



265 FW 11
***Travel/Meeting
Attendance***

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11.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter describes:

- A. Our policy for meeting attendance,
- B. Who may approve meetings involving employee travel,
- C. Who may approve employee attendance at meetings, and
- D. Procedures for minimizing the cost.

11.2 What is the Service policy?

A. Travel and meeting attendance are fundamental to:

- (1) The performance and professional development of Service employees, and
- (2) Our mission.

B. Because travel and meeting attendance can be costly and time consuming, we must:

- (1) Manage it carefully, and
- (2) Balance the benefits and the costs.

C. We encourage employees to attend meetings to:

- (1) Accomplish our mission efficiently,
- (2) Maintain a skilled workforce,
- (3) Maintain effective partnerships and professional relationships, and
- (4) Accomplish other objectives, like employee training and meeting specific obligations.

D. We will make allowances and keep costs to justifiable levels if it is necessary for additional employees to attend a meeting to accomplish other objectives or meet Service obligations.

11.3 What is the scope of the policy? This chapter:

A. Applies to all employees who attend meetings, regardless of the host. The term 'meeting' includes conferences and symposia.

B. Does not apply to training programs or attendance at international meetings. (See [231 FW 5](#) for travel related to training and [532 FW 1 and 2](#) for information about attending international meetings.)

11.4 What terms do you need to know to understand this chapter?

A. Internal meetings are meetings where participants are primarily from the Service or Department and there are few (if any) outside attendees.

B. External meetings are meetings that include participants from outside the Service and the Department where the primary role of the Service is as a participant.

C. Sponsorship or cosponsorship means that the Service has the lead or a leading role in the planning, organization, or funding of the meeting. We do not consider minimal financial assistance or in-kind services in support of a meeting to mean sponsorship or cosponsorship.

11.5 Who is responsible for approving travel and meeting attendance?

A. The **Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks** must approve:

(1) Our sponsorship or cosponsorship of an external meeting involving travel of 30 or more Government employees (also see [section 11.6C](#)).

(2) The site we plan to use to host an external meeting involving 30 or more Government employees.

(3) Internal meetings when the meetings involve travel for more than 100 Service participants.

(4) When the requirements of section 11.8A are not met, internal meetings involving the travel of 30 or more employees.

B. The **Director** must approve the following:

(1) Internal meetings when the meetings involve travel for more than 100 participants. The Director must approve these meetings before we can send the request to the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.

(2) When the requirements of [section 11.8A](#) are not met, internal meetings involving the travel of 30 or more employees. The Director must approve these meetings before we can send the request to the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks (also see sections [11.5A](#) and [11.8B](#)).

(3) Sponsorship or cosponsorship and site selection of external meetings involving the travel of 30 or more Government employees. The Director must approve these meetings before we can send the request to the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.

(4) Attendance of all Service employees at the annual meetings of the North American

and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

C. The appropriate **Regional Director** or **Assistant Director** (for Headquarters) approves requests for:

- (1) Internal meetings that meet the requirements of [section 11.8A](#) (also see [033 FW 1](#)).
- (2) External meetings we sponsor or cosponsor that involve travel for fewer than 30 Government employees.
- (3) Attendance at meetings of professional societies and other professional groups that we do not sponsor or cosponsor. Such societies/groups include, for example, the American Fisheries Society and Wildlife Society. See [section 11.7](#) for guidelines for approving attendance.

11.6 What is the Region's role when hosting a Service sponsored/cosponsored external meeting involving the travel of 30 or more Government employees or an internal meeting involving the travel of more than 100 participants?

A. The host Region/Headquarters office must:

- (1) Identify the appropriate per diem and meals and incidental expense (M&IE) rate commensurate with the location of the event and other considerations,
- (2) Attempt to maintain costs within the specified per diem rate at the location of the meeting,
- (3) Include the per diem rate in the initial announcement of the meeting, and
- (4) Compile the list of names and number of attendees, costs for the event, and hotel accommodations.

