

PART 2000 - GENERAL

Subpart E - Rural Development Policy on Meetings

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Part 2000 - General

Subpart E - Rural Development Policy on Meetings

§ 2000.201 Scope.

This Instruction prescribes the policies applicable to the attendance of employees at all types of meetings and the holding of meetings of Rural Development employees.

§ 2000.202 General.

The availability of budgeted travel funds will be of primary consideration in scheduling attendance at meetings. Administrative approval to attend a meeting is required regardless of whether the employee may have an approved travel authorization for travel to the place of the meeting. When the National Office approval is required, such approval must be obtained before departure of the employee to attend the meeting. All requests for the National Office approval will be submitted to the Administrator, Operations and Management (AOM), Attention: Human Resources Training Division (HRTD) for approval by the Under Secretary (USEC) for Rural Development or above.

§ 2000.203 Definitions.

(a) State Meeting. A meeting involving attendance by all or a substantial portion of employees within the state or states under a State Office jurisdiction.

(b) Meeting. A gathering of employees for the purpose of a conference, seminar, training session or similar event.

§§ 2000.204 - 2000.205 [Reserved]

§ 2000.206 Rural Development meetings.

This section deals with meetings called by officials of Rural Development.

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Administration
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(a) Policy. Meetings of Rural Development employees will be held to the minimum necessary for efficient operation and will comply with Departmental Manual 2300-001, Agriculture Travel Regulation (ATR). Attendance will be limited to those employees actually concerned with the subject matter involved. All meetings must be held in facilities that are accessible to persons with disabilities.

(1) Full consideration will be given to the possibility of accomplishing the objectives of the meeting through use of a less expensive means of communication such as Web- or video-conferencing.

(2) The objectives to be accomplished must be such as to justify the total cost of the meeting. State meetings may only be held every other year. Meetings will be scheduled so as to create the least possible disturbance of normal work schedules. The place of the meeting will be the point at which the least total expense to Rural Development is involved. See the ATR for guidance. Space for meetings will not be accepted from any general or specialized organization whose functions include influencing legislation affecting the activities of the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) or the promotion of the activities of Federal agencies if other suitable space is available. Such specialized groups could include organizations such as borrowers and lenders, contractors, and homebuilders. This policy also extends to space and services offered at a rate not commensurate with the prevailing rate for the area. The objective to be accomplished must be determined in advance and the agenda will be prepared accordingly. The per diem rate for employees attending the meeting will be established in accordance with RD Instruction 2036-A.

(b) Approval of Rural Development meetings. USDA Office of the Chief Financial Officer (USDA OCFO) and National Office approval is required for all Rural Development meetings where travel costs and meeting expenses are forecast to exceed \$75,000. The Rural Development USEC must approve all meetings when travel costs and meeting expenses are forecast to exceed \$40,000. Administrators and State Directors may approve meetings under their jurisdiction that do not exceed \$40,000 in travel costs and meeting expenses.

§ 2000.206 (Con.)

(c) Request for approval by the National Office. When approval of the USDA OCFO/National Office is necessary, the sponsoring office will prepare the request and submit it through HRTD at least 45 calendar days in advance of the meeting date. This approval process concerns only authority to conduct a meeting. It is not a mechanism to obtain National Office funding for any meeting. Meeting sponsors are to obtain funding through normal budgeting procedures. The meeting request will be prepared in accordance with the following:

- (1) The primary purpose of the meeting, objectives to be accomplished, and a copy of the agenda or draft agenda.
- (2) Place of meeting.
- (3) Beginning and ending dates of the meeting.
- (4) Number of employees who will attend.
- (5) Estimated travel cost and other meeting expenses.
- (6) Names and titles of the officials not under the supervision of the meeting sponsor who will be requested to attend, such as representatives from the National Office and the Office of the General Counsel.
- (7) The information required by the USDA OCFO per ATR Section 9.f, Conference and Training Events for events costing \$75,000 or more. The [HRTD SharePoint](#) contains the current required USDA OCFO forms and Decision Memorandum. Exhibit A contains a flow diagram showing the approval process.
- (8) A statement that the meeting facility is accessible to persons with disabilities.

