

Fiscal Year 2016 Report on Conferences Sponsored by Department of Commerce

Background

The Department of Commerce is committed, within current budget constraints, to enabling Commerce employees to participate in official conferences as required to meet the mission to support American businesses, create jobs and strengthen the economy. Beginning in October 2011, the Department of Commerce began an in-depth review of conferences and related travel across the Department and developed a comprehensive process for gaining approval to sponsor, host or attend conferences. In September 2016, the Department updated its conference policy to address the number of approval days required for conference packages, to clarify definitions that funds provided to a non-Federal entity pursuant to both grants and cooperative agreements are not included in the definition of conference, and to ensure accountability for being good stewards of taxpayer dollars, while at the same time ensuring that the policy meets all Office of Management and Budget mandates and Federal Travel Regulations.

Conference Activity

Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-17-08, Amending OMB Memorandum M-12-12, Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations requires Federal agencies to report on conference expenses on a dedicated place on their official website by January 31, all agency-sponsored conferences where the net expenses for the agency associated with the conference were in excess of \$100,000 and in addition, for any instances where the net expenses for an agency-sponsored conference exceeded \$500,000, the website shall include the agency designated official's rationale and approval. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, the Department of Commerce sponsored 11 conferences; 10 in excess of \$100,000 and one in excess of \$500,000. The total net cost to the Department for these 11 conferences was \$2,583,268. The Secretarial Waiver that identifies the exceptional circumstances that necessitated exceeding the \$500,000 threshold is included on the website with the report. All conferences held during FY 2016 related to accomplishing the Department of Commerce's mission to promote job creation, economic growth, and sustainable development to improve the standards of living for all Americans by working in partnership with business, universities, and the nation's workforce.

> \$500,000

NIST

Title	Purpose	Location	Start Date	Attendees	Net Costs	Quarter
Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) Full Meeting	The OSAC strengthens forensic science in the United States by publicly identifying forensic science standards and guidelines that have technical merit and were developed through an approved standards development process to be elevated for listing on the OSAC Registries. 33 OSAC units met to prioritize standards development for the year and approve documents under review.	Leesburg, VA	1/25/2016	487	\$575,559.74	2
NIST Conference Count		1		487	\$575,559.74	

< \$500,000

CENSUS

Title	Purpose	Location	Start Date	Attendees	Net Costs	Quarter
State Data Centers (SDC) and Census Information Centers (CIC) Annual Training Conference	The SDC and CIC assists the Census Bureau in disseminating, educating, and promoting the Census. The 2016 SDC and CIC Annual Training Conference provided updates and training to our partnership networks on the latest censuses, surveys, data tools, and programs. The Census Bureau sponsored annual training conference improves the relationships with our stakeholders, which strengthens our efforts to educate the public about the Census Bureau and its mission to measure America's people, places, and economy.	Suitland, MD	4/4/2016	101	\$146,246.25	3
CENSUS Conference Count		1		101	\$146,246.25	

EDA

Title	Purpose	Location	Start Date	Attendees	Net Costs	Quarter
2016 EDA National Conference	The conference brought together federal economic development resources with local practitioners to focus on economic development initiatives and best practices and provided a forum for impactful discussions for economic development leaders to share best practices about what was accomplished in communities and regions and to explore a bold plan for future economic growth as the only federal agency solely focused on economic development. It was imperative that EDA provide opportunities to bring federal and regional stakeholders together and move the agency's mission forward, while also positioning EDA as the integrator for the federal government's economic development mission.	Washington, DC	4/7/2016	214	\$277,265.35	3
EDA Conference Count		1		214	\$277,265.35	

ITA

Title	Purpose	Location	Start Date	Attendees	Net Costs	Quarter
2016 SelectUSA Investment Summit (Summit)	The Summit promoted foreign investment in United States by bringing together economic development organizations (EDOs) from all regions of the United States, foreign investors, service providers, DOC leadership, members of the United States and Foreign Commercial Service, and other U.S. Government agencies in the Federal Interagency Investment Working Group (IIWG). IIWG member agencies addressed questions and issues that investors and companies face when they invest. The approximately 147,000 interactions at the Summit were a tremendous success in bringing together global companies and U.S. EDOs to facilitate investment opportunities in the United States.	Washington, DC	6/19/2016	258	\$147,984.90	3

ITA Conference Count

1

258

\$147,984.90

MBDA

Title	Purpose	Location	Start Date	Attendees	Net Costs	Quarter
2015 MEDWeek Conference	The conference provided technical and business development sessions on strategies for growing minority-owned business domestically and abroad through a series of workshops, plenary sessions, and business-to-business matching sessions. It also recognized the accomplishments of minority-owned firms through networking events and an awards program. In October 2015, MBDA partnered with the National Minority Supplier Diversity Council (NMSDC) at their national convention for business owners, procurement officers, and diversity professionals to develop a more robust programming agenda that included both private and public sector business opportunities for Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs).	San Diego, CA	10/18/2015	41	\$159,348.21	1
2016 National Training Conference	The Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) National Training Conference (NTC) is an annual training event held for MBDA's network of business centers. The NTC served as a vehicle to train MBDA and its Business Center Staff on new and innovative programs, new and existing policies, procedures for the management of grant awards and compliance, and new initiatives as they relate to the President's Agenda, the Department of Commerce, and MBDA. It also served as a forum for the exchange of information on minority business development through general sessions, workshops, and general networking activities.	Denver, Colorado	9/19/2016	63	\$310,130.56	4
MBDA Conference Count		2		104	\$469,478.77	

