NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE INSTRUCTION 31-104-02

Financial Management and Budget
Travel, NMFSPD 31-104

GROUP & CONFERENCE TRAVEL ANNUAL PLANS AND PROCEDURES

NOTICE: This publication is available at:
http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/op/pds/categories/financial_management_and_budget.html

OPR: F/MB (D. Fioravante) **Certified by:** F/MB (B. Pawlak, Acting CFO/CAO)
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SUMMARY OF REVISIONS:
31-104 is revised, so that it is consistent with Instruction 30-101-01 on policies and procedures and to make the Division of Management and Administration responsible for coordinating the review process for Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) draft Procedure Directive documents.
Signed _____/S/_____9/23/2014_____
Brian Pawlak Date
Chief Financial Officer / Chief Administrative Officer (Acting)

Background: On May 11, 2012, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued Policy Memorandum 12-12, "Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations," which revised the policies and practices for conference sponsorship, hosting, and attendance to ensure that Federal funds are used appropriately on these activities, and that agencies continue to reduce spending on conferences where practicable.

On May 7, 2013, and in response to Policy Memorandum 12-12, the NOAA Finance Office issued Policy Memorandum 12-02, "Conferences and Group Travel." This memorandum provided guidance to Line and Staff Offices (L/SO) on conferences and group travel and established approval levels and reporting requirements.

On July 7, 2014, NOAA Finance issued Conference Memorandum 14-01 to adhere to the DOC Conference Policy, which supersedes Policy Memorandum 12-02.

Introduction: In recognizing the importance of management controls in efforts to mitigate the risk of inappropriate spending, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) will comply with the business rules and practices required by NOAA for managing all travel that falls within the definition of group or conference travel.

The NOAA business rules and practices for group travel processing require:

1. Travel for groups of twenty (20) or more employees on domestic travel and ten (10) or more employees on foreign travel traveling to the same location or event, including invitational travelers and regardless of whether or not NOAA is funding the travel, shall be approved by the NOAA Deputy Under Secretary for Operations (DUS/O) *(see reference link, NOAA Travel Advisory 13-1)*.

The NOAA business rules and practices for conference processing require:

1. Conferences less than $100,000 shall be approved by the NMFS Deputy Assistant Administrator for Operations (DAA/O) *(see reference link, Conference Memorandum 14-01)*.
2. Conferences greater than $100,000 shall be approved by the NMFS DAA/O, NOAA CFO, NOAA Chief of Staff, and DOC Deputy Secretary.
3. Conferences greater than $100,000 but less than $499,000 shall be approved by the NMFS DAA/O, NOAA CFO, NOAA Chief of Staff, and DOC Deputy Secretary.
4. Conferences of $500,000 or greater shall be approved by the NMFS DAA/O, NOAA CFO, NOAA Chief of Staff, DOC Deputy Secretary, and DOC Secretary.

<u>Conference Procedure</u>:

1. Each Financial Management Center (FMC) and Program Office shall designate a Conference and Group Travel Coordinator for each request.
2. When seeking approval for a conference, a complete Conference Package must be submitted through the NMFS Division of Management and Administration (F/MB2) via electronic mail at: nmfs.group.travel@noaa.gov.

   The event is considered a conference if ALL of the following DOC criteria are met (*see reference link, Conference and Group Travel Decision Flow Chart*):
   1. is a meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium, training *(see reference link, 5 CFR 410.404)*; AND
   2. is sponsored by anyone (Federal or Non-Federal Gov entities); AND
   3. the Agency will expend funds; AND
   4. brings together a group of government employees; AND
   5. includes two or more conference indicators:
      i. brochure
      ii. published agenda
      iii. marketed
      iv. registration required
      v. widely gathered
3. Conference packages with a total cost less than $20,000 must be submitted for approval 30 days prior to the start date; 60 days prior to the start for conferences with a group travel request; 90 days for conferences equal to or greater than $100,000.