§ 2000.207 - 2000.210 [Reserved]

§ 2000.211 Meetings outside Rural Development.

This includes any local, regional, or national meeting called by an agency or organization, Federal or non-Federal, outside Rural Development and held in the United States.

(a) Policy on attendance. When practicable, Rural Development will provide representation at meetings of borrowers and lenders, scientific and professional societies, trade associations, State and Federal officials, and other organizations and groups for the purpose of acquiring or giving information relating to the work of the Agency when such representation is necessary for the performance of the functions of Rural Development or will further its authorized use. No Rural Development employee will, while conducting official business, participate in or attend any segregated meetings or meetings held in a segregated facility from which persons are excluded because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or marital status in accordance with RD Instruction 1901-E, § 1901.202(b)(3).

(b) Considerations in recommending attendance. Officials recommending attendance at meetings will consider:

- (1) The propriety of Rural Development being represented.
- (2) Whether the specific reasons for attendance fully justify the expenditure of time and public funds.
- (3) The extent of interference with, or neglect of, the primary work of the employee concerned.
- (4) Economy in the expenditure of public funds.
- (5) Avoidance of excessive representation at any meeting. In many cases, one employee can represent the entire agency or a particular State and the information obtained can be disseminated to other interested employees.
- (6) If a speech or discussion material is prepared for use at the meeting, it must conform to Rural Development and USDA policy. If there is any doubt as to whether the speech or discussion material is in accord with policy, a copy should be sent for clearance in advance to the AOM, Attention: Legislative Affairs and Public Affairs Staff.

(c) Requesting approval for attendance. Requests for approval to attend meetings will be made in memorandum form through appropriate supervisory channels. The request must indicate:

- (1) That attendance conforms to the policy outlined in paragraph (a) of this section.

§ 2000.211(c) (Con.)

(2) That the points enumerated in paragraph (b) of this section have been given full consideration. Include a summary of the conclusions reached regarding these points.

(3) The purpose, place, and dates of the meeting.

(4) The official station of each employee for whom approval to attend is requested. (5) The estimated travel costs to be paid from public funds shown separately for each employee who will attend.

(6) The number of employees who will attend on official time but whose travel costs will not be paid from public funds.

(7) For meetings with travel and meeting expenses in excess of \$75,000, the information required by the USDA OCFO per the ATR must be prepared by the requesting office.

(8) Training acquired via Standard Form 182 "Authorization, Agreement and Certification of Training," with total costs less than \$75,000 is exempt from this approval process.

(d) Approvals - National Office and USDA OCFO. Except as provided in paragraph (e) of this section, approval by the National Office and the USDA OCFO is required for attendance at other than Rural Development meetings when the employee(s) will attend on official time or when expenditure of public funds will be involved for travel or other expenses and when attendance at the meeting is forecast to cost more than \$75,000.

(e) Approvals - Administrators and State Directors. Subject to the requirements of paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section, Administrators and State Directors may approve attendance for employees under their jurisdiction at other than Rural Development meetings/training events where the event cost is forecast to be less than \$40,000. If the request exceeds the authority of the Administrators or State Directors then the provisions of paragraph (d) of this section will apply.

§ 2000.211 (Con.)

(f) Lectures and addresses. Employees invited to deliver lectures or to address meetings for which service they will receive compensation in the form of honorarium or travel expenses, or both, must do so as private persons, although they are entitled to use of their official titles. In such cases, absence from official duty will be charged to annual leave and no per diem or travel expenses will be allowed the employee. If the lecture or address is made in an official capacity, Rural Development will pay the travel expenses and there will be no charge to annual leave.

§§ 2000.212 - 2000.250 [Reserved]

Attachments: Exhibit A

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USDA OCFO and Rural Development Decision Memorandum Process Flow
Diagram

