

NIH Policy Manual

26101-17-1 - Acquisition of Temporary Commercial Conference Space

Issuing Office: OD/OM/ORS/PES/EMB **Phone:** [\(301\) 496-3467](tel:3014963467)

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Transmittal Notice

1. Explanation of Material Transmitted:

This chapter provides guidelines and procedures for the acquisition of temporary commercial conference space by an NIH Office of the Director (OD) organization or Institute/Center (IC) when suitable conference space managed by the NIH Events Management Services is not available. The NIH Events Management Services are organizationally located within the Office of Research Services (ORS), Program and Employee Services (PES), Events Management Branch (EMB). Throughout the remainder of this chapter the Events Management Branch will be referred to as - NIH Events Management Services, the name recognized by the NIH community.

This chapter is being revised to comply with NIH Manual Chapter 1710 and to incorporate the automation of the required procedures for requesting the acquisition of temporary commercial conference space at the NIH.

2. Filing Instructions:

Remove: NIH Manual Chapter 26101-17-1, dated 8/21/2008

Insert: NIH Manual Chapter 26101-17-1, dated 3/28/2017

PLEASE NOTE: For information on:

- Content of this chapter, contact the issuing office listed above.
- NIH Policy Manual, contact the Division of Management Support, OMA at 301-496-4606, or enter this URL: <https://oma.od.nih.gov/DMS/Pages/Manual-Chapters.aspx>

A. Purpose

This chapter describes policies and procedures for the acquisition of temporary commercial conference space when conference space managed by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Events Management Services is not available. Adherence to these policies and procedures will result in the effective and efficient use of conference space managed by NIH Events Management Services and decrease the use of appropriated funds for procuring commercial conference space.

B. Background and Scope

The policies and guidelines in this chapter are derived from the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) Part 301-74 (and particularly Appendix E to FTR 301) as it applies to:

1. Conferences hosted, sponsored or co-sponsored and paid for by NIH appropriated funds when commercial conference space is to be used, including conferences scheduled through contractors.
2. Commercial conference space acquired as part of a "package deal" in which commercial conference space is provided by an establishment at no cost, contingent upon the acquisition of temporary lodging.
3. Any use of external facilities including satellite and international ones.

Note: This policy does not apply to events such as conferences and meetings of advisory committees governed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act and conferences sponsored by non-NIH organizations where NIH provides partial financial support for other than space (e.g. travel, training cost, conference cost, Peer Review/Objective Review Meetings, etc.). Such events are not subject to approval by the NIH Events Management Services.

C. Policy

1. The NIH Institutes and Centers (ICs) and the Office of the Director (OD) are required to use NIH, IC or other federally controlled space whenever it is available, and adequate for meeting or event requirements and objectives. Rather than requesting commercial conference space, the ICs and OD should, whenever possible, adjust proposed conference dates to match available federally controlled space.

Note: For more federal controlled spaces please visit: <https://fedmeetingspace.cfo.gov/>

2. When federally controlled space has been sought but is unavailable, commercial conference space may be requested as follows:
 - a. When conference participants consist primarily or totally of NIH employees, commercial conference space should be sought in the local

- area or within a 50 mile driving radius thereof. Costs to be paid by the Government are limited to commercial conference space and administrative services (e.g., AV, special equipment) only.
- b. It is the policy of the NIH that conferences and meetings are conducted in observance of applicable legal requirements, efficient and effective use of taxpayer funds, and are able to withstand public scrutiny.
4. Proposed arrangements for commercial conference space must be the most economical and effective in terms of total cost to the Government for travel, per diem, lodging, conference space, and other associated costs of conference facilities and services. ICs must complete form “NIH 827-1, Request for Acquisition of Temporary Commercial Conference Space” online by visiting <https://spapps.od.nih.gov/sites/EMBOCS/SitePages/Home.aspx>. **The request must provide cost comparisons supporting the request in addition to justifying the need for commercial conference space.** The following are acceptable justifications:
 - a. Recurring events which benefit the NIH mission by varying the location so that participants take turns in sharing travel related expenses.
 - b. Events that precede or follow another major event (satellite) and result in time and cost savings for the Government.
 - c. Events comprised of additional evening or weekend sessions conducted before or after the main conference which utilizes NIH conference space. For example, the use of commercial conference space by advisory council members for an evening or weekend session as part of the main council event; where the majority of participants are staying in a local hotel during the visit.
 - d. Events that require resources or services not provided by NIH Events Management Services.
 5. Costs for commercial conference space cannot be authorized in the NIH Business System via a Travel Order Authorization (Order); nor can such costs be claimed on a Travel Voucher in the NIH Business System. (See [NIH Manual Chapter 1500, “Travel Policies and Procedures”](#).)

