



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

MEMORANDUM TO: Chief Financial Officers

FROM: Mark Seiler
Chief Financial Officer 

SUBJECT: Implementation of new OAA Conference and
Group Travel Website and Tracking Process

The purpose of this memorandum is to introduce a new system and process to strengthen NOAA's Conference and Group Travel procedures. Despite the dedicated efforts of our conference planning staff, the complexity and scope of NOAA programs often lead to errors in the form of missed deadlines, additional fees and missed participants. Many of these errors can be eliminated by better planning and clarifying responsibilities.

Recently, OAR developed a Google-Based Website that could serve as a central Conference and Group Travel system for all NOAA Line and Staff Offices. This Website was presented to the CFO Council on January 14, 2015 and to the Deputy Under Secretary's Office on February 6, 2015. As a result of these briefings, NOAA is now in a position to launch a system that:

- Provides a central location for all NOAA Conferences and Group Travel events;
- Establishes NOAA and DOC's deadlines at each stage of the review process based on the date the conference must be approved (rather than the conference start date);
- Clarifies lead Line or Staff Offices for each conference event, preventing duplication of packages;
- Allows all NOAA employees to view conference details, including participants and package status information; and
- Provides edit rights to only designated individuals involved with conference package development or review;
- Allows reviewers to provide feedback at each stage of the review process, improving accountability and quality of all packages; and,
- Will serve as a valuable point of reference for conference information in future years.

Success of this new system requires dedicated personnel in each Line and Staff Office. Specifically, each Line and Staff Office must identify a primary and secondary Conference Travel POC. Only these individuals will have the authority to enter information in the system, providing real-time updates as packages advance through each stage of review. OAR will provide training to Line and Staff Office Conference POCs on site in Silver Spring. This training will also serve as an opportunity to enter all Conference and Group Travel information for the remainder of the year. Training will be offered in SSMC3, Room 10241 on February 24th and March 3rd, from 10am-12pm. Please send your conference travel POC name and their



preference training date to the OAR Conference Lead, Bernadette Broadus by COB Friday, February 20th, 2015 and she will work with the OAR ACIO to schedule training.

Implementation of these system changes also provides an opportunity to review and refresh our collective understanding of Conference and Group Travel policy. Attached is an overview of policy requirements for travel at each of the dollar thresholds. In addition, we have attached the most recent presentation on the Conference System, which includes feedback from the CFO Council and the Deputy Under Secretary's Office. We anticipate that all training will be completed and the new system will be operational by March 6, 2015.

It is my hope that with this new website and process, travel approvals will become more efficient and transparent. If you have any questions regarding the new Website, please direct them to OAR for consolidation at oar.group.travel@noaa.gov.



Mark Seiler