B. If payment of actual subsistence is necessary, the host Region/Headquarters office must identify this and set the maximum amount for actual subsistence in accordance with [265 FW 4](#). Limited open travel authorizations may support travel as long as approval of attendees meets the specific Service and Department requirements. The Director uses the list the sponsoring Region compiles (see section 11.6A) and approves each attendee for actual subsistence as specified in [265 FW 4](#). We may not use blanket actual subsistence approval.

C. At least 45 days before a meeting, the host Region/Headquarters office must prepare a request from the Director to the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks requesting approval of the meeting and the location.

- (1) [Exhibit 1](#) provides the format for sending requests to the Assistant Secretary for sponsorship/cosponsorship and site approvals. The requests must be routed through the Correspondence Control Unit using the Data Tracking System.
- (2) If payment of actual subsistence is necessary, the host must state reasons in paragraph VII, Special Consideration/Comments, of [Exhibit 1](#).

11.7 How do members of the Service Directorate determine if they should approve employees' attendance at professional meetings?

A. Employees are responsible for making the request to attend a meeting. They must send the request through their chain of command to the appropriate Directorate member.

B. For employees who are members of the society or organization hosting the meeting, Directorate members should give top priority to employees who are:

- (1) Giving an oral or poster presentation,
- (2) Leading a session(s) at a symposium,
- (3) Receiving an award,
- (4) Currently serving as an officer of the society or organization, or
- (5) Currently serving as a member of a planning or steering committee for the event.

C. If an employee does not meet one of the criteria in [section 11.7B](#), the Directorate member should consider approving the employee's attendance if the employee is responsible for:

- (1) Design and implementation of technical studies consistent with the subject matter of the meeting,
- (2) Directly supervising employees who design and implement technical studies, or
- (3) Developing policy, guidance, or directives related to the subject matter of the meeting.

D. The Directorate member should also consider an employee's work station and give priority to employees from field stations over employees in the Regional or Headquarters office because, in general, field station employees have fewer opportunities to interact with their professional peers than do Regional or Headquarters office staff.

11.8 How do members of the Service Directorate determine if they should approve an internal meeting?

A. Members of the Service Directorate may approve internal meetings involving up to 100 participants if the following criteria are met:

- (1) The focus of the meeting is on Service or Departmental matters,
- (2) Attendees are primarily from the Service or the Department and there are few (if any) outside attendees,
- (3) The requirements for the rental of conference facilities are not excessive,
- (4) The meeting does not require foreign travel, and
- (5) Room rates and M&IE are within the per diem rate.

B. The Director must approve:

(1) When the requirements of [section 11.8A](#) are not met, internal meetings involving the travel of 30 or more employees, and

(2) Internal meetings involving travel of more than 100 Service participants. You must send the request for approval to the Director's office at least 45 days prior to the meeting date. The Director sends the request to the Assistant Secretary for approval.

11.9 Can the Service accept payment from non-Federal sources for attendance at meetings the non-Federal source sponsors? Assistant Directors, Regional Directors, and Ethics Counselors are responsible for the oversight of this type of travel. You can find more information in [212 FW 3](#).

A. The employee must receive written approval from the appropriate ethics official to accept payment before traveling.

B. The situation must meet the following criteria before we can accept payment for an employee's travel (see [31 U.S.C. 1353](#)):

(1) The travel relates to an employee's official duties, and

(2) The payment is proposed by a qualified non-Federal source.

11.10 What are the requirements for formal dedications and ceremonies?

A. You must send plans for official dedications and ceremonies at Washington or Regional facilities where you are requesting the participation of the Secretary or Assistant Secretary to the Director through the Office of External Affairs at least 30 days in advance so that the appropriate Regional or Headquarters office personnel know of the anticipated event. (See briefing paper handbook online for more information.) The plans should include:

(1) Tentative date(s), and

(2) Information explaining rationale for the event.

B. You must also notify participants of the dedication, including local staff contacts with Congressional members in the district where the facility is located. You can find more information in [042 FW1](#).

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