

# **Social Security Administration**

## **Conference Information Report**

### **Fiscal Year 2013**

#### **Overview**

Our conference events are mission critical and support our goal to better serve 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 of our sponsored conferences and for employee attendance at non-agency sponsored events. Our strong internal conference planning policies ensure we reduce costs for all agency conference activities. We continue to use cost-cutting initiatives, including hosting events as close as possible to employee duty stations to minimize travel, maximizing our use of free Federal space, and clarifying policies restricting meals and light refreshments. In addition, we require agency components to research alternatives, such as video conferencing and Interactive Video Teletraining, to hosting events. We oversee and review our spending for all agency-sponsored conferences and employee attendance at non-agency sponsored events to ensure we use Federal funds efficiently and comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

Most of our conference expenses for fiscal year (FY) 2013 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, facilities, equipment, supplies, and other miscellaneous conference costs.

In late July 2012, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released Frequently Asked Questions on OMB M-12-12, *Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations*. Because of this guidance, in FY 2013 we expanded the definition of a conference to include technical training events that involve employee travel.

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

For FY 2013, we sponsored 2 conferences where the expenses exceeded \$500,000. In accordance with OMB M-12-12, we obtained written approval from the Acting Commissioner to waive the \$500,000 limit on conference spending based on the mission-critical nature of each event. We listed these events within our Fiscal Year 2013 Conference Information Table (Table) beginning on page 3.

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

The Table lists all of our agency-sponsored conferences, in date order, where the expenses exceeded \$100,000. For FY 2013, the table includes 12 conferences totaling \$6,294,132.

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 2013.

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 2013 Conference Information Table

SSA-Sponsored Conferences					
Conference	Total Expenses	Location	Date	Number of Attendees	Mission Related Narrative
New Administrative Law Judge Training	\$416,345	Social Security Administration (SSA) facility, Falls Church, Virginia	October 9, 2012 to November 2, 2012	71	We provided technical and programmatic training to the agency's newly hired administrative law judges. This class taught the basic functions and responsibilities of the position and introduced the new administrative law judges to national policy. The training also introduced the uniform writing process used by our agency to ensure administrative law judges write decisions using a consistent format and that the evidence in the case file supports the decision. We trained 43 judges with 28 agency trainers and speakers. This mission-critical training provided our new judges with the tools to process cases efficiently, which will help reduce our backlog of disability cases in a timely manner.
Decision Writer Training	\$208,378	SSA facility, St. Louis, Missouri	January 28, 2013 to February 8, 2013	77	We provided Decision Writer Training for newly hired employees assigned to support our nationwide hearings offices. This training was necessary to introduce employees to national policy and the uniform writing process we use in our hearing offices. We trained 63 employees with 14 agency trainers and speakers. This mission-critical training ensured that written decisions are consistent with the Social Security Act and comply with the Commissioner's adjudication policies as reflected in Social Security regulations and rulings.

**SSA-Sponsored Conferences**

<b>Conference</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Attendees</b>	<b>Mission Related Narrative</b>
Employees with Disabilities Cadre Train-the-Trainer Sessions	\$124,765	SSA facility, Baltimore, Maryland	April 15, 2013 to August 30, 2013 (6 sessions, each session 3 ½ days)	64	We provided training to members of the Employees with Disabilities Cadre on using our agency’s latest automated assistive technology applications. We trained 52 new and veteran cadre members over 6 sessions. This training complied with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Due to the intensity of the training, 12 new cadre members received an additional session of training in late summer. This mission-critical class ensured the cadre members received training on the latest assistive technology. Our training strategy employed the “train-the-trainer” method, which provided the attendees the knowledge and skill to train other employees throughout the country.
Supplemental Administrative Law Judge Training	\$322,738	SSA facility, Falls Church, Virginia	May 6, 2013 to May 10, 2013 and June 3, 2013 to June 7, 2013 (2 sessions, each session 3 days)	169	We provided Supplemental Administrative Law Judge training to administrative law judges who have been on duty for roughly one year. These supplemental training sessions reinforced accuracy and timeliness with respect to applying laws, regulations, and agency policy in adjudicating Social Security disability claims. Twenty-four agency trainers and speakers trained 145 employees. This mission-critical training ensured that administrative law judges nationwide have the tools and knowledge to correctly and consistently apply hearing procedures, agency policy, and Social Security law and regulations.

**SSA-Sponsored Conferences**

<b>Conference</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Attendees</b>	<b>Mission Related Narrative</b>
Transition to Leadership 401: Leading People	\$687,730	Multiple SSA locations throughout the country	June 17, 2013 to September 27, 2013 (19 classes, each class 3 days)	530	We provided mission-critical training to new supervisors nationwide. This session focused on developing leadership skills, the importance of diversity and inclusion, developing others, managing conflict, improving strategic thinking, building teams, and improving communication skills. We trained 530 new supervisors in FY 2013 using outside instructors and speakers. The Office of Personnel Management requires agencies to provide a training program for new supervisors to complete within one year of their initial appointment (5 Code of Federal Regulations 412.202). On May 23, 2013, our Acting Commissioner, Carolyn W. Colvin, signed a waiver to hold this event because the total expenses exceeded \$500,000.

