

Wednesday, March 13, 2013

On March 8, you received a message that provided some preliminary information on sequestration, including a copy of the February 27, 2013 guidance from OMB (OMB M-13-05). The message also promised more specific guidance from the Agency.

That guidance is now attached. It outlines how the agency is addressing the direction in OMB M-13-05 in 3 specific areas: (1) hiring; (2) monetary awards; and (3) training, conferences, and travel. Please take special note of the overarching considerations in this guidance, including the increased necessity to find savings wherever possible.

NASA will continue to review the guidance as our budgetary situation evolves, but expectations are that this guidance will need to remain in place for the rest of the fiscal year, if not beyond.

Please consult with your Center HR Director if you have specific questions about hiring, awards, and training and with your Center CFO if you have specific questions about conferences or travel.

**New Policies in Response to Direction in OMB Memorandum-13-05
“Agency Responsibilities for Implementation of Potential Joint Committee
Sequestration”**

On February 27, 2013, the Office of Management and Budget released guidance concerning agency responsibility concerning the implementation of the March 1st sequestration. Within that guidance, OMB directed that agencies provide heightened scrutiny of certain types of activities funded from sequestered accounts:

- ✓ Hiring new personnel
- ✓ Issuing discretionary monetary awards to employees, which OMB further directed should occur only if legally required until further notice; and
- ✓ Training, conferences and travel (including agency-paid travel for non-agency personnel).

The memo goes on to state that “in light of the reduced budgetary resources available due to sequestration, expending funds on these activities at this time would in many circumstances not be the most effective way to protect agency mission to the extent practicable. Therefore, agency leadership should review processes and controls around these activities, and ensure that these activities are conducted only to the extent they are the most cost-effective way to maintain critical agency mission operations under sequestration.”

To address the direction in OMB M-13-05, the agency will adopt the following guidance.

Overarching Considerations

- **Developments since release of OMB Memorandum 13-05.** Sequestration has required NASA to take a hard look at realizing savings while minimizing mission impacts. Moreover, the recent congressional full-year Continuing Resolution deliberations in the House and Senate have resulted in the likelihood of greater cuts, especially in the Cross Agency Support account, than required by sequestration alone. If enacted, these cuts will impact the agency at least until the end of the fiscal year. The following guidance reflects the increased necessity to find savings wherever possible.
- **Application to the contractor community.** This guidance – including conference and travel restrictions -- is to be applied to NASA employees and to all contract employees, including JPL employees, to extent permissible. Program managers, project managers and contracting officers should apply this guidance to all NASA direct-funded contractor travel.
- **Travel Spending Targets.** Programs and Centers are currently operating with targets for direct and reimbursable travel for FY 2013. Given the changing budget situation, those targets are likely to be revised downward. OCFO will work with the Mission Directorates to set new targets for the remainder of the year in the coming weeks.
- **Further expected guidance.** NASA leadership is also reviewing the current policies for IPAs and extended TDY assignments and will provide guidance on those specific topics in the near future.
- **Review of the Guidance.** NASA will continuously review this guidance, but expectations are that this guidance will need to remain in place for the rest of the fiscal year, if not beyond.
- **Questions.** Any questions on this guidance overall should be directed to Dave Radzanowski or Beth Robinson. Specific questions on hiring, awards, and training guidance should be directed to Jeri Buchholz, Sherri McGee, or your Center HR Office. Specific questions on conferences or travel should be directed to Beth Robinson, Pam Hanes, Joe McIntyre, or your Center CFO Office.

Hiring

At this time, there is no change to the Agency's current hiring policy. Centers may continue to transact hires as planned in their submitted phased hiring plans up to their FY2013 FTE ceilings. This includes hiring in all categories, including new intern hires, intern conversions, and all other early career hires.

Monetary Awards

All discretionary monetary awards to employees are on hold, including performance awards and individual and group special act awards; however, this guidance does not include time off awards or salary actions such as with-in grade increases and promotions. In addition, we are seeking further guidance from OMB and will provide those details as soon as they are available. In the meantime, we encourage supervisors to continue looking for non-monetary ways to recognize your employees.

Training, Conferences, and Travel

Agency leadership recognizes that training, conference sponsorship/attendance, and travel represent highly visible and scrutinized uses of budgetary resources. Thus, effective management of these types of activities, particularly during times of sequestration, is critical to maximizing resource availability to protect the Agency's mission. To preserve Agency discretion in accomplishing mission critical activities, we are taking the following steps to proactively manage participation in training, conferences, and non-conference travel.

- **Training:**

- Any training that is not scheduled as of the March 1st sequestration is subject to the following criteria. The definition of “scheduled” includes training that is published, externally documented, or identified in SATERN.
- New training will be considered if the following criteria are met:
 - Does it meet mandatory certification or regulatory requirements?
 - Does it enable employees to meet the technical duties of their position?
 - Is the cost of cancellation 50% or more than the cost of continuing the training?
 - Is the training essential for mission success including training activities related to organizational effectiveness that impact project costs, schedule, and overall success; or is it a component of long-term mission critical development programs?
 - Is the training on going, sequenced (i.e., NASA FIRST, MLLP), and the cancellation of which would have an adverse, long-term impact on an employee (i.e., extended TDY), team, organization, or mission?
- Center training officers can provide additional guidance as well as offer information about existing no-cost training opportunities on-site or on-line via SATERN.

