

Social Security Administration

Conference Information Report

Fiscal Year 2016

Overview

Our conference events are mission critical and support our goal of better serving the public by improving our business practices, adopting new technology, or training our employees on the complex policies and procedures of the Social Security Act. We have a strong review and approval process in place for all of our sponsored conferences and for employee attendance at other federally-sponsored and federally-hosted conferences. Our strong internal conference planning policies ensure we reduce costs for our agency activities. We continue to use cost-cutting initiatives, including hosting events as close as possible to employee duty stations to minimize travel, maximizing our use of free Federal space, and adhering to policies restricting meals and light refreshments. In addition, we require agency components to research alternatives to hosting events, such as video conferencing and interactive video teletraining. We oversee, monitor, and review our spending for all agency-sponsored conferences and employee attendance at other federally-sponsored and federally-hosted conferences to ensure we use Federal funds efficiently and comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

Most of our conference expenses for fiscal year (FY) 2016 were for training (technical, programmatic, and non-programmatic) and associated travel costs. Besides training and associated travel costs, our conference expenses included costs for speakers and presenters, equipment, supplies, and other miscellaneous conference costs.

Conferences where expenses associated with the conference exceeded \$500,000

For FY 2016, we did not sponsor any conference or have employees attend other federally-sponsored and federally-hosted conferences where the expenses exceeded \$500,000. Thus, we did not require approval from the Acting Commissioner for conference spending in excess of the \$500,000 limit for a single event.

Conferences where expenses associated with the conference exceeded \$100,000

The Fiscal Year 2016 Conference Information (Table) beginning on page 3, lists all of our agency-sponsored conferences, in date order, where the expenses exceeded \$100,000. For FY 2016, the Table includes 13 agency-sponsored conferences totaling \$3,133,198. We did not incur expenses exceeding \$100,000 for employee attendance at other federally-sponsored and federally-hosted conferences.

Our Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has its own conference review and approval process, and OIG confirmed it did not hold any events over \$100,000 for FY 2016.

For each conference, we include the following information in the Table:

- Name of the conference;
- Total conference expenses incurred by the agency;
- Location;
- Date(s);
- Total number of attendees whose travel expenses or other conference expenses were paid by the agency; and
- Brief explanation of how the conference advanced the mission of our agency.

Social Security Administration

Fiscal Year 2016 Conference Information Table

SSA-Sponsored Conferences

Conference	Total Expenses	Location	Date	Number of Attendees	Mission Related Narrative
New Administrative Law Judge Training – Phase 2	\$356,704	Social Security Administration (SSA) facility, Falls Church, Virginia	October 13, 2015 to November 6, 2015	67	We provided technical and programmatic training to the agency’s newly-hired administrative law judges. This training taught the basic functions and responsibilities of the position and introduced the new administrative law judges to national policy. This training also ensured our new administrative law judges learned the correct application of laws, regulations, and agency policy necessary for the adjudication of our disability claims. We trained 34 judges with 27 agency trainers, 5 agency presenters, and 1 medical presenter. This mission-critical training provided our new judges with the tools to process cases efficiently and consistently, which will help reduce our backlog of disability cases in a timely manner.
Supplemental Administrative Law Judge Training	\$117,084	SSA facility, Baltimore, Maryland	November 2, 2015 to November 6, 2015	80	We provided technical and programmatic training to the agency’s administrative law judges who have been on duty for approximately one year. This supplemental training built on the administrative law judges’ experiences and challenges in the first year, provided more intensive coverage of policy and procedure, and reinforced application of national standards. We trained 63 judges using 16 agency trainers and speakers, and 1 support staff. This mission-critical training helped ensure that our judges issue decisions that are policy-compliant, legally sufficient, and timely.

Conference	Total Expenses	Location	Date	Number of Attendees	Mission Related Narrative
New Administrative Law Judge Training – Phase 2	\$423,913	SSA facility, Falls Church, Virginia	February 29, 2016 to March 24, 2016	92	We provided technical and programmatic training to a second group of newly-hired administrative law judges. This training taught the basic functions and responsibilities of the position and introduced the new administrative law judges to national policy. This training also ensured our new administrative law judges learned the correct application of laws, regulations, and agency policy necessary for the adjudication of our disability claims. We trained 48 judges with 33 agency trainers, 5 agency presenters, 4 agency speakers, and 2 medical presenters. This mission-critical training provided our new judges with the tools to process cases efficiently and consistently, which will help reduce our backlog of disability cases in a timely manner.
Supplemental Administrative Law Judge Training	\$184,570	SSA facility, Falls Church, Virginia	May 2, 2016 to May 6, 2016	84	We provided technical and programmatic training to a second group of administrative law judges who have been on duty for approximately one year. This supplemental training built on the administrative law judges’ experiences and challenges in the first year, provided more intensive coverage of policy and procedure, and reinforced application of national standards. We trained 71 judges using 13 agency trainers and speakers. This mission-critical training helped ensure that our judges issue decisions that are policy-compliant, legally sufficient, and timely.

