



Department of Veterans Affairs

Financial Policy

Volume XIV

Travel

Chapter 10

Conference Planning, Oversight, and Reporting

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1001 Overview

This chapter establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) financial policies and procedures relating to conference planning, reporting, and oversight. The purpose of this chapter is to emphasize the need for proper planning and oversight of conferences, including associated travel. As defined by the [Federal Travel Regulation \(FTR\)](#), a conference may include a meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium, or event that involves attendee travel. The term “conference” also applies to training activities that are considered to be conferences under [5 CFR §410.404 “Determining if a conference is a training activity”](#).

There are numerous Federal travel and acquisition regulations, fiscal policies, statutory and ethics laws applicable to Federal government conference planning, oversight, reporting, and participation. This chapter provides guidance to implement and supplement those portions of the FTR pertaining to conference planning, Congressional, and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requirements on conference reporting.

Conference organizers should always be fiscally responsible when selecting conference locations and planning conference activities. In addition, conference organizers should ensure that VA does not incur expenditures for entertainment (videos, music, etc.), bus tours, motivational speakers, the purchase of promotional items, or embossing, or otherwise imprinting the name of the organization or conference on any supplies, mementos, or other handouts. Finally, conference organizers should be aware the use of Government funds to purchase food (meals or refreshments) for either Government personnel or non-Government individuals, including VA beneficiaries and stakeholders, is not generally authorized. Reference [Vol II, Ch. 4, Awards, Ceremonies, Food or Refreshments, Gifts or Mementos](#) and [The Administrator, Veterans Administration, 43 Comp. Gen. 305, B-152331\(1963\)](#) for specific guidance.

VA is legally mandated by [Public Law \(P.L.\) 112-154, Honoring America’s Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012](#) to report on any VA sponsored or co-sponsored conference, meeting, or other similar forum which either:

- Costs \$20,000 or more; or
- Costs less than \$20,000 and there are 50 or more attendees including at least one (1) or more VA employees.

Pursuant to the [Inspector General Act of 1978](#), as amended, VA Office of Inspector General (VA OIG) employees shall adhere to travel directives, policies, procedures, and guidance of VA OIG.

1002 Revisions

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
Various	Changed VA CFO to ASM/CFO throughout.	OFP (047G)	Leadership Directed.	October 2021
1004 Roles and Responsibilities	Updated positions designated to approve conferences and report on conferences.	OFP (047G)	Secretary of VA (SECVA) Memorandum, "Delegation of Authority for Travel and Conferences".	October 2021
100502 VA Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Conference Approval	Updated thresholds and positions designated to approve conferences. Removed documentation requirements of re-delegation since no re-delegation authorized, and other policy requirements no longer required.	OFP (047G)	SECVA Memorandum, "Delegation of Authority for Travel and Conferences", and general update due to new delegation of authority (DOA).	October 2021
100503 VA Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Conference Oversight	Updated responsibility for the acquisition of services and supplies over the micro-purchase threshold, in lieu of the amount.	OFP (047G)	Threshold change in Federal Acquisition Regulation	October 2021
100504 VA Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Reporting	Updated Public Law to current citation and position designated to report on conferences.	OFP (047G)	Public Law general update. SECVA Memorandum, "Delegation of Authority for Travel and Conferences".	October 2021
100506 Federal Non-VA Sponsored Conferences Approval	Updated thresholds and positions designated to approve conferences. Removed documentation	OFP (047G)	SECVA Memorandum, "Delegation of Authority for Travel and	October 2021

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
	requirements of re-delegation since no re-delegation authorized, and other policy requirements no longer required.		Conferences”, and general update due to new DOA.	
100509 Submitting Conference Approval Requests	Removed requirement to submit conference packages to VA Chief of Staff.	OFP (047G)	General update due to new DOA.	October 2021
1006 Authorities and References	Updated Public Law to current citation for reporting conferences to Office of General Council.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	October 2021
1007 Rescissions	Rescinded VA Financial Policy Volume XIV, Chapter 10, Conference Planning, Oversight, and Reporting, May 2021, and previous Appendix B delegations.	OFP (047G)	General Update due to new DOA.	October 2021
Appendices	Removed previous Appendix B: Delegations of Authority on Conferences. Moved previous Appendices C and D up to B and C throughout chapter.	OFP (047G)	General Update due to new DOA.	October 2021
Appendix B: Conference Compliance Review Procedures	Removed documentation requirement of re-delegation since no re-delegation authorized and removed \$500,000 threshold reference.	OFP (047G)	General Update due to new delegation of authority (DOA).	October 2021
Appendix C: Conference Package Related Forms	Removed documentation requirement of re-delegation since no re-delegation authorized and removed \$500,000 threshold reference.	OFP (047G)	General Update due to new DOA.	October 2021

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
1001	Added language clarifying that conference organizers should act in a fiscally responsible manner when selecting conference locations and activities and guidance on the purchase of food or refreshments.	OFP (047G)	Leadership Directed	July 2019
1002	Moved all May 2018 revisions to Appendix A	OFP (047G)	General Policy Update	July 2019
1004	Updated VA CFO designation to current position title, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Finance; updated the Inspector General reporting requirement, and the appropriation bill reference in accordance with the DOA in Appendix B.	(047G)	June 3, 2019, SECVA DOA; Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2019	July 2019
100501 A.	Added VA policy guidance for conference expense compliance.	OFP (047G)	Leadership Directed	July 2019
10051 C.	Added VA policy and statutory guidance on entertainment costs; clarified circumstances are limited to exceptions in which lodging, meals, or refreshments can be provided	OFP (047G)	Leadership Directed	July 2019
10051 D. and F.	Added language reflecting the necessity of selecting 3 different geographic locations to be reviewed for the	OFP (047G)	Leadership Directed	July 2019

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
	most cost-effective location to be chosen.			
10053 B.7.	Removed language receipts are required when requested in advance by approving official, more restrictive than FTR.	OFP (047G)	General Policy Update	July 2019
10053 B.10.	Added VA policy guidance for exceptions using appropriated funds for food.	OFP (047G)	Leadership Directed	July 2019
100503 B.11.	Added statutory guidance for exceptions using appropriated funds for entertainment.	OFP (047G)	Leadership Directed	July 2019
10053 C.2.	Changed VA CFO distribution of the CTCCS quarterly conference compliance review results.	OFP (047G)	Leadership Directed	July 2019
100504 A.2. and A.3.	Added note clarifying that if someone other than the Responsible Conference Executive (RCE) signs the PCCF or FCR in CORK, then the hard copy signed by the RCE must be uploaded.	OFP (047G)	Leadership Directed	July 2019
100504 B.	Updated Table 2 foot note 3 with current appropriation act for 2019, including the change in requirement to report to Inspector General all VA and VA co-sponsored conferences ≥ \$20,000 NLT 15 calendar days after each quarter.	OFP (047G)	Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2019	July 2019

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
100510 D	Added a higher lodging rate may not be negotiated in exchange for food; added language clarifying if meals are provided at a VA sponsored or co-sponsored event, the cost per person cannot exceed the daily per diem rate for the selected location.	OFP (047G)	Leadership Directed	July 2019
1007	Rescinded Vol XIV Travel - Chapter 10, "Conference Planning, Reporting, and Oversight", May 2018	OFP (047G)	General Policy Update	July 2019
Appendix A	May 2018, 5-year revisions moved here from Section 1002 Revisions.	OFP (047G)	General Policy Update	July 2019
Appendix B	Added June 3, 2019 Delegation of Authority (DOA) on Conference Reporting Requirements.	OFP (047G)	June 3, 2019, SECVA DOA	July 2019

Reference [Appendix A, Revision History](#) for listing of previous changes.

1003 Definitions

Approving Official (AO) – The individual(s) authorized to approve a conference package based on the estimated cost of the conference.

Bundling – Submitting multiple conferences, similar in nature and executed in the same fiscal year, in a single request for approval that summarizes estimated and final costs for each conference. Bundling of conferences is prohibited for VA sponsored or co-sponsored conferences but is permitted for Federal non-VA sponsored conferences.

Conference – A meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium, or event involving travel for attendees. The term "conference" also applies to training activities that are considered to be conferences under [5 CFR §410.404](#). If a clear-cut determination cannot be made an event is not a conference, then it must be processed under this policy as a

conference. Legal counsel should be consulted for assistance in determining whether an event is a conference if there are questions. Note: Attendee travel refers to VA funded local and TDY travel.

[OGC Memorandum dated October 26, 2016](#), “Conference Clarification”, has already opined that the following events are not considered conferences:

- Veteran outreach events (e.g., sports programs);
- Traditional ceremonies (e.g., change of command, ground-breaking, official military awards, and funerals);
- Events at which VA is conducting recruitment activities; and
- Formal classroom training, coursework at established government or commercial training facilities (e.g. Law Enforcement Training Center, and VHA National Simulation Center).

Conference Package (CP) – A term used to identify the required documentation for approval and reporting of VA sponsored and co-sponsored conferences (electronic or hard copy).

Employee – An appointed officer or employee of an agency, including a special Government employee. This definition also includes an individual employed intermittently in the Government service as an expert or consultant and paid on a daily (when-actually-employed) basis, and an individual serving without pay or at a \$1 a year.

Executive Champion (EC) – An individual assigned by an Under Secretary, Assistant Secretary, or Other Key Official responsible for overseeing the attendance and attendance approvals for assigned Federal non-VA sponsored conferences.

Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) – The FTR implements statutory requirements and Executive branch policies for travel by Federal civilian employees and others authorized to travel at Government expense.

Formal Classroom Training – Training coursework at established government or commercial training facilities. (Note: does not include training held at a hotel or conference center.)

Per Diem – The Lodgings-Plus method, a subsistence allowance for lodging, meals, and related incidental expenses incurred while on authorized TDY. Under the per diem method, VA will reimburse the daily cost incurred by a traveler for lodging up to a maximum daily rate, and a fixed allowance for meals and incidental expenses (M&IE). Travelers are required to exclude any meal provided by the Government. Per diem rates for the TDY location are established by the General Services Administration (GSA). Refer to the [GSA Per Diem Rates](#) for the per diem rates in effect for a specific travel episode.

