

III. Postaward Requirements

3.10 OJP/COPS OFFICE CONFERENCE APPROVAL, PLANNING, AND REPORTING

▶ OVW SPECIFIC CONFERENCE GUIDANCE

The section below does not apply to recipients of OVW funds. Guidance on conference approval, planning, and reporting for OVW recipients is available [here](#).

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to provide guidance to OJP/COPS Office recipients (including cooperative agreement recipients and subrecipients) and contractors that conduct training sessions, meetings, or conferences.

For purposes of this chapter (OJP/COPS Office Conference Approval, Planning, and Reporting) references to “contractor” means a Federal contractor, unless context indicates otherwise. To sign up for email notifications for any changes to the Conference Cost Policy [Email Notification \(Click to Subscribe\)](#).

Policy Overview

Cooperative Agreements and Federal Procurement Contracts

All conferences (see definition below) conducted by cooperative agreement recipients or federal procurement contractors funded by OJP/COPS Office must receive written prior approval. An approved award budget is not a prior approval. All prior approval requests for conferences costing \$100,000 or less and not exceeding any cost thresholds must be submitted a minimum of 90 days in advance of the start date. All conferences costing more than \$100,000 or exceeding any one cost threshold must be submitted a minimum of 120 days in advance of the start date. See the [Prior Approval Required](#) section for more information.

Cooperative agreement recipients must comply with the approval process regarding logistical conference planning (see section on [logistical conference planning](#)), and must keep their program manager informed of all decisions being made during the conference planning process.

In addition, cooperative agreement recipients and federal procurement contractors conducting conferences that cost more than \$20,000 must report actual conference expenses within 45 days after the last day of the event. See the [Post-Event Reporting](#) section for more information.

No hotel/venue or audio-visual contracts may be entered into before such prior approval has been obtained in writing from OJP/COPS Office.

Grants

Conferences conducted by grant recipients do not require prior approval. However, grant recipients must ensure compliance with the food/beverage, meeting room/audio-visual, logistical planner, and programmatic planner limitations and cost thresholds.

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Cost Thresholds

Cost thresholds and limitations are in place for the following items:

- Meeting room/audio-visual services (lesser of \$31.25 per day per attendee or \$25,000)
- Logistical planners (lesser of \$62.50 per attendee or \$11,000)
- Programmatic planners (lesser of \$250 per attendee or \$43,750)
- Food and beverage (generally not allowed)
- Refreshments (generally not allowed)

While there are exceptions to these thresholds and limitations, they are rare and require extraordinary justification as well as approval outside and above OJP/COPS Office. See the [Conference Costs](#) and [Prior Approval Required](#) sections for more information.

Definitions

The following definitions pertain specifically to conference costs. Additional definitions can be found in the [Glossary of Terms, Appendix 5.2](#). See [41 C.F.R. § 300-3.1](#) for a glossary of travel terms.

Agenda means a *formal agenda* that provides a list of all activities that shall occur during the event, using an hour-by-hour timeline. If food and/or beverages will be provided, it must specify when during the event this will occur.

Conference is defined broadly, and includes meetings, retreats, seminars, symposia, and training activities. See [2 C.F.R. § 200.432](#) for general cost principles that apply to conferences.

- A conference typically is a prearranged formal event with at least some of the following characteristics: designated participants and/or registration; a published substantive agenda; and scheduled speakers or discussion panels on a particular topic.
- A conference typically is not a routine operational meeting, a law enforcement operation or prosecutorial activity in connection with a specific case or criminal activity, a testing activity, or a technical assistance visit. Please refer to the definitions of these set out below to decide whether the event requires prior approval and reporting under this guidance.

Conference costs and conference expenses mean all costs using DOJ funds associated with planning, hosting, sponsoring, or otherwise holding any conference, including all of the categories of costs listed below:

- Conference meeting space (including rooms for breakout sessions)
- Audio-visual equipment and services
- Printing and distribution
- Meals provided at the event (generally unallowable)
- Refreshments (generally unallowable)
- Meals and incidental expenses (M&IE portion of per diem)
- Lodging
- Air travel to/from conference

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- Local transportation (e.g., rental car, privately owned vehicle to-and-from-the airport, taxi)
- Logistical conference planner
- Programmatic conference planner
- Trainers, instructors, presenters, or facilitators
- Other costs which must be identified individually
- Staff time associated with planning and holding the conference
- Indirect costs/overhead rates applied to direct costs associated with the conference (In accordance with negotiated agreements, all indirect costs associated with a conference must be applied to the above categories as appropriate and reported as conference costs.)

Law enforcement operation means events that involve staging (as well as victim service provider staging related to a law enforcement operation), surveillance, investigation, intelligence, and undercover activities, and other activities directly related to active law enforcement operations. For example:

- A meeting between the police department and local trafficking service providers related to an impending raid on a labor trafficking site would be a law enforcement operation.
- However, a conference about human trafficking that brought together the police department and local trafficking service providers to train, discuss their overall trafficking initiatives, and develop professional relationships, would not be a law enforcement operation.

A **routine operational meeting** typically does not have a formal published agenda, scheduled speakers, or discussion panels, and is defined as an event where the:

- Primary focus is the recipient's day-to-day operations and concerns (e.g., staff meetings, all hands meetings);
- Attendees overwhelmingly are internal to the organization holding the meeting; and
- Answer to all ten questions on the checklist on the [No Prior Approval Required](#) page is "No."

Technical assistance visit means travel by an individual or a small group of recipient/contractor staff members or consultants to provide training or technical assistance to a particular entity, where there are no costs to DOJ funds for meeting rooms, conference planning, or trinkets. Reasonable travel costs (lodging, transportation, local transportation, audio-visual, printing, and meals and incidental expenses [M&IE]) for technical assistance staff may be reimbursed.

Testing activity means an event where the primary purpose is to evaluate an individual's qualifications to perform certain duties necessary to perform his or her job. The most common examples include events held for firearms and weaponry proficiency testing and certifications. A majority of the event must be devoted to the administration and taking of the test. An event that includes testing that is merely incidental to the event, or where such testing is given upon the completion of the event to evaluate the event or determine participation in the event, is not a testing activity.

Federal facility means property or building space owned, leased, or substantially controlled by the Federal Government or the government of the District of Columbia.

Non-Federal facility is any facility that is not a Federal facility. State and local facilities are considered "non-federal facilities". For further clarification see [5 U.S.C. § 4101\(6\)](#).