

# ARS □ CSREES □ ERS □ NASS

## *Policies and Procedures*

**Title:** Professional Activities Funds for the Support of Scientific Meetings

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**Date:** December 7, 2016

**Originating Office:** Office of the Administrator

**This Replaces:** 350.10 dated 9/1/93

**Distribution:** Headquarters, Areas, and Locations

This policy and procedure provides guidance for approving funds to ARS scientists in support of domestic and international scientific meetings.

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## 1. Reference

For information on per diem allowances, see DIRECTIVE 342.1.

## 2. Definitions

**Professional Activities Fund.** The account name for the support of scientific meetings.

**Scientific Meeting.** A symposium, seminar, conference, or any other organized gathering where persons assemble for a common purpose, exchange information and views, and explore, clarify and discuss a defined subject, problem, or area of knowledge. A published report may or may not result from such meeting.

**Non-Federal Organizations.** Any organization, association, society, corporation, or governmental unit other than the Federal Government.

**Liaison Scientist.** An ARS scientist who serves as liaison between the organizer of the meeting and ARS scientific personnel. One who monitors the proposed activity from a technical point of view from the initial request for funds through the approval stage to the actual completion of the activity.

## 3. Authorities

- 7 U.S.C. 3318

## 4. Policy

It is ARS policy:

- To support mission oriented scientific meetings sponsored by organizations having prominence in the scientific community. The scientific meetings must be designed to coordinate, exchange, and disseminate information that will contribute to accomplishing objectives within the ARS mission.
- To cooperate with other scientific Non-Federal Organizations in providing financial support for appropriate scientific meeting expenses, where practicable, rather than provide the sole support.
- To receive and review the proposals for scientific meeting support submitted by a Liaison Scientist for consideration of funding.
- To transfer funds from appropriated dollars to the ARS Liaison Scientist's approved ARS research project plan who will take the lead in administering financial support to the selected scientific meeting.

## 5. Responsibilities

- **Assistant Administrator (AA)**, Office of Technology Transfer, will manage the Professional Activities Account and will ensure that its funds are used to support scientific meetings in accordance with the ARS mission and policies.
- **Office of National Program's (ONP) National Program Leader (NPL) and Deputy Administrator (DA)** will ensure that its funds are used to support scientific meetings in accordance with the ARS mission and policies. The ONP Program Analyst transfers funds to the liaison scientist's ARS in-house research project.
- **Research Leader (RL), Center Director (CD), and Area Director (AD)** will ensure that Area resources are used to support scientific meetings within his/her jurisdiction in accordance with the ARS mission.
- **Research Leader**, as the fund holder for the funds that are transferred to the Liaison Scientist's approved research project will ensure that policies on the administration of funds are followed.
- **Liaison Scientist** will follow ethics policies and apply the policies governing the administration of the Professional Activities Funds for the support of an approved scientific meeting.

## 6. Criteria and Cost Guidelines for Approving a Funding Request

**Purpose and Benefits of Supporting Scientific Meetings.**

The purpose(s) of the scientific meetings should coincide with priorities and mission of ARS. They should contribute directly or indirectly to the accomplishment of high-priority research projects. The anticipated benefits of supporting the meetings should be identified and evaluated based on the goals of the Liaison Scientist's approved research plan.

### **Relationship with Non-Federal Organizations.**

The ARS Strategic Plan calls for close coordination with other scientific organizations. The criteria used to work with a non-federal organization must be based on scientific excellence and ARS' past experience with that organization, if any.

### **Participation of ARS Liaison Scientists.**

Consider the following when determining ARS support:

- The participation of ARS scientists in a meeting that assures direct access to information exchange for potential benefit to ARS research;
- The number of ARS participants who will attend and their related roles in the meeting (i.e., planning, organizing, chairing sessions, presenting a paper, etc.)

### **Cost Guidelines.**

Funds approved to support scientific meetings must adhere to the cost guidelines contained in the "ARS Instructions and Cost Guidelines" (see Exhibit 1). Any other cost items not listed in the proposal must be approved prior to awarding of the funds.

### **Funding Level.**

ARS support for a scientific meeting shall not exceed \$5,000.