**SSA-Sponsored Conferences**

<b>Conference</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Attendees</b>	<b>Mission Related Narrative</b>
<p align="center">Train-the-Trainer Sessions for Mandatory National Contract, Equal Employment Opportunity, and Reasonable Accommodation Training</p>	<p align="center">\$218,056</p>	<p align="center">SSA facility, Baltimore, Maryland</p>	<p align="center">June 24, 2013 to June 26, 2013 and June 26, 2013 to June 28, 2013 and June 25, 2013 (2 sessions, each session 2 ½ days on the national contract and 1, 1-day session on equal employment opportunity and reasonable accommodation)</p>	<p align="center">220</p>	<p>We provided mission-critical training to managers and supervisors on implementing the new national collective bargaining agreement we reached with the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE). Our training strategy employed the “train-the-trainer” method, which provided the attendees the knowledge and skill to train other management officials throughout the country. We trained 205 employees using 15 agency trainers on the content of the national agreement, equal employment opportunity regulations, and the reasonable accommodation process. This training was necessary to ensure consistent implementation of this agreement.</p>

**SSA-Sponsored Conferences**

<b>Conference</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Attendees</b>	<b>Mission Related Narrative</b>
Transition to Leadership 301: Nuts & Bolts	\$375,174	Multiple SSA locations throughout the country	June 24, 2013 to September 19, 2013 (17 classes, each class 4 ½ days)	469	We provided training to new supervisors throughout the country. This course offered a comprehensive overview of the agency's human resources policy. Covered topics included labor and employee relations, equal employment opportunity, performance management, leave administration, recruitment and selection, workforce planning, and employee development and mentoring. We trained 449 new supervisors using 20 agency trainers and speakers. These mission-critical classes enabled our new supervisors to become proficient in both technical areas and leadership skills. The Office of Personnel Management mandates agencies provide a training program for new supervisors to complete within one year of their initial appointment (5 Code of Federal Regulations 412.202).
Transition to Leadership 501K: Key Training for Facility Managers	\$184,828	Multiple SSA locations throughout the country	July 8, 2013 to September 20, 2013 (9 classes, each class 4 ½ days)	253	We provided training to new managers assuming responsibility over a facility, typically a field office, program service center, or teleservice center. This course trains participants in topics such as security, automation, field facilities, financial management, human resources, labor/employee relations, and public affairs. We trained 237 new managers using 16 agency trainers and speakers. These mission-critical classes provided new managers with the tools necessary to manage their facility.

**SSA-Sponsored Conferences**

<b>Conference</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Attendees</b>	<b>Mission Related Narrative</b>
2013 Judicial Training	\$345,777	Marriott Inner Harbor, Baltimore, MD	July 8, 2013 to July 11, 2013 and August 19, 2013 to August 22, 2013  (2 sessions, each session 4 days)	299	We provided technical training to the agency’s administrative law judges and administrative appeals judges. Periodic judicial training is necessary to ensure the agency’s judges have the requisite knowledge and skills to adjudicate complex cases accurately and efficiently. We trained 223 judges using 46 agency trainers and speakers and 30 support staff. These mission-critical classes helped ensure that our judges have the requisite knowledge to conduct hearings, issue legally defensible decisions, and correctly apply agency policy, applicable statutes, and case law.
Technical Training for Agency Supervisors and Managers on the 2012 SSA/AFGE National Agreement Contract	\$3,149,471	Various Federal, State, and local Government locations throughout the country	July 8, 2013 to September 27, 2013  (177 sessions, each session 2 ½ days)	7,230	We provided training on the new agreement between the agency and the AFGE. This agreement constitutes a collective bargaining agreement that binds the agency to its content. These mission-critical sessions trained agency supervisors and managers on the content of the agreement and the proper interpretation and intent of the agreement language, which was necessary to ensure consistent implementation of this agreement. These sessions addressed the equal employment opportunity regulations and reasonable accommodation processes. We trained approximately 7,230 supervisors and managers; 4,040 of whom had not received the comprehensive training provided during the 2005 AFGE contract training. We used the cadre of experts trained in the June 2013 “train-the-trainer” sessions to provide this training. On July 3, 2013, our Acting Commissioner, Carolyn W. Colvin, signed a waiver to hold this event because the total expenses exceeded \$500,000.

**SSA-Sponsored Conferences**

<b>Conference</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Attendees</b>	<b>Mission Related Narrative</b>
Hearing Office Chief Administrative Law Judge Leadership and Management Training	\$108,075	SSA facility, Falls Church, Virginia	July 15, 2013 to July 19, 2013 and September 16 to September 20, 2013  (2 sessions, each session 5 days)	53	We provided training to new hearing office chief administrative law judges who serve as the leaders of their respective hearing offices. Effective leadership of hearing offices is critical in meeting our agency’s mission of reducing cases pending at the hearing level. We trained 33 hearing office chief administrative law judges using 20 agency trainers and speakers. These mission-critical sessions helped hearing office chief administrative law judges to develop the necessary leadership skills and taught techniques to manage up to 18 administrative law judges and up to 100 employees in support staff positions. The training ensured our leaders receive a practical, interactive experience that engages and challenges each hearing office chief administrative law judge to deliver ethical, timely, and quality decisions.

**SSA-Sponsored Conferences**

<b>Conference</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Attendees</b>	<b>Mission Related Narrative</b>
Senior Attorney Adjudicator Training	\$152,795	SSA facility, St. Louis, Missouri	August 19, 2013 to August 23, 2013 and August 26, 2013 to August 30, 2013 (2 sessions, each session 3 days)	112	We provided technical and programmatic training to the agency's senior attorney adjudicators. This training introduces the senior attorney adjudicators to the National Screening Unit, a pilot program that will be applicable to all hearing offices in FY 2014. The National Screening Unit will centrally select disability cases with a high statistical likelihood of a favorable on-the-record decision without an administrative law judge hearing and distribute the cases to hearing offices with senior attorney adjudicators. We trained 92 senior attorney adjudicators with 20 agency trainers and speakers. These mission-critical training sessions allowed our senior attorney adjudicators to develop the knowledge and skills to decide selected cases, which will reduce our overall processing times, expedite decisions for some claimants, and conserve our administrative law judge resources for more complex cases.