Reportable Conference – Any VA sponsored or VA co-sponsored conference, meeting, or other similar forum, which either costs \$20,000 or more, or costs less than \$20,000 and there are 50 or more attendees including one (1) or more VA employees.

Responsible Conference Executive (RCE) - An individual assigned by an Under Secretary, Assistant Secretary, or Other Key Official responsible for planning, obtaining required level of approval, oversight, and reporting of assigned VA-sponsored or co-sponsored conferences.

Retreat – A town hall type meeting for government employees to review progress and challenges in implementing Government or Departmental policies, engaging their staff in discussing various aspects of said Government or Departmental activities. Retreats are often held off site or away from the normal duty station or office. Such a facility usually offers participants a greater opportunity to socialize than they otherwise would in the office, and to personalize relationships and gain greater appreciation of each other.

Seminar – A lecture or presentation delivered to an audience on a topic or set of topics that are educational in nature. It is usually held for groups of 10-50 individuals. A seminar is frequently held at a hotel meeting space or in an office conference room.

Symposium – A meeting of a number of experts in a particular field at which papers are presented by specialists on particular subjects and discussed for the purpose of making recommendations concerning the problems under discussion.

Training – An activity leading to skilled behavior. Training also refers to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies because of the teaching of vocational or practical skills, and information that relates to specific useful competencies.

Traveler – An individual authorized to perform official Government travel, in accordance with the FTR.

Traveler List – A complete list of all VA-funded travelers, including local attendees incurring travel costs, attending a conference, including their full name, VA email address, and travel authorization or local expense voucher number (if applicable).

Unique Site – The only location meeting the conference criteria that could not otherwise be met at another location.

Workshop – A series of educational and work sessions. Small groups of people meet over a short period of time to concentrate on a defined area of concern. Purposes for workshops may vary (e.g., informing, problem solving, and training). Typically, a workshop has two components: technical, in which one presents theory in lectures and readings; and practical, in which one would do a project, produce a product, or write a paper.

1004 Roles and Responsibilities

Secretary of Veterans Affairs (SECVA) has the signature authority for submitting the mandated conference reporting required in [38 U.S.C. § 517](#), and in [P.L. 116-260, "Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021"](#), Division E, Title VII, Section 738. SECVA has designated these signature authorities to the Assistant Secretary for Management and Chief Financial Officer (ASM/CFO). In addition, SECVA has designated the ASM/CFO the OMB M-17-08 responsibility for publicly reporting agency-sponsored conferences on a dedicated VA official website.

SECVA has designated the Deputy Secretary (DEPSEC), Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials (OKOs) with the authority to approve VA sponsored, VA co-sponsored and non-Federal conferences with net expenses in excess of \$100,000, and Senior Executive Service (SES) or SES equivalent positions with the authority to approve those conferences with net expenses less than or equal to \$100,000.

Deputy Secretary, Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials (OKOs) are responsible for approving conferences with estimated expenses greater than \$100,000. No further delegation is authorized. For conference planning and approval, the DEPSEC, Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and OKOs are responsible for the following:

- A. Ensuring appropriate due diligence is performed.
- B. Establishing internal processes, tools, procedures, and roles and responsibilities needed to comply with VA policies and the Conference Oversight and Reporting Knowledgebase (CORK).
- C. Publishing supplemental processes and guidance, as applicable, to ensure program effectiveness.
- D. Ensuring the business case for each VA-sponsored and co-sponsored conference justifies the use of VA resources (funds, time, and people).
- E. Appointing an RCE for VA sponsored and co-sponsored conferences.
- F. Appointing an EC to manage attendance and overall approval for VA-wide employees at Federal non-VA sponsored conferences for which the Administration or Staff Offices is the main proponent.
- G. Identifying purchase cardholder(s) to perform the transactions required for reportable conferences and ensuring the cardholder's purchase approving official is aware of the designation and has all required documentation prior to approving transactions.

H. Establishing sufficient procedures to ensure each RCE and EC is properly trained. In addition, ensuring a properly appointed RCE has completed the required RCE training provided by the CTCCS for their conference duties.

Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, CFOs, Finance Officers, Chiefs of Finance Activities, Chief Accountants, and Other Key Officials are responsible for ensuring compliance with the policies and procedures in this chapter and designating one or more persons to answer questions pertaining to the planning and oversight of conferences.

The Assistant Secretary for Management and Chief Financial Officer (ASM/CFO) oversees all financial management activities relating to the Department's programs and operations, as required by the [CFO Act of 1990](#) and [38 U.S.C. § 309](#). The ASM/CFO specific responsibilities include the direction, management, and provision of policy guidance and oversight of VA's financial management personnel, activities, and operations. The ASM/CFO establishes financial policy, inclusive of travel, systems, and operating procedures, for all VA financial entities and provides guidance on all aspects of financial management.

The ASM/CFO designates the Executive Director, Financial Services Center with the signature authority for mandated conference reporting (Congressional and VA OIG) and the responsibility to comply with OMB M-17-08, VA public website reporting, with no further re-delegation authorized.

The Executive Director, Financial Services Center (FSC) has been designated the signature authority to submit Quarterly reports to Congress on conferences sponsored by the Department; to submit VA OIG conference reporting obligations and for subsequent fiscal years in which an appropriations act requires that VA submit an annual report to the VA OIG; and to comply with OMB M-17-08, VA public website reporting on agency-sponsored conferences, with no further re-delegation authorized.

Senior Executive Service (SES) and SES equivalent positions have the designated authority for approving VA sponsored, VA co-sponsored, and non-Federal conferences with net expenses less than or equal to \$100,000, with no further re-delegation authorized.

The RCE is required to demonstrate responsible stewardship of public funds and compliance with VA policy in performing all administrative roles and responsibilities identified throughout this chapter. For VA sponsored and co-sponsored conferences, the appointed RCE is responsible for the following:

- A. Completing the RCE required training provided by CTCCS.
- B. Developing and certifying the Conference Package (CP).
- C. Obtaining proper approval of the CP (defined in [Section 1005 Policies](#)).

- D. Uploading the approved CP into CORK a minimum of 30 calendar days prior to the conference start date to ensure conference information is available in the VA Travel System for association with the traveler authorization. Travelers will not be able to complete the travel authorization properly without the approved CP uploaded to CORK.
- E. Overseeing the execution of the conference as the senior official on-site (or alternate appointee).
- F. Timely and accurate post conference reporting.

The **EC** is required to demonstrate responsible stewardship of public funds and compliance with VA policy in performing all administrative roles and responsibilities for Federal non-VA sponsored conferences in accordance with [Section 100502](#) in this chapter.

The **Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction (OALC)** is responsible for VA's conference procurement activities through the Heads of Contracting Activity (HCA) for VA conference sponsorship or hosting. The appropriate HCA is responsible for appointing a Contracting Officer (CO). The CO will:

- A. Ensure negotiations are conducted and documented in accordance with the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR).
- B. Appoint the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR).

Only warranted COs can issue orders or make modifications to existing conference contracts and must complete any necessary modifications promptly. Modifications shall be made only when appropriate and within the overall spending limits identified in the conferences' approved CP.

The **Financial Services Center (FSC)**, under the ASM/CFO's direction, is responsible for tracking, reporting, and performing oversight of reportable conferences. The FSC Corporate Travel and Charge Card Services (CTCCS) is responsible for the following:

- A. Providing guidance and assistance to the Administrations and Staff Offices on conference approval requests, to ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies.
- B. Conducting the review of all conference approval documents and performing a sample audit of post conference report cost data and reporting results to the RCE and/or the Administration or Staff Office point of contact (POC) as follows.
 - 1. Provide weekly, a copy of the completed checklist with identified compliance issues.

2. Report monthly, the summary results of the compliance reviews previously identified to the RCE, for which no action has been taken, to the conference sponsoring/co-sponsoring Administration or Staff Office Conference POC and Senior Executives for their appropriate corrective action.

Reference [Appendix B, Conference Compliance Review Procedures](#) for criteria included in the review and audit plan.

- C. Providing a quarterly memorandum to the ASM/CFO, reporting on VA's conference policy compliance.
- D. Tracking applicable conferences to ensure conference data elements for all reportable requirements are entered into CORK within the appropriate timeframe.
- E. Delivering Congressionally-mandated and OMB-mandated reports.
- F. Working closely with OFP to ensure VA conference policies and procedures are compliant with current laws and regulations.
- G. Assisting in responding to inquiries associated to the Congressional and Freedom of Information Act.
- H. Managing CORK.
- I. Appointing an EC for cross-Administration and Staff Office participation at Federal non-VA sponsored conferences, in the event no one Administration or Staff Office can be identified as the main proponent of the conference.
- J. Ensuring approved Conference Package information uploaded in CORK is imported into the VA Travel System and the detailed conference information is selectable by travelers when creating travel authorizations.
- K. Provide the required RCE training.

Approving Officials for travel will ensure all travel is authorized and performed consistent with the FTR, [Vol XIV Travel](#), and any other agency-specific guidance relating to travel. Additionally, they could have pecuniary liability for erroneous payments resulting from their negligent or fraudulent actions. Their responsibilities include:

- A. Authorize official travel only for travelers under their jurisdiction, and in advance of the travel.
- B. Determine if the travel is essential for the purpose(s) of carrying out the mission of VA.

- C. Ensuring adequate funds are available before authorizing travel.
- D. Ensuring all travel is performed in the most economical and efficient manner.
- E. Ensuring VA’s Travel System is used to prepare, process, approve, and route travel authorizations and expense vouchers for official temporary duty travel (TDY), including when travelers are making their own transportation and lodging reservations.
- F. Examining expense reports to ensure:
 - 1. The justification, documentation of the conference date, and receipts are attached.
 - 2. Travel expenses for which reimbursement is claimed were made as authorized.
- G. Ensuring travelers under their jurisdiction:
 - 1. Complete [VA Form 10091, VA-FSC Vendor File Request Form](#) and fax to VAFSC Vendorizing Team using the number indicated on the form in order to receive travel advances and reimbursements electronically.
 - 2. File expense reports with electronically attached receipts.
 - 3. Comply with VA’s travel card program.
 - 4. Ensure travelers select the purpose code “Conference”, and the applicable “Conference Title”, on their travel authorization in accordance with the Instruction-to-Travelers (ITT) memo. Travelers will not be able to complete the travel authorization properly, without the approved conference details in the VA Travel System.
- H. Approving requests based on the established conference oversight and approval threshold under [Section 100502](#) for VA sponsored and co-sponsored conferences, and [Section 100506](#) for Federal non-VA sponsored conferences, in this chapter.