## **7. Procedure**

### **Liaison Scientist**

- A copy of the "Instructions and Cost Guidelines" (Exhibit 1) and "Budget Proposal for Support of Scientific Meetings" (Exhibit 2) can be obtained on Axon website under OTT (<https://axon.ars.usda.gov/OTT/Pages/Home.aspx>).
- Prepare Budget Proposal for Support of Scientific Meetings and obtain written approval from RL, CD, and AD.
- Send fully signed Budget Proposal for Support of Scientific Meetings to OTT.
- Upon notification of approval, work with either: 1) Financial Management and Agreements Division (FMAD) or the Business Service Center to award a grant to the Non-Federal Organization; or 2) to the Business Service Center to cover expenses by credit card or purchase order.

**OTT**

- In accordance with the goals of the ARS Strategic Plan and the potential benefits that will be derived from supporting the scientific meeting, OTT will receive, evaluate, and approve requests of national interest.
- Consult ONP-DA and AD as needed on all scientific meeting requests and make a decision to approve or disapprove requests according to the stated criteria.
- Consult FMAD to determine availability of funds, the funding level for approved meetings, and the accounting code(s) chargeable.
- Send the OTT-approved request to AA-Research Operations for final approval.
- Once approved:
  - a) Notify the Liaison Scientist and RL.
  - b) Notify ONP to transfer funds in ARIS to the Liaison Scientist's ARS in-house project and notify AD.

**FMAD**

- Advise OTT on the availability of funds to support the meeting.

**ONP**

- Transfer funds to the liaison scientist's ARS in-house research project.

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MOJDEH BAHAR  
Assistant Administrator Office of Technology Transfer

Date

**Exhibits**

1. Instructions and Cost Guidelines For Liaison Scientists Requesting Funds from ARS to Support Scientific Meetings
2. Budget Proposal for Support of Scientific Meetings

**EXHIBIT 1**  
**INSTRUCTIONS AND COST GUIDELINES**  
**For Liaison Scientists Requesting Funds from ARS to Support Scientific Meetings**

**A. ADVANCE NOTICE**

Liaison Scientist must inquire at least 3 months before the proposed scientific meeting date concerning ARS' interest in providing support for the meeting. If the Liaison Scientist will be transferring funds through a grant, then 6 month advance notice is required.

**B. REQUIRED INFORMATION**

The request must describe pertinent information about the conference, symposium, workshop, etc., including its purpose, proposed agenda, and a completed budget proposal in the format shown in Exhibit 2.

**C. COST GUIDELINES**

NOTE: Funds may not be used to cover any payment to a full-time Federal employee, including salary, travel, and registration fees. Funds may not be used for registration fees, entertainment (i.e., banquets, luncheons, coffee breaks, theater, or entertainment of any sort), and gratuity-awards (i.e., payment given to confer distinction or symbolize respect, esteem, or admiration for an individual, including speaking honoraria).

If a Grant is required to pay expenses to support the scientific meeting, then one needs to determine the indirect cost reimbursement for the grants:

1. The recipient is not required to request indirect cost reimbursement.
2. The highest percentage of indirect costs that could be paid to a recipient under a Grant agreement would be 22% of the total award. However, the recipient must have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement. If they don't have an indirect cost rate agreement, and they desire reimbursement for indirect costs, the Grant Management Specialist would work with the recipient and help them obtain an indirect cost rate agreement, or offer them a *de minimis* rate agreement of 10%, if they are eligible.

The expenditures must adhere to the following allowable costs:

1. **Salaries.** Funds may be used to pay salaries (in whole or in part) of non-professional personnel (i.e., clerical assistants, editorial assistants, and other staff for their time or effort spent directly on the meeting). The salary levels must be consistent with those the non-Federal organization would pay when using its own funds.
2. **Travel and Personal Expenses.** Allowances for airfare may not exceed economy class fares. Per diem or subsistence allowance will be limited to the days of attendance at the meeting plus the actual travel time to and from the conference location by the most direct route available. In all cases, United States flag carriers will be used when available.

When meals and/or lodging are furnished without charge or at a nominal cost (i.e., as part of the registration fee), an appropriate deduction must be made from the authorized per diem (see P&P 342.1).

Funds may not be used for visas, passport charges, entertainment, tips, alcoholic beverages or bar charges, personal telephone calls, or laundry charges of participants or guests.

Funds may not be used to pay per diem or subsistence travel expenses for local participants in the conference. Local mileage expenses of such participants is allowable.

