

General Manual
Title 250 - Financial Management

Part 406 - Meetings

KS406.3 Accepting Funds from Sources Outside NRCS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Ethics has revised its policy on the acceptance of travel expenses from non-federal sources.

The current method used to address this issue (cooperative agreements) is still acceptable and may, in some cases, still be the preferable method.

The new, additional method now available to address this issue is the use of Form AD-1161, "Approval and Report of Travel Funds Received from Non-Federal Sources." For additional guidance on this topic, refer to General Manual Title 110, Part 405.

The purpose of the trip must relate to the employee's official duties but must not be for the purpose of performing one's line responsibilities such as investigations, inspections, audits, site visits, negotiations, or litigation. This authority must be prudently applied in order to protect the integrity and appearance of the agency.

The Kansas ethics contact will prepare a conflict of interest analysis and recommend approval or disapproval accordingly. The gift of payment of travel support may only be received by the agency not the traveler. The traveler will be reimbursed by the agency. There must be no possible appearance of a conflict of interest.

Reimbursement will only be accepted for peripheral activities.

No promotional vendor training or other meetings held for the primary purpose of marketing a non-federal product will be approved. The Kansas ethics contact shall not recommend acceptance and no approval will be granted if there is any evidence that the financial assistance was solicited by the agency or employee.

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KS406.4 Meeting Approval Process

C. This is the Kansas policy for requesting attendance at Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or non-NRCS meetings that are local, area-wide, state-wide, out-of-state, multi-state, regional, national, or international in nature and for all professional society meetings.

- (1) A “meeting” is a gathering of people that may include NRCS and others, which may or may not be sponsored by NRCS. Meetings include lectures, workshops, conference, and seminars. Though some level of informal training may occur, they will be treated as meetings. Employees that are members of professional organizations should refer to Section KS406.4 C.(7) for information on attending professional society meetings.
- (2) If the state conservationist (STC) approves attendees via e-mail, memorandum, etc., no Form KS-FNM-10, Request for Approval to Attend Meeting/Unscheduled Training, is required unless travel is not by the most common method (most advantageous-to-the government).
- (3) Form KS-FNM-10, will be completed to request attendance at meetings. The following will be attached, as appropriate:
 - (a) Agenda and completed registration form
 - (b) Form KS-FNM-8, Request Authorization for Overtime/Compensatory Time/Compensatory Time for Travel
 - (c) Actual and constructive travel itinerary and cost comparison (Page 2 of Form AD-616 or Travel Spreadsheet accessed at the bottom of Form KS-FNM-10) if traveling method is personal preference versus the most common method (most advantageous-to-the government)
- (4) NRCS and non-NRCS area-wide or local meetings and state-wide meetings require verbal/written approval from the appropriate Management Team (MT) member when a bulletin or memorandum is not issued at the state level. It is the responsibility of each MT member to track these meeting approvals. See Section 406.4 C.(8) for information on registration fees.
- (5) A bulletin or memorandum will be issued for certain non-NRCS state-wide meetings such as the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting, No-Till on the Plains Winter Conference, State Association of Kansas Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils, Southwestern States RC&D Annual Meeting, and the State Association of Kansas Watersheds which will require the STCs

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approval. Employees will respond to the bulletin, by the noted deadline, with the requested information and route through proper channels for approval/disapproval. Disapproval may take place at any level. Registrations and travel authorizations for these meetings, if needed, will normally be processed at the state office (SO) level.

- (6) For all other NRCS and non-NRCS out-of-state, multi-state, regional, national, or international meetings, employees will complete Form KS-FNM-10, (including the appropriate attachments), and route through proper channels to the STC at least 30 days in advance of the meeting for approval/disapproval. Disapproval may take place at any level. See Section KS406.4 C. (7) for information on registration fees.
- (7) Attendance at state, out-of-state, multi-state, regional, national, and international professional society/association meetings will require the approval of the STC. When the deadline for submission of Form KS-FNM-10 for a particular meeting is met, all submitted will be approved/disapproved at the same time. The appropriate MT member will approve attendance at local professional society/association meetings.
 - (a) Kansas NRCS employees may attend one national professional society/association meeting and one multi-state or state professional society/association meeting on government time at personal or government expense each calendar year. The employee will initiate Form KS-FNM-10 (including the appropriate attachments), and route through proper channels to the STC at least 30 days in advance of the meeting for approval/disapproval. Disapproval may take place at any level. See Section KS406.4 C.(8) for information on registration fees.
 - (b) The following criteria will be used to determine basic eligibility for authorizing government expense to attend professional society/association meetings. Current budget status will be considered in determining if attendance is to be approved and at either personal expense or government expense.
 - (i) Presenting a Paper - Form KS-INF-16, Assistance and/or Clearance Request, is required. See General Manual Title 260, Section KS400.13.
 - (ii) Training identified in individual development plan
 - (iii) Special Emphasis Program Manager
 - (iv) First time in attendance

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- (c) A separate travel authorization (TA) will be prepared by the Financial Management Staff in the SO using Purpose Code 03 for events in Section 406.4 C.(7) identified as training.
- (8) Registration fees
 - (a) Registrations will be paid at the area or SO level when a credit card can be used. This should be charged to object class code 2570. When a credit card is not accepted, the approved Form KS-FNM-10 or Form AD-700 approved by the appropriate MT member will be forwarded, along with the completed registration form to the Financial Management Staff at the SO for processing. The registration form will be submitted to the vendor by the employee unless otherwise noted.
 - (b) An employee may elect to personally pay a registration fee by using a personal credit card or check and claim reimbursement on Form AD-616, Travel Voucher or Form SF-1164, Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business, accompanied by supporting documentation.
 - (c) Employees will notify their MT member when they are unable to attend a meeting when an advance registration fee has been paid. MT members will, in turn, notify the appropriate staff in the SO.
- (9) The Limited Open Travel Authorization (LOTA), Purpose Code 02 will be used for travel. When the location is not included on the LOTA, a separate TA will be prepared by the area or SO staffs.

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KS406.6 Responsibility for the Meeting Approval Form Preparation

H. The state office will prepare Form SCS-FNM-72 for the Annual Kansas Association for Conservation Districts meeting.

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KS406.7 Travel Authorizations NHQ

Blanket limited-open travel authorizations (TAs) will be prepared each fiscal year at the state office (SO) in accordance with the information that is received from each area office and SO staffs. Any travel outside the limited open will have a separate TA prepared by the appropriate SO staff or Financial Management (FNM) Staff. A separate TA will be prepared by the FNM Staff for all training.