



FISCAL YEAR 2013 CONFERENCE SPENDING REPORT

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A. Background

Building on the Administration's efforts to eliminate wasteful and inefficient spending, the Office of Management and Budget issued Memorandum-12-12, "Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations," in May 2012, which established additional controls over conference spending.¹ This memorandum included a requirement for reporting of conference expenses on each agency's website starting January 31, 2013.

This report provides information on conference expenses in excess of \$100,000 during the fiscal year.² In this report, the agency provides a description of all conferences where the net expenses for the agency, in excess of \$100,000 includes:

- the total conference expenses incurred by the agency for the conference;
- the location of the conference;
- the date of the conference;
- a brief explanation how the conference advanced the mission of the agency; and
- the total number of individuals whose travel expenses or other conference expenses were paid by the agency.

In addition, this report provides information on the EPA's overall conference activities throughout the year, efforts taken to reduce conference spending, and the controls the agency has enacted to ensure conference spending is reviewed and approved at an appropriate management level.

Section 3003 of the FY 2013 Continuing Resolution (CR), P.L. 113-6, lowered the reporting threshold on conference spending to \$20,000 and included language with new requirements for conference spending. For conferences occurring April 15, 2013 and after, Agencies are required to notify their Inspector General of any conference exceeding \$20,000 *within 15 days* from the conclusion date of the conference for any conference taking place in FY 2013 and beyond.

B. Activities and Internal Controls Undertaken by the EPA

1. The EPA requires Assistant Administrator or Regional Administrator approval of all conference-related activities above \$20,000. The approval must be completed prior to obligating any funds for a conference-related activity requiring resources above \$20,000.

¹ "Conference expenses" are defined in OMB M-12-12 as "all direct and indirect conference costs paid by the Government, whether paid directly by agencies or reimbursed by agencies to travelers or others associated with the conference, but do not include funds paid under Federal grants to grantees. Conference expenses include any associated authorized travel and per diem expenses, hire of rooms for official business, audiovisual use, light refreshments, registration fees, ground transportation, and other expenses as defined by the [Federal Travel Regulations]. All outlays for conference preparation and planning should be included, but the Federal employee time for conference preparation should not be included. Conference expenses should be net of any fees or revenue received by the agency through the conference and should not include costs to ensure the safety of attending governmental officials."

² The EPA uses the same definition provided in OMB M-12-12: a "conference" is defined as "[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."

2. The EPA's Office of the Chief Financial Officer made a review of conference-related activities part of the annual A-123 review beginning in FY 2012. The FY 2013 review did not uncover any non-compliance with newly implemented approval processes.
3. The EPA requires Senior Resource Officials or their designee to report conferences for their organization with net expenses greater than \$20,000 to the OIG within 15 calendar days of the conference conclusion date. This information will include the: name of the conference, conference location, conference date(s), and number of agency employees that attended.
4. For conferences with net expenses greater than \$100,000, EPA organizations must track and report the methodology to determine which costs relate to a conference and provide a description of the contracting procedures used.
5. The EPA is utilizing video conferencing in lieu of in person meetings to conserve resources. If in person meetings are required, all EPA organizations are required to attest that no adequate federal space was available prior to obligating federal funds for meeting space.

C. Overall size and scope of conference spending throughout the year

During FY13, the EPA spent \$3,339,937 for 13 "conferences" above \$100,000. Below is a complete listing of conference-related activities above \$100,000.

D. "Conferences" above \$100,000

1. Sustainable Electronics Forum

- **Date:** 10/8/2012 – 10/12/2012
- **Location:** Racine, WI
- **Cost:** \$115,695.48
- **Total Attendees:** 33
- **Individuals traveling on agency funds:** 33 (6 EPA travelers, 27 non-EPA travelers)
- **How the conference advances the agency mission:** The Sustainable Electronics Forum serves to advance the mission of the agency by bringing together a collection of electronic industry leaders to determine the major challenges in addressing e-waste issues. The goal of the forum is to: 1) develop a shared vision of what truly sustainable electronics should look like, and provide clear end-goals for design standards development; 2) Promote integration of end-of-life considerations into front-end product designs; 3) Extend the useful life of electronic products, and assess the optimal amount of time to keep products in operations; and 4) Support the creation of environmental criteria for refurbished equipment.

2. 2012 ENERGY STAR Product Partners Meeting

- **Date:** 10/22/2012 – 10/24/2012
- **Location:** St. Paul, MN
- **Cost:** \$139,064.44
- **Total Attendees:** 601
- **Individuals traveling on agency funds:** 22 (15 EPA travelers, 7 non-EPA travelers)
- **How the conference advances the agency mission:** The ENERGY STAR program is a voluntary program to identify and promote energy-efficient products and buildings. The meeting directly advances EPA's mission to protect human health and the environment, through increased energy efficiency that reduces energy production and the associated greenhouse gas emissions. This program assists American consumers, businesses and organizations in energy efficient products

that transform products in the marketplace. This meeting gathers a collection of industry leaders to discuss ways to further reduce energy consumption, improve energy security, and reduce pollution through voluntary labeling of or other forms of communication about products and buildings that meet the highest energy efficiency standards.

