

Social Security Administration

Conference Information Report

Fiscal Year 2019

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) 2019 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, and other miscellaneous conference costs.

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

For FY 2019, we did not sponsor any conferences or have employees attend other federally sponsored and federally hosted conferences where the expenses exceeded \$500,000. Therefore, we did not require approval from the Commissioner for conference spending in excess of the \$500,000 limit for a single event.

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

The FY 2019 Table lists all our agency-sponsored conferences, in date order, where the expenses exceeded \$100,000. For FY 2019, the Table includes five agency-sponsored conferences totaling \$710,824.¹ We did not incur expenses exceeding \$100,000 for employee attendance at other federally sponsored and federally hosted conferences.

¹ We have three conferences that cross from FY 2019 into FY 2020. If any of these conferences incur expenses exceeding \$100,000, we will include them in our FY 2020 Conference Information Report.

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 2019.

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 2019 Conference Information Table

SSA-Sponsored Conferences

Conference	Total Expenses	Location	Date	Number of Attendees	Mission Related Narrative
New Legal Assistant Training	\$167,729	Social Security Administration (SSA) facility, St. Louis, Missouri	October 29, 2018 to November 9, 2018	51	We provided training for newly hired legal assistants assigned to support our nationwide hearings operations. We trained 45 employees with 5 agency instructors and 1 agency support staff. This mission-critical training ensured that our new legal assistants gained the knowledge and skills to prepare complex case files that support timely, policy-compliant decisions and contribute to the continued reduction of the hearings backlog.
Fiscal Year 2019 Customer Service Representative Technical Training – San Francisco	\$130,348	Multiple SSA locations throughout the San Francisco Region	October 29, 2018 to April 19, 2019	200	We provided entry-level interactive video teletraining for customer service representatives in the San Francisco Region to support our field office operations and process our agency’s core mission work. We trained 157 employees with 43 agency mentors. This mission-critical training ensured our entry-level trainees gained the skills necessary to handle our increasing workloads, contribute to field office operations, and provide pertinent services to the public.

Conference	Total Expenses	Location	Date	Number of Attendees	Mission Related Narrative
New Decision Writer Training	\$113,186	SSA facility, Falls Church, VA	November 5, 2018 to November 9, 2018	86	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 67 employees with 15 agency instructors, 3 agency presenters, and 1 agency support staff. This mission-critical training ensured that written decisions are consistent with the Social Security Act and comply with regulations, rulings, and Social Security Administration policy.
New Legal Assistant Training	\$145,565	SSA facility, St. Louis, Missouri	February 4, 2019 to February 15, 2019	45	We provided training for a second group of newly hired legal assistants assigned to support our nationwide hearings operations. We trained 39 employees with 5 agency instructors and 1 agency support staff. This mission-critical training ensured that our new legal assistants gained the knowledge and skills to prepare complex case files that support timely, policy-compliant decisions and contribute to the continued reduction of the hearings backlog.
National Public Affairs Training Conference	\$153,996	SSA facility, Baltimore, Maryland	August 19, 2019 to August 22, 2019	189	We provided our communications professionals with training on communication priorities and major marketing campaigns. This conference provided valuable training on our programs and policies, outreach strategies, promoting online services, and educating the public about our agency. We trained 168 employees using 21 agency instructors and speakers. This mission-critical training ensured that our communications are unified, comprehensive, and effective in conveying critical information to the public.