D. References

1. Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) Part 301-74 – Appendix E to Chapter 301 –*Suggested Guidance for Conference Planning*: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/ext/public/site/FTR/file/FTR301TOC.html/category/21868/hostUri/portal>
2. NIH Efficient Spending Policy: <https://oamp.od.nih.gov/news/NIH-efficient-spending-policy>
3. NIH Manual Chapter 1363, *NIH Events Management Services*: <https://oma1.od.nih.gov/manualchapters/management/1363/>
4. NIH Manual Chapter 1743, *Keeping and Destroying Records*: <https://oma1.od.nih.gov/manualchapters/management/1743/>

5. NIH Manual Chapter 1500, *Travel Policies and Procedures*:
<https://oma1.od.nih.gov/manualchapters/management/1500/>
6. NIH Manual Chapter 6031, *Conference Support/Collection and Retention of Registration Fees under Contract*:
<https://oma1.od.nih.gov/manualchapters/contracts/6031/>
7. NIH Delegation of Authority, Travel #03A: *Local Travel and Per Diem at the Official Duty Station*: <http://delegations.od.nih.gov/DOADetails.aspx?id=1586>
8. NIH Delegation of Authority, Travel #17: *Conference Planning Provisions*:
<http://delegations.od.nih.gov/DOADetails.aspx?id=3022>
9. National Institutes of Health (NIH) Conference, Administrative, and Travel Services Contract (NIHCATSII): <https://nihcatsii.olao.od.nih.gov/>

E. Definitions

1. **Conference** – A formal meeting, composed of a varied number of participants, organized for the purpose of discussing a particular topic (such as medicine/science, management/administration or business) usually for several days.
2. **Commercial Conference Space** – Commercially available conference space that is not managed by an IC, OD, NIH Events Management Services, or another Federal Government organization.
3. **IC or OD Conference Space** – Conference space assigned to and managed by an IC or by OD; and which is defined as a room with a capacity of less than 50 persons and less than 500 sq. ft.
4. **NIH Conference Space** – Conference space centrally managed by NIH Events Management Services, Program and Employee Services (PES), ORS.
5. **Federally Controlled Space** – Federally-owned buildings or leased space, whether for single or multi-tenant occupancy, and its grounds and approaches, all or any portion of which is under the jurisdiction, custody or control of a department or agency.
6. **NIH Events Management Services** – The NIH organization responsible for the management and operation of NIH conference space, and the provision of video production, and related technical services, including but not limited to audiovisual support, and NIH television operations.
7. **Host** – An NIH IC/OD that incurs costs for planning and conducting a conference, such as meeting planner costs, venue costs, audio/visual services costs, registration website costs, etc.
8. **Sponsor** – An NIH IC/OD that provides funding for expenses incurred by another IC/OD (Host) for planning and conducting a conference.
9. **Co-Sponsorship** – Co-sponsorship is a relationship between an NIH IC/OD and a non-federal entity. It refers to the joint development of a conference, seminar, symposium, educational program, public information campaign, or similar event related to the mission of the NIH and one or more non-federal entities that share a mutual interest in the subject matter.

F. Responsibilities

1. NIH Events Management Services is responsible for determining the availability of NIH Conference Space and is the final reviewing and approving entity for requests to use commercial conference space.
2. Depending upon the method used to procure conference space, the Executive Officer (EO) is responsible, within their organization, for the initial review and approval of requests for commercial conference space. They are also responsible for certifying that, pursuant to Federal Travel Regulation (FTR), the use of travel funds for conferences were reviewed and determined to be (1) consistent with the travel plans of the NIH IC/OD or (2) essential for accomplishing the mission of the NIH IC/OD. The applicable Federal Travel Regulation policies with respect to conference planning that should be considered are:
 - a. Minimizing conference costs, including administrative costs, conference attendees' travel costs and conference attendees' time costs;
 - b. Minimizing conference costs by conducting official business by telephone, teleconference and video-conference;
 - c. Maximizing the use of Government-owned or Government provided conference facilities;
 - d. Identifying opportunities to reduce costs in selecting a particular conference location and facility; and
 - e. Developing and establishing internal policies to ensure these standards are met.
3. The NIH IC/OD administrative personnel is responsible for coordinating the completion of documents cited in this chapter to request the use of commercial conference space and checking the availability of other federally controlled space at Federal Meeting Facilities website at <http://fedmeetingspace.cfoc.gov/>
4. The NIH IC/OD Executive Officers (EOs) are responsible for reviewing and approving/signing the request for the use of commercial conference space.

