

December 13, 2013

FEDERAL TRAVEL REGULATION
GSA Bulletin FTR 14-02

TO: Heads of Federal Agencies

SUBJECT: Clarification of Agency Reporting Requirements for Conferences

1. What is the purpose of this bulletin? This bulletin clarifies the term "conference" as defined by the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR), for purposes of the reporting requirements of the FY 2013 and FY 2014 Continuing Resolutions (CR) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum (Memo) M-12-12, *Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations*.

2. What is the background of this bulletin? On May 11, 2012, OMB issued Memo M-12-12, which instituted new approval procedures and spending thresholds for Federal executive branch agency conferences. In addition, the CR P.L. 113-6 (as extended by P.L. 113-46) requires in section 3003 that agencies report conferences over \$20,000 to their Offices of Inspector General (or to senior ethics officials for those entities lacking an Inspector General).

The CR does not define the term conference, but rather refers to OMB Memo M-12-12, which cites the definition of conference found in FTR § 300.3-1:

"Conference" is defined in this memorandum as it is in the FTR, as "[a] meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium or event that involves attendee travel. The term 'conference' also applies to training activities that are considered to be conferences under 5 CFR 410.404." See 41 CFR 300-3.1.

This bulletin is not changing the definition. This bulletin provides agencies further guidance using Appendix C of the FTR on "travel purpose" to more consistently report activities. Additionally, GSA anticipates recommendations from the Governmentwide Travel Advisory Committee early next calendar year to include comments on the current definition. GSA will evaluate opportunities to address those recommendations upon receipt.

3. What should agencies do? To determine the events that meet the reporting requirements under OMB Memo M-12-12 and the CR:

First, agencies should review the OMB Memo M-12-12 and the CR for reporting requirements.

Second, Agencies should reference the FTR (FTR § 300.3-1 and FTR Chapter 301, Appendix C "Travel Purpose Identifiers") to determine the travel purpose.

If the purpose of the travel falls under "mission" as defined in Appendix C, agencies **WOULD NOT** be required to report the travel per OMB Memo M-12-12.

PURPOSE INDICATOR OF MISSION (Operational): "Travel to a particular site in order to perform operational or managerial activities. Travel to attend a meeting to discuss general agency operations, review status reports, or discuss topics of general interest. *Examples:* Employee's day-to-day operational or managerial activities, as defined by the agency, to include, but not be limited to: hearings, site visit, information meeting, inspections, audits, investigations, and examinations." Employees participating in such operational or managerial events should record the trip purpose identifier as MISSION.

If the purpose of the travel falls under “training” or “conference other than training” as defined in Appendix C, agencies MAY BE required to report the travel per OMB Memo M-12-12, if the event meets the definition of conference in the FTR and the spending threshold for the event is met.

PURPOSE INDICATOR OF CONFERENCE, OTHER THAN TRAINING: “Travel performed in connection with a prearranged meeting, retreat, convention, seminar, or symposium for consultation or exchange of information or discussion. Agencies have to distinguish between conference and training attendance and use the appropriate identifier (see Training below). *Examples:* To participate in a planned program as a speaker/panelist or other form of presentation, host, planner, or other designated to oversee the conference or attendance with no formal role, or as an exhibitor.” Employees attending events that fit this definition and have not been recorded in either Mission or Training, must be reported as a CONFERENCE, as required by M-12-12 and the CR, and record the trip purpose identifier as CONFERENCE, OTHER THAN TRAINING.

PURPOSE INDICATOR OF TRAINING: Employees attending training activities at a conference should report the trip as a CONFERENCE, as required by M-12-12 and the CR, and record the trip purpose identifier as TRAINING. The Training travel purpose identifier is defined as:

“Travel in conjunction with educational activities to become proficient or qualified in one or more areas of responsibility. 5 USC 4101(4) states that “‘training’ means the process of providing for and making available to an employee, and placing or enrolling the employee in a planned, prepared, and coordinated program, course, curriculum, subject, system, or routine of instruction or education, in scientific, professional, technical, mechanical, trade, clerical, fiscal, administrative, or other fields which will improve individual and organizational performance and assist in achieving the agency’s mission and performance goals. The term “conference” may also apply to training activities that are considered to be conferences under 5 CFR 410.404, which states that “agencies may sponsor an employee’s attendance at a conference as a developmental assignment under section 4110 of title 5, United States Code.....”

4. Whom should I call for further information? For further information, please contact Ms. Cheryl D. McClain, Office of Government-wide Policy, Office of Asset and Transportation Management (MA), via e-mail at cheryl.mcclain@gsa.gov.

By delegation of the Administrator of General Services,



Anne E. Rung
Associate Administrator
Office of Government-wide Policy