



Conferences (Hosted, Co-Hosted or Travel To)

Lawrence Berkeley
National Laboratory

Financial Policies and Procedures

Part I

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Summary

The purpose of this policy is to provide requirements and procedures for **DOE funded/** Laboratory-hosted or co-hosted conferences or when **traveling to** a conference on behalf of the Laboratory, where the total cost is expected to be **\$10,000 or greater**. This also applies to [DOE Management and Operating \(M&O\)](#) contractors for the Laboratory.

Scope

This policy pertains to all [events](#) that qualify as a Laboratory-hosted or co-hosted conference. The terms set forth in this policy are consistent with the [Department of Energy \(DOE\) Order 110.3A](#), DOE Contract 31, and the [DOE Acquisition Regulation Letter, No. AL-2005-12](#).

It is the responsibility of each Division to ensure the requirements in this policy have been met.

Policy

Laboratory-hosted/co-hosted conferences must be accomplished in a reasonable manner that minimizes expenditures while accomplishing program objectives.

A determination must be made for each Laboratory-hosted [event](#) (or "travel to" event funded all or in part by DOE) as to whether it qualifies as a conference or meeting. Several prerequisites must be met as outlined in the Event Questionnaire in the [Event Approval Database](#).

If the event does not meet established conference prerequisites, it will be considered a meeting. [Laboratory-Hosted Meetings](#) involve different prerequisites and processes.

Events **solely funded** by [Work for Others \(WFO\)](#) do not qualify as conferences. **"Travel to" conferences solely funded by WFO are not** required to be entered in the [Event Approval Database](#) (see [Traveling to a Conference](#)).

Traveling to a Conference

DOE requires the Laboratory to track employees traveling to the same "qualified" conference funded all or in part by DOE, for which the total Laboratory-wide DOE cost is \$10,000 or greater (**overhead costs do not apply**). Only "travel to" events that qualify as a **conference** using the Event Questionnaire in the [Event Approval Database](#) are to be tracked in the Event Approval Database. **Traveling to a conference solely funded by WFO is excluded from this requirement.**

Employees planning to travel to a "qualified" conference funded all or in part by DOE must complete the "Travel to" conference information in the [Event Approval Database](#) at least **45 days prior** to the conference.

Note: Open **conference** requests are closed and locked in the [Event Approval Database](#) on the **45th calendar day** prior to the start of the conference.

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Costs for traveling to a conference will be reimbursed in accordance with the Laboratory's [Travel Policy](#).

Conference Hosts/Co-Hosts

A conference host is defined as having control over the conduct or management of the conference (e.g., sufficient to influence costs, venue, program content, or similar aspects). A conference co-host exists if more than one organization shares control of the conduct or management of the conference, or provides some form of non-monetary services (see [Conference Planning Support](#)).

The following additional guidelines apply if the Laboratory participates as a conference co-host:

- The Laboratory can be identified as an official host, but it may not be featured prominently (more notably) than other co-hosts in any conference literature
- Conference Services is responsible for approving any co-hosted contractual conference agreements

Conference Planning Support

Administrative conference planning support should be allocated as follows:

- Part of the employee's normal job function: Charge Division
- Outside of employee's normal job function: Charge Conference project

Approval of Conferences

All Laboratory-hosted/co-hosted conferences must be completed in the [Event Approval Database](#) at least **45 days prior** to the conference, or they may **not be approved** by **Conference Services**.

For conference expenditures of \$10,000 or greater (**overhead costs do not apply**), the following approvals are required:

- Division Director (or designee)
- Conference Services
- Laboratory Director, Deputy Director, Associate Laboratory Director, or Laboratory Director's Chief of Staff
- [DOE Contracting Officer](#) (or designee)

As noted above, open **conference** requests are closed and locked in the [Event Approval Database](#) on the **45th calendar day** prior to the start of the conference.

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Third Party Contractual Agreements

Third party contractual agreements (e.g., hotel, food services, equipment rental, or transportation) held on behalf of the Laboratory for conference arrangements must be approved by Conferences Services.

Any third party contract not approved by Conference Services may be considered an unauthorized procurement, subject to personal financial liability and administrative discipline.