3. 22nd Annual National Association of Remedial Project Managers Training Event

- **Date:** 11/26/2012 – 11/30/2012
- **Location:** Henderson, NV
- **Cost:** \$463,554.97
- **Total Attendees:** 374
- **Individuals traveling on agency funds:** 270 (220 EPA travelers, 50 non-EPA travelers)
- **How the conference advances the agency mission:** The NARPM serves as an essential vehicle for Regional Program Managers to receive training in a single venue. This training allows key skills for managing the agency's complex environmental cleanup issues. The training provides information on technologies, policies and issues surrounding cleanups to protect human health and the environment. The event also fulfills our statutory responsibility for technology transfer and training, and meets the certification requirements under the National Contingency Plan.

4. 2013 Joint Water Quality Standards (WQS) Meeting

- **Date:** 2/27/2013 – 3/1/2013
- **Location:** Washington, DC
- **Cost:** \$101,487.00
- **Total Attendees:** 104
- **Individuals traveling on agency funds:** 28 (18 EPA travelers, 10 non-EPA travelers)
- **How the conference advances the agency mission:** In order to meet EPA's mission to protect human health and the environment, EPA sponsors partnerships with states for all aspects of environmental protection including water quality. This meeting provides an opportunity for WQS managers at HQ, regions and the states to discuss mutual policy concerns. This meeting also serves to maintain effective partnerships between EPA and the states, and within EPA HQ and regional offices.

5. Global Methane Initiative

- **Date:** 3/12/2013 – 3/15/2013
- **Location:** Vancouver, Canada
- **Cost:** \$401,905.00
- **Total Attendees:** 451
- **Individuals traveling on agency funds:** 33 (10 EPA travelers, 23 non-EPA travelers)
- **How the conference advances the agency mission:** This conference meets EPA's mission to protect human health by working with other countries to decrease global warming caused by methane emissions. The Global Methane Initiative is a key element of the US Government's international climate change strategy to promote development and deployment of cost effective greenhouse gas emission reduction technologies. EPA is the lead agency. The Methane Expo brings together all partners and private sector stakeholders in a unique international forum and included participation from 34 countries.

6. 2013 Partner of the Year Awards Ceremony

- **Date:** 3/26/2013
- **Location:** Washington, DC
- **Cost:** \$118,686.08
- **Total Attendees:** 857
- **Individuals traveling on agency funds:** 1 (1 non-EPA traveler)
- **How the conference advances the agency mission:** This is a large showcase event for the ENERGY STAR program and its partners. This conference advances the mission of the EPA to protect the environment by encouraging innovation by honoring private industry partners who have gone above and beyond their commitment to protecting the environment through energy efficiency. Approximately 800 (out of more than 20K total) partners come together to network and learn from each other about more ways to improve energy efficiency, learn more about ENERGY STAR, and highlight the achievements of the past year. Held since 1993, the annual awards ceremony is a major highlight for many partners, who strive to increase their participation in the program year after year with the hope of receiving this recognition.

7. 2013 National Sustainable Design Expo and P3 Awards Ceremony

- **Date:** 4/18/2013 – 4/21/2013
- **Location:** Washington, D.C.
- **Cost:** \$374,911.00
- **Total Attendees:** Approximately 5,000 (public expo)
- **Individuals traveling on agency funds:** 10 (10 non-EPA travelers)
- **How the conference advances the agency mission:** EPA's People, Prosperity & the Planet (P3) Program is designed to develop the next generation of environmental scientists and engineers. The National Sustainable Design Expo is a public showcase of the designs of the P3 teams which have competitively received a P3 Phase 1 grant coupled with a public expo highlighting sustainable technologies and initiatives from the non-profit, public, and private sectors. The annual National Sustainable Design Expo promotes the agency's mission of developing a world-class science base in the United States for environmental and public health issues and is sponsored by the agency's Office of Research and Development and the National Center for Environmental Research.

8. National Brownfields Conference

- **Date:** 5/15/2013 – 5/17/2013
- **Location:** Atlanta, GA
- **Cost:** \$629,283.01
- **Total Attendees:** 2,652
- **Individuals traveling on agency funds:** 78 (76 EPA travelers, 2 non-EPA travelers)
- **How the conference advances the agency mission:** The National Brownfields Conference is the largest event in the nation that focuses on environmental revitalization and economic redevelopment. The purpose of this conference is to train communities, tribes, states and nonprofit organizations regarding brownfields assessment, cleanup and redevelopment. The Brownfields Program is designed to empower states, communities and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment; to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up and sustainably reuse brownfields properties. This conference advances the agency's priorities for job creation, economic development, local community engagement, and creating positive environmental outcomes.

