



Homeland
Security

Department of Homeland Security Fiscal Year 2019
Annual Report on Conferences
January 31, 2020

Within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), training events and workshops are a means for ensuring that personnel are prepared to carry out the DHS missions. Further, DHS offers significant training and technical assistance to state, local, and tribal law enforcement and first responders in order to build expertise and capabilities across the country. The Homeland Security Act requires the Secretary to coordinate with state and local governments, and the private sector, to ensure adequate planning, equipment, training, and exercise activities.

Following guidance from the Office Management and Budget (OMB), DHS Headquarters requires all agency-hosted conference-related spending above \$100,000 be approved by DHS Headquarters prior to the obligation of funds. Components request approval of proposed conferences through their Component Senior Financial Officers via memorandum to the Deputy Chief of Staff. The requests set forth specific cost information, including any proposed travel or meals, and demonstrate how the conference supports DHS missions. The Chief Financial Officer reviews each proposal against DHS policy and recommends approval or disapproval before forwarding the request to the Deputy Chief of Staff for a final decision.

The DHS Office of the Chief Financial Officer maintains conference and travel policies and has established controls to ensure conferences are cost-effective and attendance is driven by critical mission requirements. The policies address areas such as the:

- Requirements to justify, document, and report conference-related expenses.
- Requirements to use Government facilities, cost-effective alternatives to commercial facilities, and limitation on the number of DHS attendees.
- Authority to collect conference fees from non-Federal participants and subsequent reporting requirements.
- Guidance for travel approvers to check for actions, such as use of non-contract carriers and deductions of per diem when meals are provided at conferences and reasonableness of expenses requested in the authorization process.

DHS continues to avoid costs by holding training events locally and using video teleconferencing in lieu of in-person meetings. To provide management oversight and controls, we monitor training events and workshops across DHS and work with Components to direct resources responsibly only in support of critical mission requirements.

During the course of the fiscal year, the Department hosted thirty-two conferences for which the expense to the DHS exceeded \$100,000 per event; these conferences totaled approximately \$5.3 million. In the attached Annual Report on Conference Spending list these conferences. The report contains the following data points for each event—

- The total expenses incurred by DHS for the conference (including costs for travel, food and beverages, audio-visual and any invitational/contractor related travel).
- The location of the conference.
- The date of the conference.
- An event description.
- An explanation of how the conference advanced the mission of DHS.
- Description of any contracting procedures, if used.
- The total number of individuals whose conference expenses were paid by DHS.

DHS conducts a wide variety of mission-related exempt training. The attached report does not include these activities. Component management officials (equivalent to the Under Secretary for Management) must make and retain a written determination stipulating the decision to hold these training events was made in accordance with the training exemption criteria found in the Financial Management Policy Manual. DHS requires Components to meet specific criteria to exempt a training. A training is exempt if it meets the following four criteria: 1) training will be performed by DHS or federal employees, or by contracted external instructors if there is no documented expertise in DHS to conduct the training; 2) a total of eight work hours per day (excluding lunch or breaks) for a planned, organized exchange of information between presenters and the audience; 3) the training will be conducted at a no-cost facility (federal, state, or local government owned or leased); and 4) costs are limited to travel, transportation, per diem.