NIST

Title	Purpose	Location	Start Date	Attendees	Net Costs	Quarter
2016 PSCR Public Safety Broadband Stakeholders Meeting	The NIST Public Safety Communications Research (PSCR) Division performs research, development, testing, and evaluation to ensure that first responder communications technology meets their unique, mission critical requirements. The PSCR program is a stakeholder-driven program and has implemented a robust stakeholder engagement strategy that brings public safety, Local/State/Federal government, academia, and industry together to solve tough problems. The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 directs NIST to execute a Research & Development effort to address public safety communications broadband technologies; as part of this effort the Act directs NIST to convene stakeholders and working groups.	San Diego, CA	6/6/2016	153	\$237,014.94	3
Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) Resource Committees Meeting	The two OSACs, Digital/Multimedia and Physics/Pattern Interpretation SACs and their corresponding nine subcommittees met to discuss the latest OSAC standards and guidelines under development in their OSAC units. The 11 concurrent meetings enabled forensic science practitioners and academic researchers to discuss the technical merit of these standards, to determine if a sufficient scientific basis exists to move these documents forward toward placement on the OSAC Registry of Approved Standards. It was critical to meet in person for these meetings, so the latest standards and guidelines within the Digital/Multimedia SAC and the Physics/Pattern Interpretation SAC could be discussed and voted on at these meetings. This effort supports the development of scientifically valid standards that address digital/multimedia and physics/pattern interpretation.	Phoenix, Arizona	7/26/2016	158	\$231,289.58	4

Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC)	The Chemistry SAC met to discuss the latest OSAC standards and guidelines. The seven concurrent meetings enabled forensic science practitioners and academic researchers to discuss the technical merit of these standards, to determine if a sufficient scientific basis exists to move these documents forward toward placement on the OSAC Registry of Approved Standards. It was critical to meet in person for these meetings, so the latest standards and guidelines within the Chemistry SAC could be discussed and voted on at these meetings. This effort supports the development of scientifically valid standards that address chemistry.	Phoenix, Arizona	8/2/2016	122	\$173,747.32	4
Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC)	The Biology/DNA and Crime Scene/Death Investigation SACs and their corresponding 10 subcommittees met to discuss the latest OSAC standards and guidelines under development in their OSAC units. The 12 concurrent meetings enabled forensic science practitioners and academic researchers to discuss the technical merit of these standards. It was critical to meet in person for these meetings, so the latest standards and guidelines within the Biology/DNA and Crime Scene/Death Investigation SACs could be discussed and voted on at these meetings. This effort supports the development of scientifically valid standards that address biology/DNA and crime scenes/death investigations.	Phoenix, Arizona	8/23/2016	156	\$197,989.19	4
NIST Conference Count		4		589	\$840,041.03	

NTIA

Title	Purpose	Location	Start Date	Attendees	Net Costs	Quarter
-------	---------	----------	------------	-----------	-----------	---------

FirstNet Fall 2015 SPOC (Single Point of Contact) Meeting	The meeting gathered the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for each of the 56 U.S. states and territories and up to two additional attendees to discuss the latest FirstNet and State and Local Implementation Grant Program (SLIGP) updates, solicit state and territory feedback on FirstNet planning activities, and provide a forum for states and territories to share successes and lessons learned in their FirstNet planning efforts. The two-day meeting followed the successful April 2015 SPOC meeting and provided FirstNet the opportunity to consult with states and territories on many of the required consultation topics outlined in FirstNet's enabling legislation.	Westminster, Colorado	10/7/2015	65	\$126,692.43	1
NTIA Conference Count		1		65	\$126,692.43	
Total DOC Conferences		11		1818	\$2,583,268.47	



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Secretary of Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20230

**Waiver of \$500,000 Single-Conference Limitation
Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) for
Forensic Science Meeting from January 25-29, 2016**

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) has requested approval to exceed the \$500,000 single-conference limitation in order to send members and associates of the Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) for forensic science to the NIST-sponsored OSAC meeting, which will take place in Leesburg, Virginia, from January 25-29, 2016.

In submitting its waiver request, NIST has indicated that:

- The meeting is the preeminent standards development forum for the forensic science community in the United States;
- The meeting will allow the 580 OSAC members and associates to advance the OSAC mission: to strengthen the quality, accuracy, and consistency of forensic science through the identification, development, and promotion of rigorous, science-based standards and guidelines;
- No other meetings during the year cover the same broad range of forensic science standards issues and bring together the same diverse collection of forensic scientists, academic researchers, laboratory managers, judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys;
- Because the mission of OSAC aligns with the Department of Commerce's commitment to foster national leadership to strengthen and implement quality standards in the forensic science and criminal justice communities, NIST manages its OSAC travel and conference planning resources throughout the year to support maximum attendance at this OSAC meeting;
- This will be the first time that all 33 committees and subcommittees will meet to conduct joint standards development tasks in one large plenary session as well as meet in separate breakout sessions to complete deliverables;
- The conference is an inaugural plenary event required to establish a comprehensive national forensic science community dedicated to implementing consistent, consensus-based, and scientifically rigorous standards—and while most OSAC committee meetings are held virtually to limit costs, the major cultural shift in the forensic science field that NIST is helping to produce also requires face-to-face interaction to establish trust among the relevant stakeholders;
- NIST has requested approval for an inaugural plenary event only, and should future plenary events become necessary, they will be separately evaluated at that time;
- The list of attendees is confined only to appointed OSAC members and a limited number of invited associates, carefully scrutinized to ensure the personnel selected would provide the most benefit to NIST and OSAC; and
- The estimated budget in this context would be \$695,792.

In this context, I hereby waive the \$500,000 single-conference limitation for the NIST-sponsored OSAC meeting such that NIST may proceed consistent with its estimated budget.



Penny Pritzker
Secretary of Commerce

SEP - 1 2015

Date