3. **Supplies.** Funds may be used to purchase supplies for the meeting, provided the supplies are received for use during the scientific meeting period.
4. **Conference Services.** Funds may be used for necessary recording of the proceedings, such as simultaneous translation, subsequent transcriptions, and rental of conference rooms.
5. **Publications Cost.** For electronic and print media, including distribution, promotion, and general handling, funds may be used to cover the cost of publishing the proceedings of the scientific meeting and special papers presented. When funds are awarded to pay for the entire or partial cost of publishing proceedings, a book, or a pamphlet, this cost can include special plates, charts, diagrams, printing, distributing, mailing, postage, and general handling, unless otherwise specified and approved at the time the funds are awarded. Page charges for professional journal publications are allowable where: (1) The publications report work supported by the Federal government; and (2) the charges are levied impartially on all items published by the journal, whether or not under a Federal award.

Policy and Procedure 152.1, Procedures for Publishing in Non-USDA Media (Outside Publishing), must be followed for published work products generated from ARS-supported scientific meetings.

6. Funds may be used for rental of necessary equipment, but not for the purchase of equipment.

The budget proposed for the meeting must be prepared with itemize costs under the main budget categories according to the sample format in Exhibit 2.

## **E. PUBLICATION AND COPYRIGHT**

The following guidelines must be used when the recipient organization wishes to publish material and arrange for copyright of any publication resulting from funds awarded by ARS to support a meeting.

1. Published material may be distributed free of charge. If the organization wishes to charge for the material, a special agreement on the distribution of the material should be negotiated in advance with ARS.
2. If electronic publications are not available, three copies of any publication resulting from a meeting should be sent to Liaison Scientist.
3. Acknowledgment of ARS' support must be given on the program of the meeting and on any publication resulting from the meeting.
4. Title 17 U.S.C. § 105 states that copyright protection is not available in the United States for any work of the United States Government. Because Author's contribution was done as part of the Author's official duties as an ARS employee, it is a work of the United States Government. The

fact that the private publication in which the article appears is itself copyrighted does not affect the material of the U.S. Government, which can be freely reproduced by the public. If Publisher intends to disseminate the work in foreign countries, Publisher may secure copyright to the extent authorized under the domestic laws of those foreign countries, subject to a paid-up, nonexclusive, irrevocable worldwide license to the United States in such copyrighted work to reproduce, prepare derivative works, distribute copies to the public and perform publicly and display publicly the work, and to permit others to do so. Publisher will not pay royalty income for work done by Federal employees as part of their official duties.

**EXHIBIT 2  
BUDGET PROPOSAL FOR SUPPORT OF SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS**

**Information for nonrecurring meeting/conference/workshop**

Title of meeting/conference/workshop:

Meeting Dates:

Purpose of funding request (*How does this benefit ARS*):

Dollar amount requested: *\$0.00*

What specifically are funds being used for, excluding travel expenses (*i.e. publications costs, rental of meeting space, audio/visual expenses, etc.*):

**The following information should be included along with this form**

- Original Funding Request     Agenda/Tentative Agenda/Background Materials  
 Budget – Actual breakdown of how funds will be expended

**ARS point of contact (proposed authorized departmental officer designated representative (ADODR), i.e. scientist or NPL, not DA)**

Name:

Phone:

Address:

Fax:

Address:

E-mail:

City:

State:

Zip:

**Non-ARS point of contact (if funds are for outside agency/organization, include point of contact)**

Name:

Phone:

Address:

Fax:

Address:

E-mail:

(Sample Format)  
**PROPOSED BUDGET FOR SCIENTIFIC MEETING**

Scientific Meeting Title:

Cost Category	Requested Funds	Funds Contributed from other sources
*PERSONNEL - Salaries prorated		
TRAVEL - Domestic; Foreign (1) Staff, speakers, participants (2) Housing and subsistence expenses; per diem allowance or actual charges for staff and participants (specify number of persons and days allowed)		
PUBLICATION COSTS - Printing or publication, distribution, and mailing.		
SUPPLIES - Stationery, mailing, telegraph, postage, etc.		
OTHER EXPENSES - (1) Printing programs, notices, badges, signs, etc. (2) Registration fees (excluding dues) (3) Rental of conference rooms, office and accessory space for staff, during the scientific meeting (4) Recording services, stenography, tape, photography, etc. (5) Editorial service and translations, including simultaneous translations (6) rental of projection equipment, PA system, exhibit structures		

\* Estimate the percent of direct time, effort, or hours per week for non-professional personnel; estimate hours per week for nonprofessional personnel.

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[Name], Research Leader

Date

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[Name], Center Director

Date

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[Name], Area Director

Date