

Additional Guidelines for Acceptance of “in-kind” Travel
Funds from Non-Federal Sources
August 2007

- A. Review USDA Ethics Issuance 99-2, Acceptance of Travel Funds from Non-Federal Sources. <http://www.usda-ethics.net/rules/index.htm>
- B. On line training module:
http://www.usda-ethics.net/training/module_07/index.htm

Authority – Title 31 U.S.C. 1353 grants ARS authority to accept travel assistance to events held away from a Federal employee’s official duty station. The authority to accept travel expenses from non-Federal sources permits ARS to accept the gift of financial support for the travel of its employees to attend meetings or similar functions that they have been authorized to attend in an official capacity. The authority to accept outside funding must be prudently applied in order to protect the integrity and appearance of ARS programs.

Meeting or Similar Function – defined as a conference, seminar, speaking engagement, symposium, training course or similar off-site event. Travel to conduct the ARS statutory or regulatory functions essential to carrying out an agency mission (e.g. investigations, inspections, audits, site visits, negotiations, litigation) is excluded from the definition of meeting or similar function. Also excluded are promotional vendor training, travel related to training, long term TDY, or other meetings held for the primary purpose of marketing non-Federal sources’ products.

Underlying Principle – if an employee’s participation at a “meeting or similar function” warrants the expenditure of official time, perhaps it should also warrant the expenditure of official travel funds.

General Guidance:

- a) The offer of payment of non-Federal travel assistance must not be solicited.
- b) Obtain approval to use non-Federal funds before the fact.
- c) Travel for which specific provisions are made within Cooperative Agreements should not be accepted under the authority listed above.
- d) Travel funds associated with Fellowships should be included in a formal agreement and not accepted under the authority listed above.
- e) Travel funds offered by a sponsoring organization (e.g. professional societies) if the employee serves as an officer in the organization should not be accepted.
- f) Travel funds offered by an outside entity to discuss possible future collaborations (negotiations), i.e. agreements, should not be accepted under the authority listed above.
- g) Travel funds should not be accepted if a determination is made that acceptance would cause the public, with knowledge of all the facts, to question the integrity of USDA-ARS programs or operations.
- h) Travel funds provided by another Federal agency or Department are excluded from these requirements.