

National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
Headquarters  
Washington, DC 20546-0001



APR 27 2009

Reply to Attn of: Science Mission Directorate

TO: Science Mission Directorate Division Directors  
NASA Center Directors

FROM: Associate Administrator for Science Mission Directorate

SUBJECT: Revision of Science Mission Directorate (SMD) Priorities for Conference Spending

Since the issuance of my November 13, 2008, memorandum entitled "Science Mission Directorate Priorities for Conference Spending" and my February 26, 2009, memorandum entitled "Restatement of SMD Priorities for Conference Spending," the NASA Interim Directive (NID) 9312.2, a revision of Requirements Relating to Conference Attendance, Obligations, and Expenditures, was issued.

The Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009 clarified the conference spending restrictions to provide that certain categories of conferences are excluded from the \$5 million cap on fiscal year (FY) 2009 conference spending. The conferences that are excluded from the cap include (1) scientific or technical conferences and (2) education conferences at which NASA science, technology, engineering and mathematics content is disseminated.

NID 9312.2, effective April 9, 2009, establishes revised requirements in view of this clarification. However, all conferences, including scientific/technical conferences, continue to be subject to the annual and quarterly reporting requirements detailed in the NID; one of the key requirements in this regard is the continued use of the correct conference identifier from the NASA Conference Tracking System (NCTS) when preparing travel, p-card, and purchase requests involving a conference charge.

In order to align SMD policies with NID 9312.2, my February 26, 2009, memorandum is cancelled and reissued as follows:

SMD Priorities for Conference Spending

The great majority of SMD's conference spending is for scientific/technical conferences (including qualifying educational conferences).

- SMD recognizes that its technical staff – scientists and engineers – throughout the Agency must maintain their professional currency and stature in order to successfully carry out NASA’s Mission and contribute to advancing NASA’s strategic objectives in science and exploration. Therefore, SMD’s highest priority for conference spending is to permit NASA technical staff members (scientists, engineers, etc.) working on SMD programs and projects to attend science or technical conferences.
- SMD has adopted guidelines for conference sponsorship and conference exhibiting to ensure that SMD supported conferences, in addition to advancing SMD’s goals and objectives, do not appear to be improper, inappropriate, or wasteful. These guidelines are provided in the following section.

SMD has been provided with a small amount (\$175K for FY 2009) of conference spending authority for spending on administrative (non-scientific, non-technical, and non-qualifying educational) conferences. For administrative conferences for which spending is subject to the Agency cap on conference spending, the SMD policies are as follows:

- Administrative conference spending authority reserved for SMD staff at NASA Headquarters (HQ) will be used to send some staff members to a conference in FY 2009.
- In order to assure that SMD does not exceed its administrative conference spending allocation, all administrative conference spending in SMD will be approved by Ruth Netting, Strategic Integration and Management Division (202 358-0539; [ruth.a.netting@nasa.gov](mailto:ruth.a.netting@nasa.gov)).
- HQ/SMD will not sponsor any administrative conferences with its FY 2009 administrative conference spending authority.
- HQ/SMD will not use its FY 2009 administrative conference spending authority to sponsor exhibits at administrative conferences.

The Centers have been provided with administrative conference spending authority that is separate from the SMD administrative conference spending authority.

#### Guidelines for SMD Conference Sponsorship

NASA has a responsibility to expend appropriated funds in a manner which is efficient, effective, and appropriate. NASA must also be sensitive to any appearance that funds are not being expended appropriately.

To be clear, NASA must avoid the appearance that public funds are being expended on conferences that appear to be more play and less work. NASA provides funding for conferences through sponsorship, exhibits, and support of attendees.

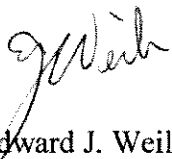
Therefore, all SMD-sponsored conferences must meet the following guidelines:

- The purpose of the conference has a clear relationship with advancing NASA's science goals and objectives.
- The logistics of the conference are – and appear to be – appropriate for accomplishing the conference purpose. This includes the size, location, duration, scheduling, and cost of the conference for both sponsors and attendees.
- The size of NASA's sponsorship, whether a small grant to subsidize student participation or full sponsorship of a large conference, must be commensurate with (a) the role of NASA in stewarding the subject science and the benefiting science community and (b) the importance of the conference to NASA in attaining its goals and objectives.

Decisions to sponsor exhibits at conferences should be made with the same guidelines in mind.

The enclosure to this memorandum describes changes in practice for SMD conference travelers, sponsors, and exhibitors.

Questions regarding SMD's priorities for conference spending may be addressed to Paul Hertz, Chief Scientist (202-358-0986; paul.hertz@nasa.gov). Questions regarding SMD's management of conference spending authority may be addressed to Kate Wolf, Resource Management Division (202-358-3995; katherine.m.wolf@nasa.gov).



Edward J. Weiler

cc:

Ames Research Center/Michael Bicay  
Goddard Space Flight Center/Nicholas White  
Glenn Research Center/Jih-Fen Lei  
Jet Propulsion Laboratory/Daniel McCleese  
Johnson Space Center/Eileen Stansbery  
Langley Research Center/Lelia Vann  
Marshall Space Flight Center/Melissa McGrath

Enclosure: Revision to SMD practices for conference spending

NID 9312.2 describes NASA's requirements relating to conference attendance, obligations and expenditures. The December 17, 2008, memorandum from Roy Maizel entitled "Conference Travel for Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPAs) and Detailees in SMD" provided implementation rules for SMD.

In order to implement the changes in NID 9312.2, the following practices are now in place for SMD.

1. All conferences upon which NASA funds will be expended, including scientific/technical conferences, must still be registered in the NASA Conference Tracking System (NCTS).
2. All conference spending, including scientific/technical conferences, must still be tracked and reported to Congress. Therefore the correct conference identifier from NCTS must continue to be used just as before when preparing travel orders, p-card orders, and purchase requests involving a conference charge. This includes sponsorship and exhibits as well as travel.
3. In order to enable tracking of conference spending for IPA and detailee travelers, all IPA and detailee travelers must travel on NASA travel orders when traveling to a conference. IPAs will continue to travel on HQ/SMD travel orders. Detailees may travel on HQ/SMD or Center travel orders as long as the appropriate conference identifier is entered on the travel orders.
4. Spending on scientific/technical conferences (including travel, sponsorship, exhibits, etc.) may be from any appropriate work breakdown structure (WBS.)
5. Spending on administrative conferences must be from the SMD Administrative Conference project WBS (Project 385560).
6. Instructions on what WBS to use for spending by contractors who are directed to attend or support conferences (either scientific/technical or administrative) is to be determined.