

Changes to NASA's Conference Sponsorship and Attendance Policies

NASA has instituted changes to improve our internal policies concerning conference sponsorship and attendance. These changes are motivated primarily by Government-wide controls relating to conferences that can be found in OMB memoranda 11-35 and 12-12.

Here is the basic information you should be aware of about the revised NASA policy. This policy is effective immediately, although there will be an implementation period over which some details and process changes will be vetted and phased in across the Agency.

1. What is a "conference"?
 - a. OMB M-12-12 broadly defines a conference to be a "meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium or event that involves attendee travel. The term "conference" also applies to certain training activities that are considered to be conferences under 5 CFR 410.404," but not to operational meetings (such as those required pursuant to NASA operational policies). We are adopting this definition for all purposes. This means more things will be considered a conference than previously under NPR 9700. We are developing a revised set of FAQs to give examples of what is considered a conference under this new definition, and these will be posted at [this link](#) as soon as they are ready.
 - b. In the meantime, please err on the side of caution and ask your Center's point of contact (POC) for conferences. A comprehensive list of contacts can be found [here](#).

2. What do I have to do when considering attending a conference?

Later this summer, to help with the new reporting requirements, NASA will revise and leverage our NASA Conference Tracking System (NCTS). Until these changes are implemented, these interim steps should be followed:

- a. Check the NCTS [page here](#) to see if the conference you plan to attend is listed. If it is, use this NCTS number in your travel authorization (function code field) and select "conference" as the travel purpose. If the conference is not listed, check with your conference POC and they can assist getting it listed.
- b. If you are going to a foreign conference, continue to follow the guidance in NPR 9700 sections. 2.5 and 2.8.
- c. Be aware that NASA will be developing a new process for conferences with NASA attendance costs expected to exceed \$75,000. A list of the conferences needing this additional review and guidance on the steps to follow will be published at the conference [link here](#) by mid-July, and you should check back there to make sure you follow that process if you plan to attend one of those conferences.

3. What do I have to do when considering NASA sponsorship of a conference?
 - a. First talk to your Center's point of contact (POC) for conferences. A comprehensive list of contacts can be found [here](#).
 - b. Be aware that conferences sponsored by government agencies are subject to numerous and significant restrictions, and cannot resemble private-sector conferences in many ways.
 - c. Acquaint yourself with NASA's Procedural Requirement 9700, Travel, Chapter 2, Requirements Relating to Conference Reporting and Attendance. These rules are still in effect with respect to preparing the key approval and reporting forms (NF-1784 and NF-1785) and filing them with the NSSC. Please keep in mind the additional requirement for pre-approval six months prior to your conference.
 - d. Ensure that the conference sponsorship is routed through the appropriate approvals. The current process is described at the conference [website here](#). Once a full NASA Interim Directive (NID) is promulgated later this summer, however, sponsored conferences with total costs under \$75,000 will be approved by your Center Director or Official in Charge, while all other sponsored conferences and monetary sponsorships must be additionally approved by the Deputy Administrator.

We will be adding additional guidance at OCFO's conference [website here](#) as it is prepared. Your local conference POCs are also available to assist with any questions you may have in the meantime.