

Social Security Administration

Conference Information Report

Fiscal Year 2017

Overview

Our conference events are mission critical and support our goal of better serving the public by improving our business practices, adopting new technology, or training our employees on the complex policies and procedures of the Social Security Act. We have a strong review and approval process in place for all our sponsored conferences and for employee attendance at other federally sponsored and federally hosted conferences. Our internal conference planning policies ensure that we reduce costs for our agency activities. We continue to use cost-cutting initiatives, including hosting events as close as possible to employee duty stations to minimize travel, maximize our use of free Federal space, and adhere to policies restricting meals and light refreshments. In addition, we require agency components to research alternatives to hosting events, such as video conferencing and interactive video teletraining. We oversee, monitor, and review our spending for all agency-sponsored conferences and employee attendance at other federally sponsored and federally hosted conferences to ensure that we use Federal funds efficiently and comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

Most of our conference expenses for fiscal year (FY) 2017 were for training (technical, programmatic, and non-programmatic) and associated travel costs. Besides training and associated travel costs, our conference expenses included costs for speakers and presenters, equipment, supplies, and other miscellaneous conference costs.

Conferences where expenses associated with the conference exceeded \$500,000

For FY 2017, we sponsored one conference where the expenses exceeded \$500,000 for a single event. In accordance with OMB M-17-08, we obtained written approval from the Acting Commissioner for spending in excess of the \$500,000 limit based on the mission-critical nature of the event. We listed this event within our Fiscal Year 2017 Conference Information Table (Table), beginning on page 3.

Conferences where expenses associated with the conference exceeded \$100,000

The FY 2017 Table lists all our agency-sponsored conferences, in date order, where the expenses exceeded \$100,000. For FY 2017, the Table includes five agency-sponsored conferences totaling \$1,752,205. We did not incur expenses exceeding \$100,000 for employee attendance at other federally sponsored and federally hosted conferences.

Our Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has its own conference review and approval process, and OIG confirmed it did not hold any events over \$100,000 for FY 2017.

For each conference, we include the following information in the Table:

- Name of the conference;
- Total conference expenses incurred by the agency;
- Location;
- Date(s);
- Total number of attendees whose travel expenses or other conference expenses were paid by the agency; and
- Brief explanation of how the conference advanced the mission of our agency.

Social Security Administration
Fiscal Year 2017 Conference Information Table

SSA-Sponsored Conferences

Conference	Total Expenses	Location	Date	Number of Attendees	Mission Related Narrative
New Administrative Law Judge Training – Phase 2	\$1,022,704	Social Security Administration (SSA) facility, Falls Church, Virginia	October 24, 2016 to November 18, 2016	195	We provided technical and programmatic training to the agency’s newly hired administrative law judges. This training taught the basic functions and responsibilities of the position and introduced the new administrative law judges to national policy. This training also ensured our new administrative law judges learned the correct application of laws, regulations, and agency policy necessary for the adjudication of our disability claims. We trained 112 judges with 67 agency instructors, 13 agency speakers, 2 medical presenters, and 1 agency support staff. This mission-critical training provided our new judges with the tools to process cases efficiently and consistently, which will help reduce our backlog of disability cases in a timely manner. On October 28, 2016, our Acting Commissioner provided written approval to hold this mission critical event because the total expenses exceeded \$500,000.

Conference	Total Expenses	Location	Date	Number of Attendees	Mission Related Narrative
New Administrative Law Judge Training – Phase 2	\$303,010	SSA facility, Falls Church, Virginia	May 1, 2017 to May 26, 2017	63	<p>We provided technical and programmatic training to a second group of newly hired administrative law judges. This training taught the basic functions and responsibilities of the position and introduced the new administrative law judges to national policy. This training also ensured our new administrative law judges learned the correct application of laws, regulations, and agency policy necessary for the adjudication of our disability claims. We trained 31 judges with 19 agency instructors, 10 agency speakers, 2 medical presenters, and 1 support staff. This mission-critical training provided our new judges with the tools to process cases efficiently and consistently, which will help reduce our backlog of disability cases in a timely manner.</p>
Supplemental Administrative Law Judge Training	\$161,606	SSA facility, Baltimore, Maryland	June 12, 2017 to June 16, 2017	117	<p>We provided technical and programmatic training to the agency’s administrative law judges who have been on duty for approximately one year. This supplemental training built on the administrative law judges’ experiences and challenges in the first year, provided more intensive coverage of policy and procedure, and reinforced application of national standards. We trained 97 judges using 11 agency instructors, 6 agency speakers, and 3 support staff. This mission-critical training helped ensure that our judges issue decisions that are policy-compliant, legally sufficient, and timely.</p>

Conference	Total Expenses	Location	Date	Number of Attendees	Mission Related Narrative
Supplemental Administrative Law Judge Training	\$161,942	SSA facility, Baltimore, Maryland	June 26, 2017 to June 30, 2017	111	We provided technical and programmatic training to a second group of administrative law judges who have been on duty for approximately one year. This supplemental training built on the administrative law judges' experiences and challenges in the first year, provided more intensive coverage of policy and procedure, and reinforced application of national standards. We trained 89 judges using 12 agency instructors, 6 agency speakers, and 4 support staff. This mission-critical training helped ensure that our judges issue decisions that are policy-compliant, legally sufficient, and timely.
Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program Assessment Center	\$102,943	SSA facilities throughout the country	July 10, 2017 to July 14, 2017	140	We administered an agency senior executive service candidate development program assessment to select a group of individuals to move into executive leadership positions in the near future. We utilized a third party to conduct the assessments to select the most qualified to participate in this program, as using an outside source provides the necessary expertise of industrial psychologists experienced with developing assessment tests. We evaluated 114 applicants using 26 agency support staff. Our development program assessment was mission critical to meet the challenges of maintaining the continuity of strong leadership within the agency.