Travelers will:

- A. Be knowledgeable of the FTR, VA travel policy, and any other agency-specific guidance related to travel and conference issues.
- B. Minimize costs of official travel by exercising the same care when incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if on personal travel and expending personal funds. Excess costs, circuitous routes, delays, or luxury accommodations and services that are not necessary or justified in the performance of official business are not acceptable under this policy. Travelers are responsible for excess costs incurred for personal preference or convenience.

- C. Ensure travel is approved prior to departing on travel.
- D. Arrange travel using VA’s Travel System, including reservations for transportation, lodging, and rental vehicles.
- E. In the event that travel plans change and conference attendance is cancelled:
 - 1. Cancel transportation and lodging reservations in a timely manner. For additional guidance, reference [Vol XIV Ch. 2, Travel Per Diem](#).
 - 2. Seek a refund of the registration fee or reimburse VA in accordance with [FTR §301-74.24](#).
- F. Claim and obtain, where applicable, lodging tax exemptions. See GSA SmartPay website for applicable locations and use certificates granted by the locality.
- G. Submit travel claims within five business days upon return to the official station. For travelers in an extended travel status (more than 30 days), submit expense reports monthly. For additional guidance on submitting travel claims, reference [Vol XIV Ch. 1, Travel Administration](#). For local expense reports, submit at least quarterly.
- H. Comply with VA’s Travel Charge Card Program guidance contained in [Vol XVI Ch. 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program](#).
- I. Select the purpose code “Conference” and the applicable “Conference Title” displayed in the “Conference Attending” field associated to the traveler’s organization, conference location, and start or end date within one day of the travel start or end dates of the conference. Travelers will not be able to complete the travel authorization properly, without the approved conference details selected on the travel authorization within VA’s Travel System.

1005 Policies

100501 VA Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Conference Planning

- A. [OMB Memorandum 17-08 \(M-17-08\)](#) requires agencies to ensure that Federal funds are used only for necessary and appropriate purposes and that all conference expenses and activities comply with both the [FTR](#) and the [FAR](#) requirements on lodging, food and beverages, per diem reimbursement, and contracting of goods and services (also reference [Vol II Ch. 4, Awards, Ceremonies, Food and Refreshments, Gifts or Mementos](#) for compliance). In addition, agencies should ensure that conference attendance and expenses are appropriate to the purpose of the conference and the mission of the agency.

- B. Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials may delegate to their executives the authority to appoint an employee, known as the Responsible Conference Executive (RCE), to plan, certify the CP, obtain required level of approval, execute, and report on VA-sponsored or co-sponsored conferences. The RCE appointment will be made in the conference approval request memorandum and the RCE must complete the required RCE training provided by the CTCCS. The RCE function must be at an appropriate general schedule level to exercise sufficient oversight of the conference.

The RCE is tasked by the responsible organization to assure there is appropriate management oversight of the conference planning process to ensure the standards for determining the best value are met. In the event the designated RCE is unable to continue executing their duties, a memorandum from the requesting office appointing the replacement RCE and the effective date must be uploaded into CORK.

- C. For Conference Package Development, the RCE is responsible for the following:
1. Updating CORK with all conference title information no later than 15 calendar days prior to the beginning of the next fiscal quarter. This update must ensure that the next quarter's planned conference titles and estimates are as refined as possible. The update must also include any additional conferences planned, and a status change for any cancelled conferences.
 2. Developing a CP for all VA sponsored and co-sponsored conferences and complete all required forms for conference approval (reference [FTR Appendix E to Chapter 301, Suggested Guidance for Conference Planning](#)).
 3. Estimating all applicable conference costs listed in [VA Form 10008, Conference Request Form](#). Only expenses incurred using appropriated funds are to be included. Total conference cost estimates should include all direct and indirect expenses paid by VA. When structuring contracts with conference vendors, fees for goods and services must be itemized and exclusive to the particular item being provided. Costs may not be added to a line-item(s) as a way to pay for or supplement a separate expense. For example, the price for a meeting room or lodging rate may not be inflated to pay for food (meals or refreshments) or for entertainment or awards.
 4. Exercising strict fiscal responsibility in determining the best value for a conference site, in accordance with [FTR §301-74.1\(a\)](#). Per Diem estimates will be based on [GSA Per Diem Rates](#) for the locality. Attendance will be a reasonable estimate of participants based on anticipated interest, ensuring VA representation is limited to the minimum number of attendees determined necessary to accomplish the purpose of the conference, and include estimated costs for late additions, as presenters and other attendees, which are likely to occur after conference approval.

5. Ensuring conferences do not include entertainment costs. Reference [Vol II Ch. 4, Awards, Ceremonies, Food and Refreshments, Gifts or Mementos](#), and for specific statutory guidance reference [The Administrator, Veterans Administration, 43 Comp. Gen. 305, B-152331 91963](#)).
 6. Unless authorized under the ethics regulations ([FTR §301-74.1\(d\)](#)), decline individual gifts. Gifts that are prohibited include travel and lodging for site visits used for familiarization of a potential conference site, and under other circumstances.
 7. Consulting the OGC Ethics Office to clarify what may or may not be accepted (e.g., special rates or benefits) and include guidance provided by OGC in the CP.
 8. Including costs for all necessary conference-related site visits.
 9. When event planning includes contracting for food, meeting one of the exception conditions identified in [Vol II Ch. 4, Awards, Ceremonies, Food and Refreshments, Gifts or Mementos](#), the RCE must determine if the food to be provided will be contracted as a meal (e.g. continental breakfast/breakfast, lunch, or dinner) or as light refreshments. If the contract stipulates a meal will be provided, the RCE must include in the ITT the provided meal(s) must be deducted from M&IE in their travel claims.
 10. Ensuring the proper approval is obtained ([Section 100510](#)), when providing lodging, meals, or light refreshments under one of the limited exceptions identified in [Vol II Ch. 4, Awards, Ceremonies, Food and Refreshments, Gifts or Mementos](#). Under no circumstance may a higher meeting room, lodging rate, or other line item expense be negotiated in exchange for food (meals or refreshments).
 11. When planning conferences in the local area of the official station, schedule time for local attendees to obtain their meal(s) at no expense to the government.
 12. Do not approve any CP in which they are performing the certification function, as there must be a separation of duties between the RCE and the approver.
 13. Review and certify the CP is compliant with regulations and policy, and route for approvals as required in [Table 1: VA Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Conference Approval Thresholds](#) in this chapter. Electronically captured and digitally verified signatures are acceptable on all CPs and reporting forms. Reference [Appendix C, Conference Package Related Forms](#) for CP required forms and the [VA Conference Resource Home](#) website for form instructions and examples sample CPs.
- D. Under Site Determination, the RCE must analyze estimated conference expenditures for different sites to determine which site would provide the overall best

value to the Government. This analysis is referred to as performing a site cost comparison ([FTR §301-74.5](#)). VA sponsored and co-sponsored conferences shall maximize the use of Government-owned or Government-provided conference facilities to the extent practicable ([FTR §301-74.1\(b\)](#)), considering such factors as availability, suitability, per diem, transportation, and rental of conference rooms (reference paragraph [E. Requirements for Documenting Site Selection](#)). When selecting a site for a VA sponsored or co-sponsored conference the RCE will ([FTR §301-74.3](#)):

1. Consider alternatives to a face-to-face conference, such as teleconferencing, before making any firm commitment on a physical location.
 2. Identify opportunities to reduce costs in selecting a particular conference location and facility (e.g., through the availability of lower rates during the off-season at a site with seasonal rates) ([FTR §301-74.1\(c\)](#)).
 3. Evaluate cities and venues based on the various factors as outlined in [FTR Appendix E to Chapter 301 – Suggested Guidance for Conference Planning](#).
 4. Conduct a site cost comparison ([FTR §301-74.4](#)) for the size, scope, and locations of the proposed conference using [VA Form 10008](#). Review and compare 3 different geographically diverse locations to ensure that the most cost-effective venue is chosen for the conference. When a unique site is required, a site comparison is not needed. Instead, the costs and justification for the unique site must be provided in the site selection rationale/notes section of the [VA Form 10008](#), or included in the conference approval request memorandum.
 5. Ensure documentation of all alternative sites considered or unique site justification is retained in accordance with [Section 100511](#) in this chapter.
- E. Minimizing costs is a critical consideration in determining when to use an event planning and event support services (EPESS) Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA), in accordance with the Chief of Staff Memorandum. In general, the use of contract event planners is not advantageous because it can reduce VA's control over conference expenses and can increase costs. The RCE should consult with the CO to determine if internal VA support services would provide the best value to the VA. If circumstances make the use of a conference planner necessary, the contract with the planner must cover only the planning and logistical support provided by that vendor. For conference planning and support, VA developed a comprehensive Customer Ordering Guide to assist VA offices in preparing required documentation to order EPESS. Warranted COs may place orders against an EPESS BPA by following the Electronic Contract Management System (ECMS) procedures detailed in the guide.

