conference is allowable prior to committing grant funds for such purposes. A short conversation could help avoid a costly and embarrassing mistake.

Dept. of Energy

From “Special Terms and Conditions for Use in Most Grants and Cooperative Agreements”:

CONFERENCE SPENDING (FEBRUARY 2015)

The recipient shall not expend any funds on a conference not directly and programmatically related to the purpose for which the grant or cooperative agreement was awarded that would defray the cost to the United States Government of a conference held by any Executive branch department, agency, board, commission, or office for which the cost to the United States Government would otherwise exceed \$20,000, thereby circumventing the required notification by the head of any such Executive Branch department, agency, board, commission, or office to the Inspector General (or senior ethics official for any entity without an Inspector General), of the date, location, and number of employees attending such conference.

Summary

- Sponsored projects are subject to terms and conditions attached to the specific award.
- Terms and conditions may restrict how funds can be used, particularly for meeting/conference expenses.
- If considering using sponsored project funds to help pay for a conference, review the terms and conditions of the award.
- Conferences are defined, per the Uniform Guidance, as involving individuals who are NOT part of UW-Madison (beyond the non-Federal entity = beyond UW-Madison).
- Sponsored project funds must not be used to pay for departmental or project meetings on campus.
- Contact RSP accountant for the award with any questions:
<https://www.rsp.wisc.edu/accountantsearch.html>.