9. LEAN Skills Development Program

- **Date:** 6/17/2013 – 6/20/2013
- **Location:** Arlington, VA
- **Cost:** \$111,115.86
- **Total Attendees:** 36
- **Individuals traveling on agency funds:** 36 (36 EPA travelers)
- **How the conference advances the agency mission:** The Office of Policy convened a national LEAN Skills Development Program for EPA employees as a part of EPA's ongoing efforts to foster organizational excellence. OP provided participants with the lean/business process improvement skills and coaching needed for EPA to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its programs and processes. The skills development sessions comprised of six phases including two 1-week in person training sessions. The remaining four phases were accomplished via remote/virtual means using the knowledgeable and materials of a contractor and available through EPA's eLearning Skillport website.

10. 2013 NPDES Permit Writers Conference

- **Date:** 7/22/2013 – 7/26/2013
- **Location:** Shepherdstown, WV
- **Cost:** \$116,884.50
- **Total Attendees:** 164
- **Individuals traveling on agency funds:** 58 (31 EPA travelers, 27 non-EPA travelers)
- **How the conference advances the agency mission:** The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits create the primary regulatory mechanism to reduce surface water pollution in the nation. This conference offers the only opportunity nationally for NPDES permit writers to be trained in more complex and advances topics of the NPDES program including stormwater, combined sewer overflows, and whole effluent toxicity, and emerging EPA policy on topics such as nutrient pollution.

11. 2013 Community Involvement Training Conference

- **Date:** 7/29/2013 – 8/1/2013
- **Location:** Boston, MA
- **Cost:** \$518,911.80
- **Total Attendees:** 374
- **Individuals traveling on agency funds:** 148 (148 EPA travelers)
- **How the conference advances the agency mission:** The Community Involvement Training is an agency-wide training conference that has been held annually from 1998-2007 and semi-annually since 2007. The CIT training is designed for managers, project staff, and our federal, tribal, state, and local government partners to come together to plan and implement environmental community involvement, partnership, outreach, and education programs. This conference provides a platform for all attendees to discuss successes, obstacles and lessons learned, as well as an opportunity to cultivate cross-program/cross-agency relationships.

12. National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC)

- **Date:** 9/11/2014 – 9/12/2014
- **Location:** Atlanta, GA
- **Cost:** \$138,768.00
- **Total Attendees:** 252
- **Individuals traveling on agency funds:** 64 (36 EPA travelers, 28 non-EPA travelers)

- ***How the conference advances the agency mission:*** In 1993, the EPA established the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council in order to obtain independent, consensus advice and recommendations from a broad spectrum of stakeholders involved in environmental justice. As a federal advisory committee, the NEJAC was chartered to provide the Administrator with advice and recommendations on integrating environmental justice considerations into the agency's programs, policies, and day-to-day activities. The NEJAC consists of representatives of community-based groups, business and industry, academic and educational institutions, state and local governments, tribal governments and indigenous organizations, and non-governmental and environmental groups. The council meets publicly approximately two times a year and provides a forum for discussions about integrating environmental justice into EPA priorities and initiatives.

The NEJAC public meeting was convened to receive comments, and discuss and provide recommendations regarding these primary areas: (1) implementation of EPA Plan EJ 2014; (2) the EPA's tribal program; (3) the EPA's science and research program; and (4) the EPA's guidance on public engagement in permitting. The NEJAC also provides an environment for all parties to express their viewpoints and to formulate independent, clear and timely consensus advice and recommendations to the EPA about major public policy issues.

13. 24th National Tanks Conference and Exposition

- ***Date:*** 9/15/2013 – 9/18/2013
- ***Location:*** Denver, CO
- ***Cost:*** \$109,651.41
- ***Total Attendees:*** 663
- ***Individuals traveling on agency funds:*** 70 (68 EPA travelers, 2 non-EPA travelers)
- ***How the conference advances the agency mission:*** The 24th National Tanks Conference and Exposition educates attendees on the best management practices and upcoming issues related to protecting the environment and human health from the dangers of releases from underground storage tanks. When underground storage tanks leak, there is a potential threat for groundwater contamination, which is the source of drinking water for nearly half of all Americans. This conference is the only national forum where state, tribal, and federal regulators, and industry partners can meet to share, discuss, and learn about the latest policy and information needed to help administer and manage UST programs and prevent potential UST leaks.