Site Selection

The hosting Division should select a site that minimizes costs. The use of government-provided facilities is preferred. Resort or recreational sites should be avoided, unless a true cost savings will result.

The hosting Division must perform a cost comparison of **at least three** prospective locations, unless there is a specific advantage to the Government, which must be documented in writing. A justification/impact statement must also be provided as to why the selected site provides the best overall value or is necessary in order to achieve the conference objective.

Allowable/Unallowable Conference Costs

- A checklist of **allowable/unallowable** conference costs is available on the Conference Services website (see [Checklists: Allowable/ Unallowable Budget Expense List](#)).
- Private funds, [sponsorships](#) and exhibitor fees may be used for **unallowable** conference costs.
- Laboratory funds and registration fees can only be used for **allowable** costs (see [DOE FAR 31.201-2](#), *Determining Allowability*).

Food Service

For food and beverage service provided during a conference, all of the following requirements must be met (see [Food and Beverage](#) policy):

- External participants (non-Laboratory employees) are present (at least 20% is required).
- Food service is [incidental](#) to the conference.
- Attendance during meals and when refreshments are served is important for the attendee's full participation in the conference.
- Event-related work precedes any food service provided, and the food service is provided during a working session.

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- A detailed agenda is provided (including events with food and an attendee list with guest affiliations).
- Food service for the conference has been approved **in advance** by Conference Services.

Funding Sources

Laboratory-hosted or co-hosted conferences may be funded from a number of internal and external sources including registration fees, sponsorships, exhibitor fees, and Laboratory funding. All funds and revenue used to support conferences must be deposited into the appropriate Laboratory project(s) established by the Controller's Office.

Registration Fees

Registration fees for attendees may **only** be used for **allowable** expenses.

The hosting Division determines the appropriate registration fee to be charged. The registration fee should be set at an amount that generates sufficient revenue to cover the specified items to be financed through registration fees, but not an amount that would lead to excess revenue.

The collection of registration fees is handled through an online registration tool, which is managed by Conference Services. All registration fees collected are deposited into the **allowable** BZ project established for each conference.

Fees collected for optional **unallowable** activities (e.g., entertainment, excursions) will be deposited into the **unallowable** BZ project.

The hosting Division may, at their discretion, waive or reduce registration fees for speakers, invited guests, students or others.

Exhibitor Fees

An exhibitor participates in the conference to display products and services that relate to the purpose of the conference. Exhibitor fees collected can be used for **allowable** or **unallowable** expenses. The allocation of **allowable** or **unallowable** funds from exhibitor fees is determined by the Division and is included in the conference budget. Exhibitor fees are not considered registration fees.

Sponsorships

Sponsorships are voluntary contributions made by outside organizations to support the conference (i.e., a benefactor). Funds received from sponsorships can be used for **allowable** or **unallowable** conference costs. The allocation of allowable or unallowable funds from sponsorships is determined by the Division and is included in the conference budget.

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Reimbursement for Speakers and Invited Guests

Travel costs for speakers and invited guests should be charged to the appropriate conference project.

Project Set-up Requirements

In order to segregate conference costs from other program costs, the requesting Division must open a **separate** project for each conference. This will serve as the parent project for the allowable [BZ project](#) and **cannot** be a summary or WFO project. Any programmatic costs associated with the conference should be charged to this project for costs not covered by revenue collected in the [BZ project](#).

Segregating conference costs provides several benefits:

- Increases conference cost visibility/transparency.
- Facilitates external reporting requirements for the DOE Conference Management System (CMS), which is used by **Conference Services** only.
- Assists the close out of surplus allowable BZ project revenue and costs and surplus non-DOE BZ revenue.

Availability of Conference Funds

- Invoices submitted for payment from the **unallowable** BZ project will **NOT** be paid if there are insufficient funds.
- Costs that exceed funds in the **allowable** BZ project will be re-allocated to the Division conference parent project at closeout.

Surplus Conference Revenue

DOE Funds

Any surplus conference revenue collected from DOE as a host, co-host or sponsor are subject to the Miscellaneous Receipts Act (U.S. Code 3302) and must be deposited with the U.S. Treasury as soon as possible.