G. Procedures

1. NIH IC/OD actions:
 - a. Getting NIH conference space at the desired date and time is based on availability. Therefore, efforts should be taken by the conference sponsor to secure space. The conference sponsor should contact NIH Events Management Services on 301-435-2208 in advance of the scheduled conference (consult NIH Manual Chapter 1363 for applicable priorities for reservations) to ascertain the availability of NIH conference space for the event(s) scheduled date(s) and location. The sponsor should provide primary and alternate dates, when feasible. If conference space is available, the procedures outlined in the NIH Manual Chapter 1363 shall be followed for reserving space. If the conference space is not available, the NIH IC/OD is responsible for checking the availability of other federal government conference facilities.

- b. If NIH conference space is not available, the sponsor/administrative personnel submitting the request will receive an e-mail from NIH Events Management Services stating that suitable space is not available for the date(s) requested. NIH Events Management Services will provide the requester the procedures for requesting commercial conference and/or meeting space which include:
 - i. A copy of NIH Events Management Services e-mail stating that suitable space is not available; and
 - ii. Electronically submitting a request for acquisition of temporary commercial conference space: [Form NIH 827-1, "Request for Acquisition of Temporary Commercial Conference Space"](#). The routing and approval system can be found at this website: <https://spapps.od.nih.gov/sites/EMBOCS/SitePages/Home.aspx>
 - iii. The conference sponsor provides the information requested in the electronic system, and after submitting, the request is automatically forwarded to the IC Executive Officer for approval. This information will provide a cost comparison of three facilities and includes costs of lodging, conference and breakout rooms; and administrative services (travel). This is required to ensure the most suitable facility has been selected at the most advantageous cost to the Federal government. If the conference sponsor selects a vendor from the [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\) Conference, Administrative, and Travel Services Contract \(NIHCATSII\)](#), one cost proposal is acceptable.
 - iv. After IC approval, the electronic request will be reviewed by the Business Services Branch, PES, ORS for approval.
2. NIH Events Management Services actions:
- a. The NIH Events Management Services will review the documents identified above in G.1.b. and approve/disapprove the request. If the request is approved, NIH Events Management will forward the approved electronic NIH 827-1 to the appropriate IC/OD Executive Officer. If suitable NIH Conference Space is available upon receipt of the documents, the request will be disapproved. The IC or OD conference sponsor will be notified of the decision within two working days of receipt of the documents.
 - b. NIH Events Management Services will maintain a log of approved and disapproved requests for commercial conference space.

H. Records Retention and Disposal

All records pertaining to this chapter must be retained and disposed of under the authority of [NIH Manual 1743](#), "Keeping and Destroying Records," Appendix 1, "NIH Records Control Schedules" (as amended). These records must be maintained in accordance with current NIH Records Management and Federal guidelines. Contact your [IC Records Liaison](#) or the NIH Records Officer for additional information.

I. Internal Controls

The purpose of this manual issuance is to inform the EOs that they must first exhaust all resources to find NIH conference space before finding/spending funds on commercial conference space available to the public.

1. Office Responsible for Reviewing Internal Controls relative to this Chapter:

The Program and Employee Services (PES), ORS is responsible for the method used to ensure that controls are implemented and working effectively.

2. Frequency of Review: Ongoing review; annually.

3. Method of Review: NIH Events Management Services maintains oversight and ensures effective implementation and compliance of the applicable policies, regulations, and guidelines through the review of numerous resources, including but not limited to an ongoing comparison of costs between the acquisitions of commercial conference space vs. the use of NIH Conference Space. On an annual basis, NIH Events Management Services, with the assistance of the NIH Office of Financial Management, will conduct an audit between their log of approved/unapproved requests for commercial conference space and procurements listed under Object Code 232A.

4. Review reports are sent to: The Director, Office of Research Services (ORS); the Associate Director, Program and Employee Services (PES), ORS; and Deputy Director of Management (DDM), NIH. Reports will indicate that controls are in place and working effectively. Issues of special concern will be brought to the immediate attention of the Director, ORS.