1. Administrations and Staff Offices are permitted to use internal VA event planning support services and a la carte contracts for event support services, instead of an EPESS BPA; however, all a la carte event support services must be contracted through a warranted CO for all other conference-related expenses, in accordance with the [FAR](#). The use of third-party contract planners does not eliminate the requirement for reporting total conference costs.
 2. All proposed contracts for conferences where VA's commitment, expenditure, and liability combined exceed \$25,000, require legal review by the Office of General Counsel (OGC) Procurement Law Group (PrLG) and technical review by Acquisition Assistance Division or Acquisition Program Management Division staff prior to signature by a CO.
 3. For conferences held in the District of Columbia, VA may not directly procure group lodging facilities for conference attendees without specific approval and appropriation from Congress. However, [FTR §301-74.12\(a\)](#) does not prohibit payment of per diem to an employee authorized to obtain lodging in the District of Columbia while performing official business travel.
 4. While it is always desirable to obtain lodging consistent with the established lodging portion of the per diem rate for the chosen locality, it may not always be possible. In instances when lodging is not available at the established per diem rate, travelers must perform a cost comparison between the costs associated to a lodging facility that meets the applicable per diem rate and the cost of the actual expense method at the conference locality, as prescribed of [Vol XIV Ch. 2, Travel Per Diem](#).
 5. Once the site is selected, the RCE will ensure written documentation of the evaluation criteria and the selection rationale used ([FTR §301-74.14](#)) is retained in accordance with [Section 100511](#) in this chapter.
- F. Requirements for Documenting Site Selection. To document and justify the selected site, whether comparing any combination of government owned and non-government owned facilities, a cost comparison of three (3) geographically diverse site locations must be conducted to ensure that the conference will be held in the most economical location while achieving the objectives of the conference. Site cost comparisons are not required when a conference is held for a specific purpose requiring a unique site that could not otherwise be met at another location.
1. Although Government facilities must first be considered when comparing locations, it is not considered a unique site, unless it is documented as the only location meeting the conference criteria. When a unique site is selected, in lieu of a site cost comparison, the costs and justification must be provided on the [VA Form 10008](#) site selection rationale/notes section and in the conference approval request memorandum.

2. Administrations and Staff Offices are responsible for conducting market research and determining customers’ needs. A contracting officer (CO) may be able to provide suggestions or guidance based on previous experience to assist in finding the most cost-effective conference facility. Reference [FTR Appendix E to Chapter 301 – Suggested Guidance for Conference Planning](#), for recommended guidance along with other factors to be considered when a conference is being developed.

100502 VA Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Conference Approval

- A. Approval authorities vary depending on the estimated cost of the conference. In accordance with Secretary of Veterans Affairs (SECVA) Memorandum, “Delegation of Authority for Travel and Conferences” (Refer to VA Financial Policy, Volume XIV, Chapter 1, Travel Administration), the SECVA has designated the positions in the table below, with approval authority:

Table 1: VA Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Conference Approval Thresholds

Costs to VA	Certification	Recommendation for Approval	Approval
x¹ < \$20K and < 50 Attendees	Not Required	Knowledgeable employee from requesting office	SES or SES equivalent positions with no further delegation.
x¹ < \$20K w/50+ Attendees, OR \$20K ≤ x¹ ≤ \$100K	RCE	RCE	SES or SES equivalent positions with no further delegation.
>\$100K	RCE	RCE	DEPSEC, Under/Assistant Secretaries and OKOs*, with no further delegation.

x equals total estimated cost of the conference.

*Refer to Volume I, Chapter 1, VA Financial Policy and Accounting Overview, contains a list of Other Key Official (OKO) positions.

- B. Estimated Cost is < \$20,000. Conference packages estimated to cost less than \$20,000 with less than 50 attendees must have conferences approved by an SES or SES equivalent position. This authority cannot be re-delegated.
- C. Estimated Cost is \$20,000 - \$100,000 or < \$20,000 with 50 or more attendees (one or more of whom is a VA employee). SES or SES equivalent positions must approve CPs for conferences with estimated costs less than \$20,000 with 50 or more attendees (one or more of whom is a VA employee), or for conferences with estimated costs between \$20,000 and \$100,000. This authority cannot be re-delegated. The following documents must be submitted in the request:
 1. A conference approval request memorandum signed by the authorized approving official (AO).
 2. [VA Form 10008, Conference Request Form](#).

Reference [Appendix C, Conference Package Related Forms](#) for additional routing documents required to submit a CP.

- D. Estimated Cost is > \$100,000 . The DEPSEC, Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and OKOs must approve CPs for conferences with estimated costs greater than \$100,000. This authority may not be re-delegated. The following documents must be submitted in the request:
1. A conference approval request memorandum signed by the authorized AO.
 2. [VA Form 10008, Conference Request Form](#).

Reference [Appendix C, Conference Package Related Forms](#) for additional routing documents required to submit a CP.

CPs should be submitted no later than 45 calendar days prior to the date funds are to be obligated, or no later than 70 calendar days prior to the start of the conference, whichever is earlier. The approved CP is required before VA can incur any conference obligations.

- E. Bundling of conferences is prohibited.
- F. AOs are authorized to provide one-time approval for recurring VA sponsored or hosted conferences (e.g., annual conferences) within the overall limits of their approval authority. Approvals should be documented and include control conditions based on historical execution of these events. Such conditions should include but not limited to; cost limits, event durations, maximum attendance, and location restrictions. The actual conference execution is subject to annual reporting requirements, must be documented in CORK, and subject to the availability of funding.

100503 VA Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Conference Oversight

VA is committed to accurately tracking appropriated funds for VA-sponsored or co-sponsored conferences and ensuring appropriate internal controls are in place.

- A. Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials must ensure their budget officers are fully integrated into the decision process to ensure fiscal discipline and the RCE completes required RCE training provided by CTCCS.
- B. The RCE is responsible for ensuring proper stewardship of government funds during the execution of the conference and ensuring the conference complies with applicable statutes, regulations, and policies. The RCE will:

1. Ensure costs incurred are documented and total expenses do not exceed the approved estimated costs.
2. Ensure all approvals and CP documentation is uploaded into CORK in order to support the conference approval decision and for future audit purposes (reference [Appendix C, Conference Package Related Forms](#)). This includes:
 - a. [VA form 10008, Conference Request Form](#).
 - b. A list of travelers - full name, VA email address, travel authorization or local expense voucher number, ensuring not to include any personally identifiable information (PII).
 - c. A list of all contract numbers associated with the conference.
 - d. All other documentation, supporting costs, justifications, and any specific expense approval documents.
3. If after approval, the conference location and/or dates change, and it does not affect the conference scope or costs, a memorandum indicating the change in the location and/or dates must be completed and signed by the RCE. If there is a location change, the RCE must include the costs in the memorandum as accomplished on the [VA Form 10008](#).
4. Notify the approving authority, prior to conference execution, if budgetary thresholds are crossed or require additional approval; for example:
 - a. If an approved CP is determined to exceed the approved estimate by ten percent or more prior to execution of the conference, a re-approval of the CP is required. If the revised estimate requires a higher level of approval authority, revised CP documents must be signed by the required level of approval authority. If the revised estimate does not require a higher level of approval authority, a summary memorandum signed by the original approval authority is sufficient.
 - b. If the final cost of a conference exceeds the approved estimate by ten percent or more, justification for the increase in the final cost must be provided to and approved by the required level of approval authority identified in [Table 1: VA Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Conference Approval Thresholds](#).
 - c. If the final cost per attendee increases by ten percent or more as compared to the estimated cost per attendee, the RCE must provide justification for the cost increase and provide written notification to the official who approved the original CP. The Approving Official must acknowledge receipt of the notification by signing and dating the document.

- d. Should a review of estimates, final costs, or cost per attendee result in a ten percent or more increase, the RCE must upload all subsequently obtained approval or signed notification documents, including all supporting justifications, into CORK.
5. Exercise due diligence during the execution of a conference (e.g., expenses incurred have prior approval, and use of purchase cards complies with policy).
6. Inform all employees involved with the conferences of prohibitions against soliciting or receiving any gifts or gratuities from outside entities. Reference [Vol XIV Ch. 9, Non-Federal Source Funding \(Donated Travel\)](#), for guidance. RCE should consult with OGC (Ethics) for advice.
7. Issue the ITT in a timely manner to all conference attendees. The ITT will provide FTR and VA Policy guidance to include, but not limited to the following:
 - a. Conference name, dates, location, and point of contact for questions.
 - b. Registration and payment method instructions for registration fees (when applicable) to ensure improper payments do not occur, e.g. micro-purchase card split payments on a known requirement (reference [Vol XVI Ch. 1, Government Purchase Card Program](#)).
 - c. Remind all employees not to accept individual gifts unless authorized under the ethics regulations.
 - d. Travel funding information.
 - e. Guidance on common types of travel expenses travelers might incur for inclusion on the TA, i.e., TDY travelers versus Local travelers.
 - f. Identify documentation requirements on the TA. For example, attach:
 - The ITT, [VA Form 10079](#), Cost Comparison Worksheet for Privately Owned Vehicle (POV) Versus Common Carrier Transportation when choosing to use a privately-owned vehicle instead of the Government preferred mode of transportation ([FTR §301-10.4](#) and [§301-10.5](#)); or
 - [VA Form 10079a](#) Personal Travel in Conjunction with Official Travel Cost Comparison Worksheet when the employee chooses an indirect route or rental car at TDY location in lieu of alternative ground transportation, etc.
 - g. Lodging reservation information, including guidance if lodging is not available at the per diem rate at the conference site ([FTR §301-74.6](#)).
 - h. Identify if hotel tax exemption is applicable at the conference site, providing forms or required documentation.

- i. Reduction of meals from M&IE, when meals are provided by or included in the registration fee paid for by the government.
- j. Provide copies of the signed approval memorandum authorizing lodging, meals, or both for local travelers and the requirement to attach the memo to their travel authorization.
- k. Expense voucher instruction, e.g. time limit on filing and expense voucher receipt requirements (reference [Vol XIV Ch. 1, Travel Administration](#), for requirements).
- l. Requirement to select purpose code “conference” and the applicable “Conference Title” associated to the traveler’s organization, conference location, and conference dates. Travelers will not be able to complete the travel authorization properly without the approved conference details in the VA Travel System.
- m. Remind all employees in the event travel plans change and conference attendance is cancelled:
 - i. Cancel transportation and lodging reservations in a timely manner. For additional guidance, reference [Vol XIV Ch. 2, Travel Per Diem](#).
 - ii. Seek a refund of the registration fee or reimburse VA in accordance with [FTR §301-74.24](#).
8. Identify and clearly communicate all conference requirements to the CO for contract issuance. A warranted CO will be responsible for the acquisition of services and supplies over the micro-purchase threshold to ensure acquisitions in support of conferences are planned and managed in accordance with the [FAR](#).
9. Ensure VA does not solicit lodging accommodation upgrades as part of contracts. The CO must obtain a technical and legal review of all proposed contracts with hotels or similar facilities for conferences where VA’s cost may exceed \$25,000.
10. Ensure VA does not incur expenditures for the use of entertainment (videos, music, etc.), motivational speakers, the purchase of promotional items, or embossing, or otherwise imprinting the name of the organization or conference on any supplies, mementos, or other handouts, (reference [Vol II, Ch. 4, Awards, Ceremonies, Food or Refreshments, Gifts or Mementos](#)).
11. Appropriated funds are not available for entertainment, including food for employees and non-employees, except under specific statutory authority, reference [The Administrator, Veterans Administration, 43 Comp. Gen. 305, B-](#)

[152331\(1963\)](#), and [Vol II, Ch. 4, Awards, Ceremonies, Food or Refreshments, Gifts or Mementos](#).

