

## **Guidance for Approval and Payment of Conference and Training Sponsorships**

Sponsorship can be defined as: APHIS providing funds in support of a mission-related event that is either being hosted by APHIS or hosted by an outside entity.

When APHIS provides funding for a mission-related conference that is hosted by an outside entity; payment may be handled through a grant, cooperative agreement, interagency agreement, or the Miscellaneous Payment process. APHIS will never award funding without making sure the cost is allowable. If there is no budget breakout from the Cooperator, we have an obligation to ensure the costs are allowable. Approval through the procedures outlined below must be obtained prior to spending any funds on the event. Below are three scenarios that may or may not require prior conference approval, based on your specific circumstance. For further clarification, contact your respective Federal Agency Travel Administrator (FATA).

1. When APHIS is granting funds for a conference that the Wildlife Society is hosting and gives \$10,000 towards the conference, but does not have APHIS participants travelling to the conference, this does not have to be approved through the Conference Transparency Accountability and Tracking (CTAT) for conference approval.
2. When APHIS is supporting a conference through a cooperative agreement or grant that the Wildlife Society is hosting and gives \$10,000 towards the conference; and has 1 or more people travelling to the conference (i.e., the travel is outside of the cooperative agreement or grant and is paid through normal federal travel procedures), the \$10,000 support for the conference as well as the APHIS travelers, require approval in CTAT.
3. When APHIS is receiving funding through a Cooperative Service Agreement; part of which is used to fund a conference, which includes required training for Federal Aviation Administration certification where 1 or more APHIS personnel will travel to attend. When the funding is from a non-federal source, CTAT approval is required, as well as Office of the General Counsel (OGC) clearance is required. The OGC clearance process outlined below, is used when non-federal contributions are requested to fund a conference.

The Office of the Chief Financial Officer requires that OGC be contacted to review the circumstances when an agency intends to use non-federal contributions to fund expenses for a conference. A document from OGC giving their concurrence must be uploaded in CTAT. Contact the OGC point of contact below for the review and then upload their concurrence documentation in CTAT prior to routing the CTAT request for approval:

OGC POC: Elin Dugan  
Email: ELIN.DUGAN@OGC.USDA.GOV  
Phone: 415-744-3158

When APHIS is the conference host and funds are being provided for: registration, booths, travel for individuals, and purchase of transportation (i.e., participant bus transportation); payment guidance for these specific costs are covered in the Purchase Card procedures, Federal Travel Policies, or Integrated Acquisition System (IAS) procedures, and will require approval of the conference in CTAT, prior to the procurement. In addition, reporting the event is required on the quarterly Conference Travel Report (CTR). These three types of payment transactions are not covered in this guidance, but they must follow the approval and reporting steps below.

## **Sponsorship Payments for Hosted or Attended Conferences**

When the event is determined to be a conference according to the below criteria, approval must be obtained in CTAT. If the event is attended, hosted, or sponsored and meets ***all*** four of the criteria outlined below, the event is a conference, and would be subject to pre-approval and reporting.

1. The event is a meeting, retreat, seminar, or symposium that involves federally funded attendee travel (nonlocal), **AND**
2. Includes participants from at least one agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, **AND**
3. Involves costs associated with attendee travel and per diem, **AND**
4. Includes any of the following indicators:
  - a) Requires registration and/or registration fees - **Registration is open to public and not only targeted members.**
  - b) Has an established hourly agenda and/or brochure - **Agenda is advertised to solicit public participation, not solely used internally for mission operational meetings to keep participants on task/schedule.**
  - c) Requires audio/visual support, printing, room/facility rental, and/or speaker and translation fees - **Self-explanatory.**
  - d) Is advertised internally or externally – **The event is advertised to solicit open participation and not solely targeting specific participants.**
  - e) Has a scheduled speaker or discussion panel - **Refers to paid speakers and/or consultants, not agency/government Subject Matter Experts that do not receive a speaker fee.**

If you need additional information or assistance, contact your respective FATA.

### **Approval:**

Must be obtained in CTAT, prior to spending funds for the conference or travel. The approved Decision Memo for Conferences will serve as official documentation to show the event has been approved. However, when there is an Administrator approval, there is no Decision Memo needed. A printed copy of the electronic approval from CTAT, from the Administrator or Administrator's Designee serves as the approval.

### **Decision: Determining the Appropriate Payment Process**

If requesting to fund a sponsorship for conference or training only, follow the Miscellaneous Payment process to request the payment.

If multiple procurements will be funded with the sponsorships follow the Grant Issuance process.

If the Agency is hosting and sponsoring an event, then follow the interagency (for federal recipients) or the Cooperative Agreement (for non-federal recipients) processes.

### **Reporting:**

All sponsorships not processed through a cooperative agreement or grant must be reported on the quarterly CTR. These procedures can be found here:

<https://my.aphis.usda.gov/myportal/myaphis/support/travel/>

## **Payments:**

Guidance on cooperative agreements, grants, and interagency agreements are provided in the APHIS Agreements Management Manual (AAMM). Additionally, you can also work with your Program's Agreements Specialist or by contacting the Agreements Specialist assigned to your specific program in the Agreements Services Center, FMD.

The two payment types below require conference approval in CTAT or non-conference verification through TSC prior to spending.

1. Miscellaneous Payment. The Recipient may provide a simple invoice to be paid through the miscellaneous payments process working with the FMD-Financial Operations Branch (FOB) in Minneapolis, MN. Remember, FMD-FOB will require the Decision Memo if the event is determined to be a conference to be completed and submitted along with the request to processing the payment. When there is an Administrator approval, there is no Decision Memo needed; although, a printed copy of the electronic approval from CTAT from the Administrator or Administrator's Designee serves as the approval.
2. Interagency Agreement. This instrument would be used if the event would be hosted by another federal agency. The agreement request will require the Decision Memo if the event is determined to be a conference, to be completed prior to processing the agreement. When there is an Administrator approval, there is no Decision Memo needed; although, a printed copy of the electronic approval from CTAT from the Administrator or Administrator's Designee serves as the approval.

## **Who to Contact:**

Assistance with this guidance is available from FMD-Financial Services Branch (FSB) which includes the ASC, TSC, FSB Branch Chief, or the MRPBS-FMD-FOB at [FOST@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:FOST@aphis.usda.gov).

### **Current Event Approval Thresholds**

<b>Event and Cost</b>	<b>Approval Level</b>
Non-conference under \$50,000 (not in CTAT)	No Special Approval or Reporting Required.
Non-conference \$50,000 and over (not in CTAT)	Agency Administrator
Conferences less than \$40,000	Agency Administrator
Conferences \$40,000 - \$74,999	MRP Under Secretary
Conferences between \$75,000 and \$450,000	Deputy Secretary (with pre-approval from the Office of the Chief Financial Officer)
Conferences over \$450,000	Secretary of Agriculture

Can also be accessed here: <https://my.aphis.usda.gov/myportal/myaphis/support/travel/>