- **Conference Attendance and Sponsorship**

This section applies to NASA and to NASA contractor employees.

1. **Domestic Conferences**

- a. **Criteria** - NASA will limit domestic conference attendance to those conferences that meet all of the following criteria. OCFO will determine

whether a conference as a whole meets these criteria.

- i. The conference is essential and/or necessary (as compared to discretionary or preferable)
 1. A scientific or technical presentation at a scientific or technical conference meets these criteria, but the other criteria must also be met.
 - ii. The conference contributes to the agency's core mission.
 - iii. The employee attending is substantively involved with the conference (moderating panels and attending-only do not meet this criteria).
 - iv. There are no alternative methods of participating (e.g., phone, video conference, or pre-recorded video message).
 - v. **Examples** – For example, the following conferences do NOT meet the new criteria and NASA funded participation will not be allowed:
 1. National Space Symposium
 2. The American Astronautical Society's Robert H. Goddard Memorial Symposium and Goddard Memorial Dinner
- b. **50 Person Limit** - Assuming the criteria above are met, NASA will limit the total attendance at a domestic conference to 50 persons, including both civil service and JPL and other contractor employees, unless the conference is approved to exceed the 50 person limit by OCFO.
- i. Centers will ensure compliance with the timeliness requirements in the recent NID on conference attendance and sponsorship, which generally require submission of approval requests six months in advance.
 - ii. Centers and MD's will work with OCFO's office to determine specific Center, including JPL, allocations for particular conferences.
 - iii. Once allocations are set, Centers and MDs will approve a specific traveler's (civil servant or contractor) attendance utilizing the criteria above.
 1. In addition to the criteria above, prioritization of attendance limitations should consider:
 - a. First priority to Presenters,
 - b. Second priority to ensuring equitable application of travel restrictions, for example among supervisory and non-supervisory employees
- c. **NASA Sponsorship** – NASA will only sponsor conferences that are deemed mission critical. OCFO will determine whether a conference as a whole is considered mission critical for sponsorship.
- i. **Example** - Centers should not sponsor or host Yuri's Night activities.
- d. **Invitational Conference Attendance** – Invitational conference attendance must meet the same criteria for domestic conference attendance.

2. **Foreign Conferences** – Foreign conference participation and sponsorship is prohibited unless the conference as a whole is specifically approved by OCFO.
 - a. As of 3/12/13, no foreign conferences are approved by OCFO. Pending a future waiver by OCFO, attendance at any foreign conference is prohibited.
 - b. **Example** – Currently planned conferences that are not approved include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. IAF Spring Meeting
 - ii. Rotary International Conference
 - iii. European Geosciences Union General Assembly 2013
 - iv. Sixth European Conference on Space Debris
 - v. IAASS Conference
3. **Local Center Conference Attendance** – NASA employees may attend conferences located at their Center if there are no associated travel costs and attendance contributes to the agency’s core mission.
4. **Applicability to Approved Conferences** - These limitations will apply to all currently planned conferences (whether or not they have been previously approved with other attendance/sponsorship parameters) scheduled to occur on or after March 19th.
5. **Waiver** - A waiver process will be established through OCFO for all matters addressed in this section to ensure mission critical activities are not adversely impacted.

- **All Other Travel**

This section applies to NASA and to NASA contractor employees.

1. **Criteria** - NASA will limit all travel to travel that meets the following criteria:
 - a. The travel is essential and/or necessary (as compared to discretionary or preferable)
 - b. The travel contributes to the agency’s core mission
 - c. The employee travelling is substantively involved with the purpose of the trip
 - d. There are no alternative methods of participating (e.g., phone, video conference, or pre-recorded video message).
2. **OIC Approval** - Using the criteria above, specific types of travel requires approval by a supervisor at the OIC-level (i.e., the Center Director level for Center employees). This guidance applies to all NASA and NASA contractors, including JPL employees, for travel to:
 - a. Outside of the Continental U.S. (Foreign plus Hawaii and Alaska)
 - b. Launches
 - c. Speaking engagements not at a NASA Center or not part of an approved conference.
3. **Invitational Travel** – Invitational travel must meet the same criteria for funded travel to be accepted.

4. **Advisory Committee Travel** - NAC, ASAP, and all respective advisory subcommittee presentations should take place by telecom or VITS to the extent practicable.
5. **Management Council Travel** – Travel for EC, SMC, PMC, MSC, BPR, and all respective sub-council meetings should not occur unless approved on a case-by-case basis by the respective council chair. Unless otherwise required by the chair, these Councils will meet via ViTS.
6. **Local Travel.** This guidance does not affect procedures related to local travel.