12. Ensure the CO or government purchase cardholder makes all purchases within the limits of their individual authority, and only authorized contracting personnel make commitments or changes that affect price, quality, quantity, delivery, or other terms and conditions of a contract.
 13. Ensure purchases are made with appropriate approval. Above the micro-purchase limit, the CO determines the best vehicle for purchases. At or below the micro-purchase threshold, the RCE must designate a purchase cardholder to perform the transaction, ensure the cardholder's approving official is aware of the designation, and has all required documentation prior to approving transactions. The purchase cardholder must have RCE approval prior to purchase. Reference [Vol XVI Ch. 1, Government Purchase Card Program](#), regarding the cardholder's responsibilities (i.e. prohibiting split payment of a single requirement), and the approving official's responsibility to certify all transactions made by cardholders, and to ensure applicable documentation is maintained in accordance with [Section 100505](#) in this chapter.
 14. Nominate a qualified COR for conferences.
 15. Serve as the senior official on-site during the execution of the conference. However, the RCE may delegate, to an appropriately qualified person, the duties of on-site oversight.
 16. Update CORK should there be any conference changes or cancellation.
 17. Determine appropriate on-site conference support personnel before, during, and after a conference. These individuals are identified by name and the designation must be provided to these travelers for inclusion in their travel receipts.
 18. Ensure that employees and supervisors involved in conference oversight complete all mandatory and applicable training, which includes mandatory annual VA-approved ethics training and the "VA Online Travel Card Training" (TMS ID#5508). For Purchase Card Holders, purchase card training (TMS ID#5863) is required as described in [Vol XVI Ch. 1, Government Purchase Card Program](#), and for travel cards, reference [Vol XVI Ch. 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program](#).
- C. CTCCS will perform an on-going compliance review on:
1. All approved conferences, prior to the conference being held, to ensure RCEs have complied with all policy requirements identified in [Section 100503](#).
 2. A sample of all conferences post completion.

The detailed results of these compliance reviews are provided monthly to the RCE and applicable Administration or Staff Office conference management points of contact. CTCCS will provide guidance to address any issues related to compliance with VA conference policies and procedures. Reference [Appendix B, Conference Compliance Review Procedures](#).

CTCCS will provide the results in a quarterly memorandum to the ASM/CFO on any outstanding compliance findings. The ASM/CFO will report to the Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials the results of CTCCS's quarterly memorandum on VA's conference policy compliance. The memorandum will summarize compliance review results by Administration and Staff Office. The memorandum will identify whether the conference applies to the current quarter or was identified in the prior quarter. In addition, the memorandum will identify those conferences for which the Administration or Staff Office has taken no action to address identified non-compliance.

100504 VA Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Conference Reporting

A. After the conference takes place, the RCE will:

1. Prepare the [VA Form 10089b, Responsible Conference Executive \(RCE\) Post-Conference Certification Form](#) (PCCF) and the [10089a, Final Conference Report](#) (FCR) identifying estimated-versus-actual costs (only including expenditures of appropriated funds), and include previously provided justifications and any re-approval. If the actual cost exceeds the approved estimate by ten percent or more, or the final cost per attendee increases by ten percent or more over the estimated cost per attendee, reference [Section 100503](#) for the required actions.
2. Submit the PCCF within 15 calendar days of conference conclusion. This can be accomplished by entering the information in CORK. Note: If someone other than the RCE signs the PCCF in CORK, then the hard copy signed by the RCE must be uploaded. The hard copy serves as the formal record and must match the data on the digital copy within CORK.
3. Submit a complete FCR within 45 calendar days of conference conclusion. This can be accomplished by entering the cost data in an FCR in CORK. Note: If someone other than the RCE signs the FCR in CORK, then the hard copy signed by the RCE must be uploaded. The hard copy serves as the formal record and must match the data on the digital copy within CORK.

Incomplete FCRs submitted in CORK will have an adverse effect, resulting in VA providing inaccurate information to Congress, VA OIG, and on VA's public website. Every effort will be made to ensure the report includes the final travel costs for all travelers from their completed travel vouchers in the VA's electronic travel system. However, final reporting will not be delayed pending these final

costs. To ensure timely reporting, the travel authorization costs from the traveler’s approved authorization in the electronic travel system may be used for up to 5 percent of the travelers. As part of the supporting documentation, RCEs must provide the name, email address, and TA number for all attendee travel.

4. Ensure the final travel costs reported only include costs incurred for the specific conference. A TA may include more than one mission, but only the conference expense portion of the TA must be included in costs reported for the conference.

B. CTCCS uses CORK to generate quarterly reports on reportable conferences to Congress, an annual report to the VA OIG, and to annually post on [VA's Public Website](#) on conference expenditures over \$100,000.

Table 2: VA Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Conference Reporting

Costs to VA	Frequency of Statutory Reporting	Reported to	Time Frame for Statutory Reporting	Frequency of Posting Requirement	Time Frame for Posting Requirement
x ¹ < \$20K and < 50 attendees	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
x ¹ < \$20K and ≥ 50 attendees, including 1+ from VA ²	Quarterly	Congress	NLT 30 calendar days after the end of the fiscal quarter ²	Posting not required	Posting not required
x ¹ ≥ \$20K	Quarterly	Congress	NLT 30 calendar days after the end of the fiscal quarter ²	Posting not required	Posting not required
x ¹ ≥ \$20K ³	Quarterly	Inspector General	NLT 15 calendar days after the end of the quarter ³	Posting not required	Posting not required
x ¹ > \$100K ⁴	Annually	Public Website ⁴	NLT January 31, following the close of each fiscal year	Annually	January 31
x ¹ > \$100K ^{3,5}	Annually	Inspector General ³	None ⁵	Annually ⁵	January 31 ⁵

¹ x equals total estimated cost of the conference.

² [38 U.S.C. § 517](#)

³ [P.L. 116-260. "Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021"](#), Division E, Title VII, Section 738

⁴ [OMB Memorandum 17-08](#)

⁵ No statutory time requirement for reporting conferences >\$100K to VA OIG, rather it is a VA set period.

C. Reports to Congress.

1. No later than 30 calendar days after the end of each fiscal quarter, the Executive Director, FSC will provide a quarterly report on reportable conferences to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives as depicted in Table 2 above.

2. Reports to Congress shall include total estimated costs to VA for conferences occurring during the fiscal quarter in which the report is submitted, and an accounting of the final costs to VA for each conference occurring during the previous fiscal quarter. The report must include reportable costs in accordance with [38 U.S.C. §517](#).

D. Reports to Inspector General.

1. To comply with the 15 day notification requirement with [H.R. 1625, "Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018"](#), personnel from VA OIG have access to CORK to view information about conferences that have been completed. The RCE uses CORK to record post-conference data elements.
2. The Executive Director, FSC will submit an annual report to the VA OIG for conferences in excess of \$100,000. The report must include reportable costs in accordance with H.R. 1625, "Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018".

E. Reports on [VA's Public Website](#).

1. To comply with [OMB M-17-08](#), the Executive Director, FSC will report on the VA public website by January 31 for each conference sponsored by VA during the prior fiscal year, where U.S. Government appropriated funds were expended in excess of \$100,000. The report must include reportable costs in accordance with [OMB Memorandum 17-08](#).
2. The website must include all DEPSEC, Under Secretary, Assistant Secretary and OKO approvals identifying the exceptional circumstances for any instance where conference net expenses exceeded \$500,000.
3. The website includes information about fiscal year conference net expenses, as well as a general report about conference activities throughout the fiscal year.

100505 Federal Non-VA Sponsored Conferences Planning

- A. [OMB Memorandum M-17-08](#) removed oversight requirements for VA attendance at non-Federal conference. However, VA approving officials must still exercise discretion and judgment in ensuring that all conference expenses are appropriate, necessary, and managed in a prudent manner in accordance with [FTR, Vol XIV Travel Policy](#), and [Vol XVI Ch. 1, Government Purchase Card Program](#). The guidance below does not apply to VA attendance at non-Federal conferences.
- B. Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials may delegate the authority to appoint an Executive Champion (EC). The EC's primary function is overseeing the attendance and the attendance approvals of assigned Federal non-VA sponsored conferences. The EC appointment will be made in the conference

approval request memorandum. The EC function must be at an appropriate general schedule level to exercise sufficient oversight of the conference. The Administration or Staff Office may designate administrative support agents for the EC. In the event the appointed EC is unable to continue executing their duties, a memorandum appointing the replacement EC and the effective date shall be completed.

- C. CTCCS will appoint an EC for cross-Administration and Staff Office participation at Federal non-VA sponsored conferences in the event no one Administration or Staff Office can be identified as the main proponent of the conference.

100506 Federal Non-VA Sponsored Conferences Approval.

Approval includes preparation, routing, and approval of request for Federal non-VA sponsored conference attendance, including the development of the business case and guidance for attendee travel and oversight. Approval authorities vary depending on the estimated cost of the conference. In accordance with Secretary of Veterans Affairs (SECVA) Memorandum, “Delegation of Authority for Travel and Conferences” (Refer to VA Financial Policy, Volume XIV, Chapter 1, Travel Administration), the SECVA has designated the positions, as appears in the table below, with approval authority:

Table 3: Federal non-VA sponsored Conference Approval Thresholds

Costs to VA	Certification	Recommend for Approval	Approval
x¹ ≤ \$100K	EC	EC or an administrative support agent	SES or SES equivalent positions with no further delegation authority.
>\$100K	EC	EC or an administrative support agent	DEPSEC, Under/Assistant Secretaries and OKOs, with no further delegation.

¹ x equals total estimated cost of the conference

*Refer to Volume I, Chapter 1, VA Financial Policy and Accounting Overview, contains a list of Other Key Official (OKO) positions.

