



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
Reston, Virginia 20192

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Memorandum

Distribution: Water Mission Area

From: Donald W. Cline
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WATER MISSION AREA POLICY MEMORANDUM NO. 2018.02

Subject: Policy and Guidelines for Water Mission Area Conference Attendance and Sponsorship

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide policy and guidance to the U.S. Geological Survey Water Mission Area Staff regarding conference attendance and sponsorship.

General Information

The Department of the Interior Conference Policy is that conferences over \$20,000 will need USGS approval. Conferences over \$40,000 needs Assistant Secretary of Water and Science as well as Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget approval. Conferences over \$100,000 or more will need the Deputy Secretary of Interior's approval. There are wait times associated with the approval process so please plan accordingly. **TIMELINESS is CRITICAL.** Late packages = reduced attendance.

In compliance with statutory requirements and OMB policies, the Department is committed to reporting actual costs associated with each conference. Actual conference costs are to be reported for hosted meetings costing \$20,000 or more and all conferences costing \$100,000 or more.

Conference approval

First and foremost, you must sign up for ALL conferences in the USGS Conference Database even if you will incur no costs: <https://obis.usgs.gov/SitePages/ConfHome.aspx>. Make sure that your supervisor is correct on the conference sign-up page as you must obtain that approval prior to attending the conference.

If the information listed is incorrect, please work with your Account Manager UAM to update the information in Active Directory and then sign up in the database.

The deadline to sign up for a conference is 120 days before the conference starts to ensure enough time to complete a package if one is needed. It is possible a conference lead will establish an earlier deadline in order to gain conference approval before early registration deadlines. If you want to sign up after the deadline you must contact the conference lead. If you are placed on a waitlist, you are not authorized to attend the conference unless the conference lead has told you otherwise.

If a conference package is over \$20,000 no non-refundable travel arrangements can be made or registrations purchased until the package is approved. Registration is a non-refundable purchase. This means for larger meetings such as AGU, GSA, National Groundwater Association Summit, you should not be registering for a conference until otherwise approved.

Attendees should map the subject/content of their presentation or session to the appropriate Secretarial priority. Although there are 10 total DOI priorities, USGS only participates in 4 of them and we should only map to those 4 (no change from current guidance).

- Creating a conservation stewardship legacy second only to Teddy Roosevelt. (Eco, Water (not GWSIP), CLU, and CSS related presentations);
- Utilizing our Natural Resources (Energy and Minerals related presentations only);
- Protecting our people and borders (Hazards, EH, and GWSIP related presentations) and;
- Modernizing our infrastructure (facilities, EI, organizational reform related presentations).

Please note that invitational travelers and contractors are also included in the database. Their costs count towards our conference totals and we want to make sure their attendance is recorded, too.

Travel Authorizations for Conference Travel

The employee must use the purpose code "Conference Attendance" when creating the travel authorization. In addition, the employee must use a four digit Conference Unique Identifier that will be given by the USGS Conference Lead and add the conference name in the Document Detail box. This unique identifier is the four digit number found in the Conference Database that identifies this conference and can be located in the URL of the conference record <https://obis.usgs.gov/SitePages/Request.aspx?CaseID=6551>. In this example, 6551 is the conference identifier. This information aids the conference leads and coordinators in finding relevant information within Concur relating to this specific conference. All other information can be noted in the Trip Comments field.

Stay within the daily per diem limits for meals, lodging and incidental expenses. If meals are provided, reduce the per diem expenses as appropriate on your voucher. See Section 5 of the CGE Federal Traveler Manual for instructions.

Post Conference

Each employee who has attended a conference has to complete their travel voucher **within 5 days** of the last day of the conference.

For Local Travelers:

- If you plan to claim mileage reimbursement, please file your local travel voucher (SF-1164) within 5 days of the last day of the conference. Remember that you can only claim the mileage above and beyond your normal daily commute.
- Please ensure that the person processing your SF-1164 enters the four digit unique conference identifier for this conference and the conference name in the Reference field of the form. This unique identifier is the four digit number found in the Conference Database that identifies this conference and can be located in the URL of the conference record
<https://obis.usgs.gov/SitePages/Request.aspx?CaseID=6551>. This information aids the conference leads and coordinators in finding relevant information within Concur relating to this specific conference. All other information can be noted in the Trip Comments field.

Conference Sponsorships

In addition to limiting conference spending to less than \$100,000 for an individual meeting, senior leaders have also limited sponsorship funding to less than \$10,000. The conference policy refers to sponsorship spending as expending funds for sponsoring, advertising, corporate membership, and all other financial support to a hosting organization.

The Water Mission Area has implemented that all requests for conference sponsorship fill out the memo that appears in Attachment A.

More Information

The Office of Administration has established a Fact Sheet for conferences. For more information, please go to:

<https://collaboration.usgs.gov/aei/cctw/layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/aei/cctw/Conferences/Fact%20Sheets/Employee%20Conference%20Fact%20Sheet.docx&action=default>

Attachment A

Water Mission Area Conference Sponsorship Questionnaire

Sponsorship requested by:

1. Conference Information

- a. Name
- b. Location
- c. Dates
- d. Total funding requested
- e. Which of the four USGS WMA programs will provide the funding for this conference?
- f. How often is conference held?
- g. Have we sponsored this in the past? If so, when and how much?

2. What are the objectives of the conference? How do they support or align with WMA priorities?

3. What is included in the conference sponsorship?

4. List cooperators and stakeholders who participate in this conference?

5. Conference Attendance

- a. Total attendance from previous conference?
- b. How many USGS employees attended previous conference?
- c. How many WMA employees attended previous conference?
- d. How many WMA employees are interested in attending the requested conference?

6. Explain the role of the USGS in conference planning?

7. Why is this conference sponsorship important to the Water Mission Area?

8. How does the conference support current and future priorities of the WMA?

9. Why should the WMA sponsor this conference?

10. What are the impacts if the WMA does not sponsor this conference?