Non-DOE Funds

Any surplus conference revenue collected from or provided by Laboratory co-hosts or sponsors *other than DOE or DOE contractors* are not subject to the Miscellaneous Receipts Act and, therefore, do not need to be returned to the U.S. Treasury.

It is expected that any surplus conference funds are to be maintained at a minimum. The following options apply to the disposition of surplus funds for both **allowable** and **unallowable** conference-related expenditures. The disposition of surplus conference funds is the responsibility of the Conference Chairperson.

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- **Allowable** surplus funds can be used to offset conference-related costs that are clearly identifiable in the Division conference **parent project**.
- **Unallowable** surplus funds can be used to offset conference-related costs in the **allowable** BZ project.
- Can be refunded to the attendees (if surplus funds are material).
- Can be returned to the sponsor.
- Can be used for future occurrences of the same conference.
- Immaterial surplus amounts can be retained in an institutional BZ project to use for conferences as necessary; e.g., to offset other conference costs.

Payment of Conference Expenses

Conference-related invoices and receipts must be reviewed and approved by the Division and conference Services. The hosting Division should ensure that all **allowable** and **unallowable** expenses are separated and identified on the final invoices/receipts prior to submitting for payment. Payment is made via the following Request for Issuance of Check (RFIC) forms:

- [Request for Issuance of Check](#)
- [Request for Issuance of Check \(payment with a BZ Project\)](#)

Conference Management System (CMS)

The CMS is the **DOE** central database used for planning purposes to compile data, generate reports, and view proposed and approved conferences that **exceed the \$10,000 threshold**. Following approval by DOE, preliminary conference information is entered into the CMS by Conference Services. Upon final closeout of each conference, updated information such as the final number of attendees, costs and other relevant information is updated in the CMS by **Conference Services** and reviewed by the Laboratory's DOE Contracting Officer.

Records Retention and Maintenance

Conference Services maintains conference records in accordance with applicable DOE and Laboratory retention policies. The retention of conference records ranges from three years to permanent, depending upon the significance of the conference, the conference host or sponsor, and the relationship between the Laboratory and the host or sponsor. See [DOE Administrative Schedule 16, Administrative Management Records, Item 8 \(d\)](#).

The following reflects specific records to be maintained by the responsible organization for each conference:

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Conference Services

- Approved forms and documents from the Laboratory's Event Approval Database.
- Copies of invoices paid by Conference Services for **allowable** and **unallowable** conference costs.
- Documentation of all refunds requested by the hosting Division and processed by Conference Services.
- Copies of **allowable** and/or **unallowable** payments made by third parties for costs contracted by the Laboratory.

Controller's Office (General Accounting)

- Documentation of closing project reconciliation.

Hosting Division

- Copies of paid invoices for both **allowable** and **unallowable** conference costs.
- Approved paper copy of the Laboratory-Hosted Conference Approval Request (from the Event Approval Database).
- Copies of contractual agreements approved by Conference Services.

Roles and Responsibilities

Hosting Division

- Plans, organizes, and initiates conference arrangements.
- Sets up a separate project for each conference which serves as the parent project for the allowable [BZ project](#) which **is not** a summary or Work-for Others (WFO) project.
- Completes the applicable entries, forms and documents in the Laboratory's [Event Approval Database](#), which includes funding and budget information, for approval by Conference Services.
- Develops and maintains the conference budget and appropriate financial records.
- Whenever possible, minimizes the number and cost of exhibits/booths by using corporate-type exhibits/booths that can be shared by DOE and DOE contractor organizations.
- Provides a dedicated Division project in which to charge costs associated with the conference.

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- Identifies allocation of **allowable** and **unallowable** costs and income from exhibitors and/or sponsors in conference budget.
- Upon completion of the conference, reviews and verifies conference revenues and expenditures within 120 days after completion of the conference.
- Ensures that all **allowable** and **unallowable** expenses are tracked, separated and identified on the final invoices and receipts prior to submitting to Conference Services for payment.

Division Director or Designee

- Approves all Laboratory-hosted, co-hosted, and travel to conferences.