- A. Estimated Cost is ≤ \$100,000. For conferences with estimated costs less than or equal to \$100,000, SES or SES equivalent positions must approve Federal non-VA sponsored conferences with no further delegation authority. The following documents must be included in the approval request:

1. A conference approval request document authorized by the Approving Official.
2. Either include a completed [VA Form 10090a, Federal Non-VA sponsored \(External\) Conferences Approval Plan](#), or include the following information:
 - Fiscal quarter;
 - Sponsoring office;
 - Hosting organization;

- Total estimated costs of all Federal non-VA sponsored conferences in the previous fiscal year;
 - Conference title;
 - Known or estimated date;
 - Location;
 - Projected number of attendees;
 - Estimated travel costs;
 - Estimated registration fees; and
 - Estimated total cost for maximum VA funding requested.
- B. Estimated Cost is > \$100,000. The DEPSEC, Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and OKOs must approve attendance at Federal Non-VA sponsored conferences with estimated costs greater than \$100,000. This authority may not be re-delegated. The Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials must submit [VA Form 10090a, Federal Non-VA sponsored \(External\) Conference Approval Plan](#), no later than 70 calendar days prior to the start of the first scheduled conference. Any emergent conference not previously included on the originally submitted VA Form 10090a, requires a new VA Form 10090a. The bundled conference request list (VA Form 10090a) must include the data elements identified in paragraph [A2](#) above.
- Reference [Appendix C, Conference Package Related Forms](#), for additional routing documents required to submit a request.
- C. Approval officials are authorized to provide one-time approval for recurring Federal non-VA sponsored conferences (e.g., annual conferences) within the overall limits of their approval authority. Approvals should be documented and include control conditions based on historical execution of these events. Such conditions should include, but not limited to; cost limits, event durations, maximum attendance, and location restrictions. The actual conference execution is still subject to annual reporting requirements and subject to the availability of funding.
- D. The EC is responsible for securing the proper administrative approvals for attendance of VA employees at Federal non-VA sponsored conferences. There must be a separation of duties between the EC and approver, therefore an EC may not be the approver on the same conference (reference [Table 3, Federal non-VA sponsored Conference Approval Thresholds](#)).

100507 Federal Non-VA Sponsored Conferences Oversight

The EC will:

- A. Ensure the proper approval for each conference is obtained as defined in [Table 3, Federal non-VA sponsored Conference Approval Thresholds](#) .

- B. Prior to conference execution, notify the approving authority when budgetary thresholds are exceeded, or require additional approval.

100508 Federal Non-VA Sponsored Conferences Reporting.

While Congressional, VA OIG, and VA Website reporting of Federal non-VA sponsored conferences is not required by law, the Administrations and Staff Offices are responsible for ensuring a final list of approved attendees is available upon request.

100509 Submitting Conference Approval Requests

All conferences must be approved in accordance with [Section 100502](#) for VA sponsored and co-sponsored conferences and [Section 100506](#) for Federal non-VA sponsored conferences.. VA employees traveling to conferences outside the United States must comply with [Vol XIV Ch. 6, International Travel](#), if applicable.

100510 Travel Expenses, Meals, and Light Refreshments

- A. VA approving officials will limit the authorization and payment of travel expenses to those that are necessary to accomplish the purpose of the conference. All conference travel will be performed in the most economical and effective manner and in accordance with the FTR and VA's travel policy chapters in [Vol XIV Travel](#). Actual Expense requires approval and reimbursement in accordance with [Vol XIV Ch. 2, Travel Per Diem](#).
- B. Travelers may reference [Vol XIV Ch. 1, Travel Administration](#), and [Vol XIV Ch. 3, Transportation Expenses](#) for guidance specific to their transportation needs.
- C. Travelers may refer to [Vol XIV Ch. 2, Travel Per Diem](#) for guidance on lodging authorization and reimbursement. Local travel lodging is only authorized under 5 U.S.C. 41, Government Employees Training Act (GETA), and reference [Vol XIV Ch. 7, Local Travel](#). The RCE must plan the venue and agenda to mitigate the need for local travelers to obtain lodging so that costs are the most economical to the government.
- D. In general, the use of Government funds to purchase food or refreshments for either Government personnel or non-Government individuals, including VA beneficiaries and stakeholders, is not authorized; however, there are some limited exceptions to this prohibition (reference [Vol II Ch. 4, Awards, Ceremonies, Food and Refreshments, Gifts or Mementos](#)).

If one or more of the exception conditions are met, the approving official must be conservative in the expense estimates in accordance with policy on food and

refreshments. If meals are provided at a VA sponsored or co-sponsored event, the cost cannot exceed the daily per diem rate for the selected location. RCE's are encouraged to consider contracting for approved meals as part of the conference, in lieu of VA reimbursing each traveler. The RCE must plan the venue and agenda to mitigate the need for the government to purchase meals for local travelers so that costs are the most economical to the government. Under no circumstance may a higher meeting room, lodging rate, or other line item expense be negotiated in exchange for food (meals or refreshments).

- E. When a meal is furnished by the Government at a conference, or the cost is included in a conference registration fee for which the Government pays or reimburses an employee, the employee is responsible for ensuring all meals provided are deducted from M&IE on the travel authorization. In the absence of advance knowledge, meals provided by the Government must be deducted on the expense voucher ([FTR §301-74.21](#) and [§301-11.18](#)). A continental breakfast, when provided by the Government, constitutes a reduction of breakfast from M&IE. The provision of Government provided light refreshments or complimentary snacks does not require a reduction to M&IE, as these are not considered a "meal".

For further guidance on M&IE, reference [Vol XIV Ch. 2, Travel Per Diem](#). For guidance on reimbursement of meals when in the local area, reference [Vol XIV Ch. 7, Local Travel](#).

100511 Record Retention

- A. Approved CPs, required forms in accordance with [Appendix C, Conference Package Related Forms](#), and all associated supporting documents must be retained for six years in accordance with National Archive and Records Administration ([NARA](#)) [guidelines](#), and available for inspection by VA OIG or other interested parties, as requested.
- B. Administrations or Staff Offices are responsible for ensuring record retention requirements are met for any aforementioned document that is not retained in a mechanized system.

1006 Authorities and References

[Federal Travel Regulation](#)

[5 CFR §410.404, "Determining if a conference is a training activity"](#)

[Vol II, Ch. 4, Awards, Ceremonies, Food or Refreshments, Gifts or Mementos](#)

[The Administrator, Veterans Administration, 43 Comp. Gen. 305, B-152331\(1963\)](#)

[P.L. 112-154 “Honoring America’s Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012,” Sec. 707 \(Title 38 United States Code \(U.S.C.\) Sec. 517 effective October 1, 2012\)](#)

[P.L. 116-260, "Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021](#)

[Inspector General Act of 1978](#)

[OGC Memorandum dated October 26, 2016 Conference Clarification](#)

[CFO Act of 1990](#)

[38 U.S.C. §309](#)

[38 U.S.C. §517, Quarterly Reports to Congress on Conferences Sponsored by the Department](#)

[H.R. 1625, "Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018"](#)

[Federal Acquisition Regulation](#)

[Vol XIV, Travel](#)

[Vol XVI, Charge Card Programs](#)

[OMB M-17-08 Amending OMB Memorandum M-12-12, Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations](#)

[FTR Appendix E to Chapter 301, Suggested Guidance for Conference Planning](#)

[5 U.S.C. 41 Government Employees Training Act \(GETA\)](#)

[OMB M-12-12, Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations](#)

[5 U.S.C. Part III, Subpart D, Chapter 57, “Travel, Transportation, and Subsistence”](#)

[38 U.S.C. §7411, “Full-time Board-certified Physicians and Dentists: Reimbursement of Continuing Professional Education Expenses”](#)

[38 U.S.C. §7471, “Designation of Regional Medical Education Centers”](#)

[41 CFR Chapters 300-304, Federal Travel Regulations \(FTR\)](#)

[OMB M-11-35, “Eliminating Excess Conference Spending and Promoting Efficiency in Government”](#)

[Executive Order 13589, “Promoting Efficient Spending”](#)

[FTR Bulletin 14-02, “Clarification of Agency Reporting Requirements for Conferences”](#)

[VA Conference Resource Home](#)

1007 Rescissions

- A. VA Financial Policies and Procedures, Volume XIV Travel - Chapter 10, “Conference Planning, Reporting, and Oversight”, July 2019.
- B. Delegation of Authority on Conference Reporting Requirements (VIEWS 144041), June 2019.
- C. Streamlined Conference Planning and Approval, Oversight and Reporting Policies and Procedures (VAIQ 7551953), December 2014.

1008 Questions

Forward all questions concerning the financial policies and procedures in this chapter to CTCSS at VAConferences@va.gov.

Appendix A: Revision History

The following revisions occurred prior to the current published version of the chapter. The section numbers referenced below may have changed during the course of subsequent revisions.