Conference	Total Expenses	Location	Date	Number of Attendees	Mission Related Narrative
Supplemental Administrative Law Judge Training	\$173,032	SSA facility, Falls Church, Virginia	June 13, 2016 to June 17, 2016	77	We provided technical and programmatic training to a third group of administrative law judges who have been on duty for approximately one year. This supplemental training built on the administrative law judges' experiences and challenges in the first year, provided more intensive coverage of policy and procedure, and reinforced application of national standards. We trained 64 judges using 12 agency instructors and 1 support staff. This mission-critical training helped ensure that our judges issue decisions that are policy-compliant, legally sufficient, and timely.
Fiscal Year 2016 Judicial Training	\$171,389	Marriott Inner Harbor at Camden Yards, Baltimore, Maryland	July 12, 2016 to July 14, 2016	178	We provided technical training to the agency's administrative law judges and administrative appeals judges. Periodic judicial training is necessary to ensure the agency's judges have the requisite knowledge and skills to adjudicate complex cases accurately and efficiently while using the latest technology. We trained 137 judges using 24 agency trainers and speakers, and 17 support staff. This mission-critical training helped ensure that our judges have the requisite knowledge to conduct hearings, issue legally defensible decisions, and correctly apply agency policy, applicable statutes, and case law. We used an off-site facility because it was the most efficient and cost-effective means of delivering technical training to a large number of administrative law judges. We did not incur facility costs at this location, and we avoided transportation costs because we did not shuttle employees from the hotel to headquarters.

Conference	Total Expenses	Location	Date	Number of Attendees	Mission Related Narrative
Essentials of Suitability Training – Regional Offices	\$131,612	SSA facility, Baltimore, Maryland	July 18, 2016 to July 28, 2016	28	We provided technical training to our background investigation adjudicators who are responsible for determining the fitness of the agency's workforce. This training encompassed the fundamentals of adjudicating background investigations. We trained 28 employees using Office of Personnel Management instructors. This mission-critical training ensured we are compliant with Federal national training standards set forth by the Office of Personnel Management and the Office of Management and Budget.
New Administrative Law Judge Training – Phase 2	\$433,926	SSA facility, Falls Church, Virginia	July 18, 2016 to August 12, 2016	99	We provided technical and programmatic training to a third group of newly-hired administrative law judges. This training taught the basic functions and responsibilities of the position and introduced the new administrative law judges to national policy. This training also ensured our new administrative law judges learned the correct application of laws, regulations, and agency policy necessary for the adjudication of our disability claims. We trained 50 judges with 34 agency instructors, 8 agency presenters, 2 medical presenters, 4 agency speakers, and 1 support staff. This mission-critical training provided our new judges with the tools to process cases efficiently and consistently, which will help reduce our backlog of disability cases in a timely manner.

Conference	Total Expenses	Location	Date	Number of Attendees	Mission Related Narrative
Disability Determination Services Administrator Meeting	\$121,842	SSA facility, Baltimore, Maryland	July 19, 2016 to July 22, 2016	194	We held a meeting for State disability determination services (DDS) administrators and staff, as well as agency executives and regional directors, to discuss systems, programmatic, and operation issues specific to the disability program. This meeting helped disseminate information and build the consensus necessary for achieving our shared mission and goals for the disability program. We had 108 participants with 38 agency presenters and 48 support staff. This mission-critical meeting enabled participants to address important projects and workload planning issues, as well as allowed participants to share concerns and best practices.
Fiscal Year 2016 Technical Entry-Level Customer Service Representative Training – San Francisco	\$105,908	Multiple SSA locations throughout the San Francisco Region	July 19, 2016 to November 9, 2016	106	We provided interactive video teletraining in the San Francisco Region to support our field office operations and process our agency’s core mission work. We provided entry-level training for customer service representatives to support the expected increases in key workloads over the next few years. We trained 82 employees with 24 agency mentors. This mission-critical training ensured our entry-level trainees gained the skills necessary to handle our increasing workloads, contribute to field office operations, and provide pertinent services to the public.
Fiscal Year 2016 Claims Representative Technical Training Class	\$299,318	SSA facility, Baltimore, Maryland	July 25, 2016 to September 21, 2016	22	We provided face-to-face entry-level technical training for locally employed overseas claims representatives. We trained 20 students, all employees of the Department of State, with 1 Department of State instructor and 1 agency instructor. This mission-critical training provided overseas staff with the skills necessary to serve American citizens and beneficiaries living in foreign countries.

Conference	Total Expenses	Location	Date	Number of Attendees	Mission Related Narrative
New Administrative Law Judge Training – Phase 2	\$438,373	SSA facility, Falls Church, Virginia	August 15, 2016 to September 9, 2016	100	We provided technical and programmatic training to a fourth group of newly-hired administrative law judges. This training taught the basic functions and responsibilities of the position and introduced the new administrative law judges to national policy. This training also ensured our new administrative law judges learned the correct application of laws, regulations, and agency policy necessary for the adjudication of our disability claims. We trained 53 judges with 32 agency instructors, 8 agency presenters, 2 medical presenters, 4 agency speakers, and 1 support staff. This mission-critical training provided our new judges with the tools to process cases efficiently and consistently, which will help reduce our backlog of disability cases in a timely manner.
Fiscal Year 2016 Judicial Training	\$175,527	Marriott Inner Harbor at Camden Yards, Baltimore, Maryland	August 16, 2016 to August 18, 2016	173	We provided technical training to a second group of administrative law judges and administrative appeals judges. Periodic judicial training is necessary to ensure the agency’s judges have the requisite knowledge and skills to adjudicate complex cases accurately and efficiently while using the latest technology. We trained 133 judges using 24 agency instructors, 2 agency speakers, and 14 support staff. This mission-critical training helped ensure that our judges have the requisite knowledge to conduct hearings, issue legally defensible decisions, and correctly apply agency policy, applicable statutes, and case law. We used an off-site facility because it was the most efficient and cost-effective means of delivering technical training to a large number of administrative law judges. We did not incur facility costs at this location, and we avoided transportation costs because we did not shuttle employees from the hotel to headquarters.