Conference Services

- Administers and maintains the Conference policy and procedures. Provides guidance and training when necessary.
- Reviews, approves and manages all Laboratory event information entered into the [Event Approval Database](#) to ensure timeliness and compliance with Laboratory policy, DOE Contract 31, and DOE Order 110.3A, Conference Management.
- Reviews, negotiates, and approves third party contractual agreements for conference arrangements such as hotel contracts, audio/visual services, chartered transportation services, etc.
- Reconciles registration payments to ensure all applicable fees have been paid and all payment information is captured.
- Provides General Accounting with the registration payment list.
- Reviews invoices and receipts to ensure allowable and unallowable costs are separated appropriately.
- Manages the event registration database.
- Manages the conference approval process.
- Enters preliminary and final conference information into the DOE CMS database for conferences that exceed \$10,000 (overhead costs do not apply).

Laboratory Director or Designee

- Approves all Laboratory-hosted, co-hosted and travel to conferences for which total expenditures are \$10,000 or greater (overhead costs do not apply).

Note: The designee for the Laboratory Director is the Deputy Director, Associate Laboratory Director, or Laboratory Director's Chief of Staff.

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Contracting Officer (DOE Berkeley Site Office)

- Approves all Laboratory hosted, co-hosted and travel to conferences for which expenditures are \$10,000 or greater (overhead costs do not apply).
- Reviews conference data entered in the DOE CMS database.

Controller's Office (General Accounting)

- Deposits registration fees and/or sponsorship funding and records revenue in the Laboratory's Financial Management System (FMS).
- Upon approval from Conference Services.
 - Opens **unallowable** BZ project for the conference.
 - Sets up an **allowable** BZ project and requests it be opened by the Budget Office.
 - Issues payment for conference expenses approved by Conference Services.
 - Closes and reconciles conference project(s).
- Provides general guidance on conference accounting.
- Prepares final resource adjustments to zero out the BZ projects at closeout.

Budget Office

- Opens the **allowable** BZ project for the conference.

Authority

- [Department of Energy \(DOE\) Order 110.3A](#)
- [DOE Acquisition Regulation Letter, No. AL-2005-12](#)
- [DOE Administrative Schedule 16, Administrative Management Records, Item 8 \(d\).](#)
- DOE Contract 31

Contacts

- [Conference Services hotline](#)
- Manager, Operations

Glossary

- **BZ Project:** Allowable and/or unallowable project established for each Laboratory-hosted/co-hosted conference. The BZ project is used to collect registration fees and other external funds and to pay invoices for conference costs. Overhead costs (i.e., burdens or taxes) within a BZ project are applied to travel, procurement and conference/meeting expenses costs.
- **Co-Host:** An organization that shares conference hosting responsibilities with another (see Host).
- **Conference Management System (CMS):** The DOE central database used to compile data, generate reports, and view proposed and approved conferences \$10,000 or greater (overhead costs do not apply). Conference Services is responsible for entering conference data into the CMS.
- **DOE Contracting Officer:** The Laboratory's DOE Contracting Officer is located at the Berkeley DOE Site Office.
- **Event:** Any formal activity that involves the dissemination or exchange of trade, business, professional or technical information with employees or peers.
- **Exhibitor:** An individual or organization that participates in the conference to display their products and services relative to the purpose of the conference.
- **Host:** An organization that has control over the conduct or management of the conference (e.g., sufficient to influence costs, venue, program content, or similar aspects).
- **Incidental:** Minor or subordinate in significance or nature; i.e., secondary.
- **Laboratory-Hosted Meeting:** An event or activity conducted at Laboratory expense, during which Laboratory employees, supplemental labor employees, and/or visitors hold work-related discussions, exchange or disseminate technical information, or conduct structured training.
- **Management and Operating (M&O) Contractor:** The third party management of a DOE facility. DOE competitively awards M&O contracts to manage and operate DOE facilities. These M&O contractors are finally integrated with DOE and operate under strict DOE controls and guidelines.

Official Travel: Travel necessary to accomplish official business on behalf of the Laboratory. Official travel is properly authorized, processed, conducted, reported and reimbursed in accordance with this policy (see [Travel and Expense](#) policy).
- **Sponsor:** An organization outside the Laboratory that makes a voluntary contribution to support the conference (i.e., a benefactor).
- **Work for Others (WFO):** Work for non-DOE entities performed by DOE/contractor personnel (LBNL).