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
1004	Added Approving Official responsibility to ensure travelers select the purpose code “Conference” and the applicable “conference title” on the Travel Authorization (TA).	CTCCS	Conference Module implementation in VA Travel System	May 2018
1004	Added Traveler responsibility to select the purpose code “Conference” and the applicable conference title associated to the TA.	CTCCS	Conference Module implementation in VA Travel System	May 2018
100501	B. Added oversight requirement for RCE appointment to be named in the conference approval request memorandum and that RCE must complete the required RCE training.	OF (047)	General Policy update	May 2018
100501	C 9. Added guidance regarding meals in travel claims.	OFP (047G)	Clarification	May 2018
100501	C.11. Added RCE responsibility to schedule time for local attendees to obtain meal(s) at no expense to the government when planning conferences in the local area of the official station.	OFP (047G)	Update to Vol. XIV, Chap. 7, Local Travel	May 2018
100502	B. Changed, “CPs prepared” to “conferences”.	CTCCS	Administrative Update	May 2018
100503	A. Added oversight requirement to ensure RCE completes required RCE training.	OF (047)	General Policy update	May 2018
100503	B.3. Added requirement for an RCE signed memo indicating a change in location and/or dates if conference location and/or dates	CTCCS	General Policy clarification	May 2018

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
	change after approval and it does not affect conference scope/costs. If there is a location change, the RCE must also include the costs in the memo as accomplished on the VA Form 10008.			
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100502	B. Changed, “CPs prepared” to “conferences”.	CTCCS	Administrative Update	May 2018
100503	A. Added oversight requirement to ensure RCE completes required RCE training.	OF (047)	General Policy update	May 2018
100503	B.3. Added requirement for an RCE signed memo indicating a change in location and/or dates if conference location and/or dates	CTCCS	General Policy clarification	May 2018

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
	change after approval and it does not affect conference scope/costs. If there is a location change, the RCE must also include the costs in the memo as accomplished on the VA Form 10008.			
100503	B.7.m Added additional instructions to ITT memo for travelers when creating travel authorizations and changing or cancelling the TA.	CTCCS	Conference Module implementation in VA Travel System	May 2018
100504	A.3. Added language to increase timely FCR submission by allowing use of TA cost estimates for 5% of travelers.	CTCCS	General Policy Update	May 2018
100504	Table 2: deleted OMB Memorandum 12-12, added OMB Memorandum 17-08.	OFPP (047G)	Update to OMB memorandums	May 2018
100504	D. Added 15-day notification requirement with H.R. 1625, "Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018".	CTCCS	General Policy Update	May 2018
100504	E. Deleted OMB 12-12, added OMB M-17-08.	OFPP (047G)	Update to OMB memorandums	May 2018
100505	B. Clarified requirement for EC appointment to be made in the conference approval request memorandum.	CTCCS	General Policy Update	May 2018
100510	C. Added RCE requirement to plan venue and agenda to mitigate the need for local travelers to obtain lodging to minimize costs that are most economical to the government.	OFPP (047G)	Update to Vol. XIV, Chap. 7, Local Travel	May 2018
100510	D. Added RCE requirement to plan venue and agenda to mitigate the need for the government to purchase meals for local travelers so costs are the most economical to the government.	OFPP (047G)	Update to Vol. XIV, Chap. 7, Local Travel	May 2018

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
Appendix A	Added Revision History.	OFP (047G)	Administrative Update	May 2018
Appendix B	Added Approval Authority	CTCCS	Administrative Update	May 2018
Appendix C	D.2.d. Changed “45 days” to “45 calendar days”.	CTCCS	Administrative Update	May 2018
Appendix D	A.1.d.e. and 2.g.h. Added requirement for supporting documents to support FCR costs and justification when actual costs exceed the estimated costs by 10% or greater.	CTCCS	General Policy clarification	May 2018
100504	Updated referenced chapters for light refreshments and/or meals at conferences	CTCCS	Updated references to Awards Vol II Ch4 and Local Travel Vol XIV Ch. 7.	August 2017
100301	Defined Approving Official	CTCCS	General Policy Update	January 2017
100302	Specified bundling restriction applies to VA-sponsored conferences only	CTCCS	General Policy Update	January 2017
100303	Added note to clarify conference definition and linked to OMB memorandum 17-08	CTCCS	General Policy Update	January 2017
100304	Removed reference to non- VA sponsored conferences in Conference Package definition	CTCCS	General Policy Update	January 2017

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
100306	Clarified Executive Champion definition	CTCCS	General Policy Update	January 2017
100308	Added definition of Formal Classroom Training	CTCCS	General Policy Update	January 2017
100309	Modified Per Diem definition	CTCCS	General Policy Update	January 2017
100317	Deleted COSVA Approval definition, changed “Attendee List” to “Traveler List” and arranged alphabetically (changed reference from “attendee list” to “traveler list” throughout)	CTCCS	General Policy Update	January 2017
100501.0 1	C.4. Removed reference to attendee time cost D.1. Removed redundant language and added face-to-face to item a D.2. Added hyperlink to Chief of Staff memo E. Removed unique site examples	CTCCS	General Policy Update	January 2017
100501.0 2	A. Changed “should” to “must”	CTCCS	Administrative Update	January 2017
100501.0 3	C.2. Updated for CORK II requirements C.3. Provided clarification when revised CP is required when estimates change	CTCCS	General Policy Update	January 2017
100501.0 4	Added calendar days throughout to clarify reporting requirements. Updated for CORK II requirements	CTCCS	Administrative Update	January 2017

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
100502.0 1	Modified verbiage to align with EC definition	CTCCS	Administrative Update	January 2017
100502.0 2	Removed CTCCS from oversight of DOA memos for non-VA sponsored conferences A.1. Revised language for approval documentation B. Added “bundled” to clarify bundling is permitted for Federal non- VA-sponsored conferences C. Modified language to remove waiver requirements (per M-17-08), removed 10008a from use (form rescinded), provided cost requirements for approval	CTCCS	General Policy Update	January 2017
100503	Moved instructions for international conferences from 100501	CTCCS	Administrative Update	January 2017
Appendix A	Updated to align with policy changes	CTCCS	General Policy Update	January 2017
Appendix B	Updated to revise checklist questions with policy/form updates	CTCCS	General Policy Update	January 2017
Various	Changed language from non-VA sponsored conferences to Federal non-VA sponsored conferences.	CTMR OCTCC S	OMB Memorandum M-17-08	December 2016
Various	Name change from Corporate Travel and Reporting Office (CTRO) to Corporate Travel Management Reporting Office (CTMROCTCCS)	CTMR OCTCC S	Administrative update	December 2016

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
100302	Deleted VAAA authorization to bundled conferences.	CTMR OCTCC S	OGC Conference Clarification Opinion (VAIQ 7713724)	December 2016
100303	Added events that are not considered a conference. Included language that if a clear-cut determination cannot be made, then the event shall be processed as a conference.	CTMR OCTCC S	OGC Conference Clarification Opinion (VAIQ 7713724)	December 2016
100317	Changed SECVA waiver to COSVA Approval.	CTMR OCTCC S	OMB Memorandum M-17-08	December 2016
100401	Changed SECVA waiver to COSVA approval.	CTMR OCTCC S	OMB Memorandum M-17-08	December 2016
100402	Changed DEPSEC >\$100K to \$500K approved thresholds to Under/Assistant Secretaries and Other Key Officials.	CTMR OCTCC S	OMB Memorandum M-17-08	December 2016
100501.0 1	Incorporated new language on agencies requirements from M-17-08 and deleted old language from M-12-12.	CTMR OCTCC S	OMB Memorandum M-17-08	December 2016
100501.0 2	Updated conference approval thresholds. Added guidance for pre-approval of annual conferences. Deleted bundling authority for VAAA.	CTMR OCTCC S	OMB Memorandum M-17-08 OGC Conference Clarification Opinion (VAIQ 7713724)	December 2016
100501.0 3	Clarified content of quarterly memorandum on VA's conference policy compliance.	CTMR OCTCC S	VA OIG Audit, 15-01227-129	December 2016

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
100501.0 4	Deleted bundling authority for VAAA.	CTMR OCTCC S	OGC Conference Clarification Opinion (VAIQ 7713724)	December 2016
100502.0 1	Changed paragraph guidance from external conference oversight to Federal non-VA sponsored. Clarified that AOs must still use discretion and judgement for attendance at non-Federal conferences per FTR, Travel Policy and Government Purchase Card Policy.	CTMR OCTCC S	OMB Memorandum M-17-08	December 2016
100502.0 2	Updated conference approval thresholds. Added guidance for pre-approval of annual conferences.	CTMR OCTCC S	OMB Memorandum M-17-08	December 2016
100502.0 3	Removed purchase card oversight verbiage covered in Vol XVI Ch 1 and gifts and gratuities covered in Vol XIV Ch 9	CTMR OCTCC S	OMB Memorandum M-17-08	December 2016
100503	Updated conference approval thresholds and removed need to elevate approval when officials attend.	CTMR OCTCC S	OMB Memorandum M-17-08	December 2016
1006	Added reference and link to OMB M-17-08.	CTMR OCTCC S	OMB Memorandum M-17-08	December 2016
100701	Updated version of previous Volume XIV Travel - Chapter 10, "Conference Planning, Reporting, and Oversight"	CTMR OCTCC S	Administrative update	December 2016
Appendix A	Incorporated conference approval threshold changes.	CTMR OCTCC S	OMB Memorandum M-17-08	December 2016

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
Appendix B	Corrected a consistency issue on timing for review of pre-conference packages. Incorporated conference approval thresholds changes for compliance reviews.	CTMR OCTCC S	Administrative update OMB Memorandum M-17-08	December 2016
1001	Added authority for OIG employees to follow OIG directives, policy, guidance; and language on VA's legal reporting requirements.	OFP (047G)	General Policy update	October 2016
1003	Added definitions: Attendee List; Bundling; and Waiver. Updated name from Covered Conference to Reportable Conference, and definition.	OFP (047G)	VA OIG Audit, 15-01227-129; General Policy Update	October 2016
1004	Added roles and responsibilities for: VA Secretary (SECVA), Deputy SECVA; CTMROCTCCS compliance review and reporting. Updated VA CFO reporting requirements;	OFP (047G)	VA OIG Audit, 15-01227-129; General Policy update	October 2016
100501	Added: Bundling policy and reporting guidance; segregation of duties; site selection documentation retention; approval guidance for conferences under \$20K (Table 1); re-delegation memo for conferences up to \$100K must be provided to CTMROCTCCS; attendee list must be in the Conference Oversight and Reporting Knowledgebase (CORK); CTMROCTCCS compliance review and reporting to VA CFO and VA CFO reporting. Updated: Changed Responsible Conference Executive (RCE) function level requirement; Event planning and support services use of Blanket Purchase Agreements; changed applicable event and	OFP (047G)	VA OIG Audit, 15-01227-129; General Policy Update	October 2016

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
	training words to read conference(s); unique sites do not require cost comparison; Updated approval levels; estimate and reporting variance to 10 percent and requirements; Instructions to Travelers; reporting requirements (Table 2); replaced use of VA Form 10008a, b, and d, with one VA Form 10008 for VA sponsored and co-sponsored conferences.			
100502	Added: Segregation of duties; guidance on payment method of registration fees to avoid split payments using the micro-purchase card. Updated: Executive Champion (EC) appointment and function level requirement, and approval requirements (Table 3). Removed notifying approver if cost exceeds estimate.	OFP (047G)	General Policy Update	October 2016
100503	Added section on submitting CP approval requests using VA's document processing system.	OFP (047G)	General Policy Update	October 2016
100504	Combined travel expenses, meals, and light refreshments in one section and updated guidance.	OFP (047G)	General Policy Update	October 2016
100505	Created Record Retention section and updated.	OFP (047G)	General Policy Update	October 2016
1007	Rescinded March 2015 Ch 10 Conference Planning, Reporting, and Oversight.	OFP (047G)	Revised Chapter	October 2016

