




**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**Chief Financial Officer and**  
**Assistant Secretary for Administration**  
Washington, D.C. 20230

MEMORANDUM FOR Bureau Chief Financial Officers  
FROM: Stephen Kunze  **OCT 12 2018**  
Deputy Chief Financial Officer  
and Director for Financial Management  
SUBJECT: Department of Commerce Conference Pre-Approval Process

On August 1, 2017, the Department of Commerce (Department) conducted a pilot to streamline the conference pre-approval process and to provide greater flexibility to the bureaus to approve conferences. This memorandum officially ends the pilot and provides updated policy on the conference pre-approval process effective the date of this memorandum. These changes will be incorporated into the Department's 2016 Conference Policy.

In accordance with OMB Memorandum 17-08, dated November 25, 2016, and the success of the pilot, the Department will continue with the following policies:

- The chief financial officer and assistant secretary for administration (CFO/ASA) is designated as the approving official for all held conferences with a net cost of \$200,000 and greater.<sup>1</sup>
- The bureau head or the bureau deputy under secretary (or equivalent) has the authority to approve conference expenditures up to \$200,000 following their internal pre-approval process.
- The Department will require bureaus to submit annual Conference Plans for all held recurring planned conferences with a net cost of \$200,000 and greater. The spreadsheet (Attachment 1) submission will not require additional documentation; however, additional explanation or clarification on the details submitted in the plan may be requested. If there are optics or significant cost increases from the previous year, the Department may request supporting documentation. The Conference Plan spreadsheet will be submitted annually by November 30 for FY 2019 and September 30 for FY 2020 and thereafter for all held conferences planned. Also, any conferences planned in the subsequent fiscal years may be included in this time period submission if the planning phase requires an early pre-approval decision. Bureaus may submit updates to their plans on a quarterly basis. These plans must be authorized by the bureau head or the bureau deputy under secretary (or equivalent).

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with OMB Memorandum 17-08, the term held refers to Federally-sponsored/co-sponsored and Federally-hosted/co-hosted conferences.

- All non-recurring held conferences with a net cost of \$200,000 and greater require documentation for a pre-approval package, which includes the Conference Approval Memorandum (Attachment 2) signed by the bureau head or bureau deputy under secretary (or equivalent) as well as the Conference Checklist (Attachment 3). If any conference becomes recurring, then the bureau will add this conference to the annual conference plan, and no further documentation is required.
- Any conferences that have potential optics regardless of the cost should be sent through the pre-approval process as a complete conference package submission. The bureau must include a clear and concise justification for any potential optics as well as a statement that the optics were discussed with the deputy secretary.
- Attended only conferences will not require pre-approval by the Department; therefore, a conference package will not be submitted for pre-approval. Bureaus will follow their internal process to manage this type of conference. For international attended conferences, bureaus must ensure planned attendance is below the 50 travelers threshold department-wide. This assurance will require the Department to coordinate attendance to ensure the threshold is not exceeded. Therefore, bureaus must notify the Department of the international conference 45 calendar days prior to registering or planning to attend, and the Department will coordinate with the bureaus to obtain this information and will let the bureaus points of contact know if a reduction in attendees will be necessary.

We believe that the new policy and processes will streamline the pre-approval process and will enhance your bureau's ability to manage its conference requirements. If you have any questions about the policy or the process, please feel free to contact Cecelia Kizer, Director of Travel Management Division at [ckizer@doc.gov](mailto:ckizer@doc.gov) or 202-482-9079 or Gordon Alston, Director, Office of Financial Reporting, Policy, Internal Controls, and Travel at [galston@doc.gov](mailto:galston@doc.gov) or 202-482-0753.

Attachments:

- (1) Annual Conference Plan
- (2) Conference Approval Memorandum
- (3) Conference Checklist

cc: Lisa Casias  
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Bureau Conference Point of Contacts