4. The NMFS DAA/O authorizes blanket approval to the Regional Administrators, Science Center Directors, and Program Office Directors if NMFS participation in conferences meets the following criteria:
    1. is less than the group travel requirements of 20 or more employees on domestic travel and 10 or more employees on foreign travel, including invitational travelers, regardless of whether or not NOAA is funding the travel;
    2. costs of participation do not exceed $10,000 and any contracting costs do not exceed $2,500;
    3. participation in the conference is not sensitive in any way and/or could attract undesired media attention;
    4. FMC or Program Office has done due diligence to ensure the above is true and accurate.
        i. The FMC or Program Office is still required to complete the paperwork as outlined in the NOAA Policy Memorandum 14-01. FMCs and Program Offices must retain this paperwork as part of their records to ensure their participation meets all the applicable laws, rules and policies.
        ii. For conferences in which NMFS is the organizer for the conference, the particular NMFS FMC or Program Office hosting the conference will take an active lead in collecting the necessary data and submitting a complete package for review and approval to nmfs.group.travel@noaa.gov.
5. The Conference Package consists of:
    a. Conference Synopsis
    b. NOAA Conference Costs Breakdown
    c. Conference Cost Workbook (Under $100,000)
    d. NOAA Group Travel Request (if applicable)

Exemption from Conference Classification:

The following re-occurring meetings are exempt from being considered a conference, but still require group travel approval if the threshold is met:

1. Fishery Management Council (FMC) meetings
2. Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC) meetings

Conference Reporting:

1. Where the costs are expected to equal or exceed $100,000, the FMC or Program Office must submit the Conference Title, Start Date, and End Date via email to nmfs.group.travel@noaa.gov 90 days prior to the conference start date.

Conference Actual Cost Determination:

After a conference concludes, the actual cost determination is required. NMFS offices with conferences totaling costs over $20,000 are required to submit actual expenditures on conference travelers and a copy of all other pertinent contract information to support the conference costs. The designated Conference and Group Travel Coordinator must provide a response by the F/MB2 set deadline. Conference reporting must include:

1. Travel Vouchers (TV).
2. The actual expenses for the travelers that reconciles with their TV.
3. Copies of contracts or invoices that are not included in the TV.
4. Proof of payment, including a receipt and copy of the credit card statement or cancelled check for all registration fees if applicable. If a credit card statement or cancelled check is provided, personal financial account information (account number, credit card number, etc.) must be redacted prior to submission. For any registration fees which are not paid using a purchase card, justification as to why the purchase card was not used must be provided.
5. Conference reporting must be submitted through F/MB2 via electronic mail at: nmfs.group.travel@noaa.gov.
6. Conference information is required to be reported in these instances:
    a. A sponsored conference costs exceed $20,000.
    b. NMFS is a co-sponsor of a conference with a non-Government entity, and the NMFS financial contribution exceeds $20,000.
    c. NMFS is a co-sponsor of a conference with another Federal entity, and the total cost of the Federal contribution exceeds $20,000.

Group Travel Procedure:

1. Each FMC and Program Office must designate a Conference and Group Travel Coordinator for each request.
2. When seeking approval for group travel, a "NOAA Group Travel Request" must be completed 45 days prior to the event start date and submitted through F/MB2 via electronic mail at: nmfs.group.travel@noaa.gov.

Group Travel and Conference Reporting Procedure:

1. FMC and Program offices provide F/MB2 with group and conference details of planned engagements for the new fiscal year by September 30th of the preceding fiscal year. Designated Conference and Group Travel Coordinators are authorized editing rights by F/MB2 to the NMFS Group and Conference Master Tracker via Google Drive one month prior to the September 30th deadline. Conference and Group Travel Coordinators upload office group and conference details in chronological order.

References: This section includes links for NOAA Corporate Services conference and group travel procedures and corresponding documents.

- NOAA Travel Advisory 13-1
- NOAA Policy Memorandum 14-01
- Conference and Group Travel Decision Flow Chart (scroll to "Overview")
- 5 Code of Federal Regulations 410.404 (Definition of a Conference)
- NOAA Conference Package documents (scroll to "Conference Travel Procedures")
- NOAA Group Travel Request document (scroll to "Group Travel Procedures")