

Office of Fossil Energy Conference Policies and Procedures

1. Without prior ASFE approval, no federal funds will be committed; contracts signed; agency services, facility, name, or logo used; or any FE involvement be announced for a conference.

The ASFE will approve costs related to all meetings, including but not limited to program, project, and peer reviews; conferences designated in EPACT, project implementation plans, grants, or cooperative agreements; and meetings where FE will incur exhibitor expenses, allow use of DOE facilities, or provided in-kind services by employees or FE contractors.

2. Before planning or announcing FE involvement in a meeting, each office or site should check with the Communications Office to see if prior ASFE approval is required.

Some types of meetings are exempt. However, exclusions are very limited.

3. All FE conference proposals will be submitted for approval on the standard Fossil Energy HQ form.

No other forms or modifications of the HQ form (except to enter data) will be accepted. Any form that is not fully completed, is unclear, or includes information not in compliance with the DOE Order will be returned to the originator. An electronic version of the form will be emailed to conference coordinators. However, if your office would like a copy, please contact Cynthia Chambers, FE Communications Office, (202) 586-3434. When changes occur a new version of the form will be distributed.

The “Request for Conference Approval -Proposal Preparation Instruction” (attached) will provide guidance on how FE employees/managers should prepare a conference proposal for approval.

4. All conference proposals will comply with and include documentation required by the DOE Order (110.3) on Conference Management, FE Conference Management Policies and Procedures, the Office of the Deputy Secretary, and the Office of the Secretary of Energy.

5. Conferences or conference support included in the proposed FE budget will specify that final obligation of funds will depend upon the compliance with DOE and FE policies and procedures.

6. If FE involvement is announced by a conference organizer prior to ASFE approval, the FE employee liaison will contact the organizer to request that DOE/FE references be removed until approved is obtained.

7. Deputy Assistant Secretaries, Office Directors, and Field Directors will ensure employees are aware of conference management requirements and work with Headquarters personnel in complying with DOE and FE policies and procedures.

Periodically, FE Headquarters receives oral or written direction from Secretarial Offices about a new requirement which requires asking proposal originators for additional information. By working together to expedite requests for this supplementary data, FE will meet DOE requirements and minimize delays in the approval process.

8. The Office of Fossil Energy's conference approval process will be comprised of the following steps.
 - a. Initial endorsement or approval by the Office Director (FE-3, FE-5, FE-6, FE-7, and FE-8), Field Director, or Deputy Assistant Secretary where the proposal originates.
 - b. Delivery to the Office of FE Communications at Headquarters of the original package, email of a PDF, or facsimile of the proposal.
 - c. Review of the package by the Communications Office for completeness, clarity, and compliance and, if necessary, return to the originator for missing or additional information.
 - d. Logging of the package into the DOE Controlled Correspondence System.
 - e. Circulation for concurrence by the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Budget Officer (for cost increases over the previous year), International Affairs Deputy Assistant Secretary (when a conference will be held outside the United States), and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary.
 - f. Review for approval by the ASFE.
 - g. Forwarding, if required, to the Under Secretary and Associate Deputy Secretary for review.
 - h. Return of approved package to FE Communications, which will provide a copy of the approval to the originator, post the information on the DOE Conference Management System and the FE Internet site, and file the original approval package.

Steps "a" through "f" may take several weeks (longer when a reviewer is on travel or leave). Review by the Under Secretary and Associate Deputy Secretary may require three weeks or so as they only review conferences one day per week. Therefore, proposals should be delivered to the HQ with ample time for all reviews *before* approval is needed. A minimum of two months prior to conference deadlines for major decisions (selection of date and location), announcements, signing of contracts, or exhibit space reservations is suggested for submission of a conference proposal to Headquarters. The approval process will not be expedited due to submission of a proposal right before a conference deadline.

9. If FE will be the meeting organizer, hosting facility, major funding source (at least 40% of hard monies), or one of the primary sponsors, FE personnel will be involved in major conference decisions.

At this level, DOE is responsible for oversight assuring the conference is run in a manner that complies with all applicable Federal directives and regulations, is fiscally responsible with taxpayer money, and does not reflect negatively upon the Federal Government or DOE. In these cases, the meeting proposer will provide written justification and cost comparisons for the selection of the conference location and facility as well as meeting other facility criteria stipulated in the Order.

10. Cooperation of all personnel is needed in ensuring FE conference information is current at all times.

Inquiries about conferences will continue to be received from DOE Secretarial officials, Congress, Office of the Inspector General, and General Accounting Office. Therefore, the Communications Office should be promptly notified of any changes of information (dates, location, cost, attendance, etc.) after a meeting is approved so that accurate data is available at all times to my staff.

The *Secretary's Annual Report to Congress on Conference Management* requires that actual cost and attendance numbers replace the estimated figures originally provided. If conference data is updated throughout the year, it will expedite the end of the year reporting process for everyone.

11. The ASFE must approve answers provided by originating offices or sites to formal inquiries about conferences.

To ensure consistent answers to audits or other investigations about FE conference procedures, expenses, attendance or other issues, all official responses will come through the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Fossil Energy.

General requests for information about an approved conferences (date, location, agenda, registration fee, etc.) will continue to be answered by the conference planner.

12. Responsibilities of personnel under DOE Order 110.3 and FE Conference Policies and Procedures.

- Program budget contacts must require proof of approval by the ASFE *before* committing funds to any FE conference activity (for exhibit space, meeting facility, support services, or funding to a conference organizer) and be cognizant of regulations on travel and per diem as stipulated in the DOE Order on Conference Management and DOE Travel Policy and Procedures, in particular the restrictions on reimbursement of meals included in registration fees.
- People who approve or concur on conference proposals or attendance must be able to justify the relevance of the conference to program goals, demonstrate benefits to the agency, ensure FE compliance with DOE conference and travel policies and procedures, and assure that attendance is kept to the minimum number necessary to accomplish program objectives.
- Conference attendees or participants will receive prior approval from the appropriate authority *before* making travel arrangements or paying conference fees.
- Project managers should be aware of conference management requirements for FE contractors in DOE Order 110.3.