

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. For meetings which involve "outside" training, the requirements of RD Instruction 2057-A also are applicable.

§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 a travel authorization which includes authority for travel to the place of the meeting. When National Office approval is required, such approval must be obtained before departure of the employee to attend the meeting. All requests (or National Office approval will be addressed to the Administrator, Attention: Organization, Management and Training Division.

§2000.203 Definitions.

- (a) State Meeting. A meeting involving attendance by all or a substantial portion of the supervisory or clerical employees, or both, within the state or states under the State Office jurisdiction.
- (b) Meeting. A gathering of employees for the purpose of a conference, seminar, training session or similar event.
- (c) District Meetings. A meeting involving attendance by all or a substantial portion of the County Office supervisory or clerical employees, or both, from counties comprising the territory of one or more District Directors.

§§2000.204 - 2000.205 [Reserved]

§2000.206 Rural Development meetings.

This section deals with meetings called by officials of Rural Development, except meetings of borrowers or County Committee meetings.

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Administration  
General

(a) Policy. Meetings of Rural Development employees will be held to the minimum necessary for efficient operation. Attendance will be limited to those employees actually concerned with the subject matter involved. Full consideration will be given to the possibility of accomplishing the objectives of the meeting through use of a less expensive means of communication. The objectives to be accomplished must be such as to justify the travel costs 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 travel expense to Rural Development is involved. Space for meetings will not be accepted from any general or specialized organization whose functions include the influencing of 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 of farmers, contractors, homebuilders, etc. 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. National Office approval is required for all State Meetings and any other Rural Development meeting where travel costs would exceed \$5,000. Meetings within a State Office jurisdiction who do not exceed \$5,000 in travel costs may be approved by the State Director.

(c) Request for approval of the Administrator. When approval of the National Office is necessary, the request will be submitted to the Organization, Management and Training Division at least 30 calendar days in advance of the meeting date and will contain the following:

- (1) The primary purpose of the meeting, objectives to be accomplished, and a copy of the agenda, if available.
- (2) Place of meeting.
- (3) Beginning and ending dates of the meeting.
- (4) Number of employees who will attend.
- (5) Estimated travel cost.
- (6) Names and titles of officials not under the supervision of the official holding the meeting who will be requested to

§2000.206 (c)(6) (Con.)

attend, such as representatives from the National Office and the Office of the General Counsel. This shall be limited to no more than 4 from the National and Finance Offices, including the Administrator or designee.

(7) The per diem allowance recommended and the reasons for the rate recommended. Estimated per diem cost.

(d) Requests for National Office staff members' attendance at meetings. During the meeting planning period in which attendance of National Office staff members (National Office includes Finance Office) is being considered, State Directors will informally contact the Travel Unit of the Budget Division to determine if there are any schedule conflicts before formally requesting their attendance.

§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 farmers, 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 acting in an official capacity will attend any segregated meeting.

(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 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 Administrator, Attention: Legislative Affairs and Public Information 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.

(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 cost of travel and per diem 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 and per diem will not be paid from public funds.

(d) Approvals - National Office. Except as provided in paragraph (e) of this section, approval by the National Office is required for attendance at meetings other than Rural Development meetings when the employee will attend on official time or when expenditure of public funds will be involved for travel or other expenses.

(e) Approvals - State Director. Subject to the requirements of paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section, State Directors may approve attendance for employees under their jurisdiction at other than Rural Development meetings when held within the geographical limits of the State(s) serviced by the State Office. If the request exceeds the authority of the State Director, and approval is recommended by the State Director, 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 traveling 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 traveling expenses will be allowed the employee. If the lecture or address is made in an official capacity, Rural Development will pay the traveling expenses and there will be no charge to annual leave.

§§2000.212 - 2000.250 [Reserved]

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