

Social Security Administration

Conference Information Report

Fiscal Year 2018

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) 2018 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, supplies, facilities, and other miscellaneous conference costs.

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

For FY 2018, we sponsored one conference where the expenses exceeded \$500,000 for a single event. In accordance with Office of Management and Budget Memorandum 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 2018 Conference Information Table (Table), beginning on page 3.

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

The FY 2018 Table lists all our agency-sponsored conferences, in date order, where the expenses exceeded \$100,000. For FY 2018, the Table includes three agency-sponsored conferences totaling \$844,305. 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 in FY 2018.

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 2018 Conference Information Table

SSA-Sponsored Conferences

Conference	Total Expenses	Location	Date	Number of Attendees	Mission Related Narrative
New Administrative Law Judge Training – Phase 2	\$599,766	Social Security Administration (SSA) facility, Baltimore, Maryland	October 23, 2017 to November 17, 2017	191	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 100 judges with 69 agency instructors, 10 agency speakers, 2 medical presenters, 1 agency presenter, and 9 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 12, 2017, 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
Supplemental Administrative Law Judge Training	\$144,309	SSA facility, Baltimore, Maryland	August 22, 2018 to August 24, 2018	134	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 108 judges using 19 agency instructors, 4 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.
New Decision Writer Training	\$100,230	SSA facility, St. Louis, Missouri	September 17, 2018 to September 21, 2018	71	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 57 employees with 10 agency instructors, 3 agency presenters, and 1 support staff. 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.