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
1008	Updated Point of Contact Information	OFP (047G)	General Policy Update	October 2016
Appendix A	Remove FTR references and replaced as current App. B. Updated CP and CORK documentation requirements. Replaced use of VA Form 10008a, b, and d, with one VA Form 10008 for VA sponsored and co-sponsored conferences	OFP (047G)	General Policy Update	October 2016
Appendix B	Replaced current App. B with new Conference Compliance Procedures.	OFP (047G)	General Policy Update	October 2016
Various	Reformatted to new policy format and completed 5-year review.	OFP (047G)	Reorganized chapter layout	May 2018
1004	Added CTCCS responsibility to import approved conferences in CORK to VA's Travel System Conference Module.	CTCCS	Conference Module implementation in VA Travel System	May 2018

Appendix B: Conference Compliance Review Procedures

CTCCS will use the following procedures to conduct the review of all conference approval documents in CORK and perform a sample audit of post conference report cost data. When conducting reviews, if CTCCS finds CPs are not in compliance, the Administration or Staff Office POC will be contacted for corrective action.

The compliance review will start with a weekly review of all pre-conference packages. Each week all conferences that will begin the following week will be reviewed using the procedures below.

All conference packages will be reviewed weekly based on the projected Final Conference Report (FCR) due date. Each week, CTCCS will review the conferences that should have a PCCF or FCR completed the previous week to determine whether the required reports were submitted on time.

A stratified sample of fully completed conference packages will be reviewed after the FCR has been submitted. Each week, a sample of the conferences that had their FCR completed the previous week will be reviewed using the procedures below.

It is recommended that the RCE use these procedures as guidelines for ensuring CPs for VA-sponsored and co-sponsored conferences comply with policy.

A. General Conference Information:

- CORK ID;
- Conference Title;
- Conference Cost Category (i.e. less than \$20K, \$20K-\$100K, etc.);
- Facility Type (Government or Commercial);
- Fiscal Year;
- Quarter;
- Conference Start Date;
- Conference End Date;
- PCCF Due Date;
- PCCF Submission Date;
- FCR Due Date;
- FCR Submission Date;
- Administration/Staff Office; and
- RCE.

B. Compliance Review Criteria:

1. Administrative Error - No correction required: No action will be required to correct administrative errors identified in a conference package. However, CTCCS will continuously assess these errors for actionable trends that can be

resolved through process improvements or changes to policy. This type of error includes old form versions, spelling errors, and other administrative details that do not negatively affect the requirements of a complete conference package.

2. Material Error - Correction required: CTCCS will track material errors identified in a conference package to ensure they are corrected for the identified conference as required. Additionally, CTCCS will continuously assess all errors for actionable trends that can be resolved through process improvements or changes to policy. This type of error includes missing signatures, missing documents, or any missing information that is required by policy.

C. Pre-Conference Review

1. Conference Approval Documentation:
 - Does the conference package contain documentation that the conference was reviewed and approved;
 - Does the conference approval documentation contain sufficient justification that the conference supports the mission;
 - Was the conference approved by the proper authority as required;
 - Is appropriate documentation uploaded to support all unique requirements (e.g., Local Per Diem authorization, refreshments at conference, etc.) and approved by the appropriate authority; and
 - Do all documents provide consistent information (e.g., location on the [VA Form 10008, Conference Request Form](#) matches the site selected in the approval memorandum, RCE named is the same throughout, dates of the conference are the same on all documents, conference title in CORK matches conference title on documentation, etc.)?
2. [VA Form 0907 Strategic Communication Review](#):
 - Is the VA Form 0907 completed correctly; and
 - Is the VA Form 0907 signed by the proper authority?
3. [VA Form 4265, Concurrence and Summary Sheet](#):
 - Is the VA Form 4265 completed correctly; and
 - Is the VA Form 4265 signed by the proper authority?
4. [VA Form 10008, Conference Request Form](#):
 - Is the VA Form 10008 completed correctly;
 - Is the VA Form 10008 signed by the RCE;
 - Were three geographically diverse cities compared; and
 - Does the site selection rationale/notes block provide sufficient justification when the site selected was not the most cost-effective site or a unique site was selected?

D. Post Conference Review

1. [VA Form 10089b, RCE Post Conference Certification Form](#) (PCCF):
 - Is the PCCF completed correctly;
 - Does the data entered in CORK match the uploaded hardcopy PCCF if applicable;
 - Is the PCCF signed by the proper authority; and
 - Was the PCCF completed within 15 days of conference completion?

2. [VA Form 10089a, Final Conference Report](#) (FCR):
 - Is the FCR completed correctly;
 - Does the data entered in CORK match the uploaded hardcopy FCR, if applicable;
 - Is the FCR signed by the proper authority;
 - Was the FCR completed within 45 calendar days of conference completion;
 - Are significant changes in conference scope from the approved pre-conference package identified and properly justified;
 - Does the use of contractor support include competitively awarded contracts, an adequate description of the contracting procedures used, and cost comparison factors considered;
 - Do the estimated costs on the FCR match the estimated costs originally submitted in the pre-conference approval package;
 - Are actual costs exceeding the estimated costs by 10% or greater documented with sufficient justification and approved by the proper authority;
 - Does the package indicate whether a Purchase Card was used and if so, was the Purchase Cardholder properly identified;
 - Are appropriate supporting documents uploaded to support all travel, contract, and purchase card costs; and
 - Do all documents provide consistent information (e.g., identical fields on the PCCF and FCR for record match)?

E. Cost Review

1. Individual Traveler Costs:
 - Is a complete traveler attendee list provided to support a travel cost data pull from the VA Travel System; and
 - Do the individual traveler costs reported on the FCR match the costs paid in VA's Travel System?

2. Contract Costs:
 - Is a complete list of contract numbers provided to support verification of contracts paid; and
 - Do the contracting costs paid match the costs reported on the FCR?

3. Purchase Card Costs:

- Are all purchase card invoices and receipts provided to support verification of purchases made;
- Do the purchase card costs paid match the costs reported on the FCR; and
- Were there any inappropriate or unauthorized purchase card purchases noted that are contrary to restrictions on purchase card usage?

4. Cost Estimate to Actual Variance:

- Do the actual costs exceed the estimated costs by 10% or greater;
- Is proper justification provided when actual costs exceed the estimated costs by 10% or greater; and
- Was approval by the proper authority received for actual costs that exceed the estimated costs by 10% or greater?

Appendix C: Conference Package Related Forms

Please review [VA Conference Resource Home](#) intranet page for conference related forms procedures not covered in this chapter.

A. VA Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Conference Forms.

1. RCE must submit the following standard CP forms to the authorized approving official for VA-sponsored and co-sponsored conferences with estimated costs of \$20,000 or more, or when estimated costs are less than \$20,000 but have 50 or more attendees of which at least one (1) is a VA employee. All documents must be uploaded into CORK:
 - A conference approval request memorandum signed by the authorized Approving Official; and
 - [VA Form 10008, Conference Request Form](#).
2. In addition, the following documentation must be uploaded into CORK, but is not required to be included in the CP:
 - A list of all travelers (including full name, VA email address, travel authorization or local expense voucher number, do not include any PII);
 - A list of all contract numbers associated with the conference;
 - Appropriate supporting documents to support all travel (VA employees/contractors), contract, and purchase card costs to include purchase card invoices and receipts provided to support verification of purchases made; and
 - Proper justification when actual costs exceed the estimated costs by 10% or greater.
3. RCE must submit the following standard CP forms to the authorized approving official for VA-sponsored and co-sponsored conferences with estimated costs in excess of \$100,000 and upload into CORK once approved:
 - [VA Form 0907, Strategic Communication Review](#);
 - [VA Form 4265, Concurrence and Summary Sheet](#);
 - A conference approval request memorandum signed by the DEPSEC, Under Secretary, Assistant Secretary, or OKO; and
 - [VA Form 10008, Conference Request Form](#).

In addition, the following documentation must be uploaded into CORK, but is not required to be included in the CP:

- A list of all travelers (including full name, VA email address, travel authorization or local expense voucher number, do not include any PII);
- A list of all contract numbers associated with the conference;
- Appropriate supporting documents to support all travel (VA employees/contractors), contract, and purchase card costs to include

- purchase card invoices and receipts provided to support verification of purchases made; and
 - Proper justification when actual costs exceed the estimated costs by 10% or greater.
4. RCE must submit the following post-conference reports for VA-sponsored and co-sponsored reportable conferences:
- [VA Form 10089b, Responsible Conference Executive \(RCE\) Post-Conference Certification Form](#); and
 - [VA Form 10089a, Final Conference Report](#).

These forms, or their equivalent, can be accomplished by entering requisite data into CORK.

B. Federal non-VA sponsored Conference Forms.

1. The following information must be submitted by the EC for approval to the authorized approving official for Federal non-VA sponsored Conferences:
- A conference approval request document authorized by the Approving Official.; and
 - Either include a completed [VA Form 10090a, Federal Non-VA sponsored \(External\) Conferences Approval Plan](#), or include the following information:
 - Fiscal quarter;
 - Sponsoring office;
 - Hosting organization;
 - Total estimated costs of all Federal non-VA sponsored conferences in the previous fiscal year;
 - Conference title;
 - Known or estimated date;
 - Location;
 - Projected number of attendees;
 - Estimated travel costs;
 - Estimated registration fees; and
 - Estimated total cost for maximum VA funding requested.
2. EC must submit the following standard approval request forms to authorized approving officials for Federal non-VA sponsored Conferences.
- [VA Form 0907, Strategic Communication Review](#); and
 - [VA Form 4265, Concurrence and Summary Sheet](#).
3. In addition, Administrations and Staff Offices are responsible for ensuring a final list of approved attendees is available upon request.