

5.8 Conferences, Seminars, Workshops, Training Sessions and Retreats

5.8.1 External Conference Definition

External conferences are those that involve the attendance of persons other than the employees of a single State department, institution or agency. Payment for meals is allowable if included in the registration fee, but such fee must not consist exclusively of meals or it will not be allowable unless meeting overnight travel criteria. The registration fee is typically made for defraying the cost of speakers, building (room) use, handout materials, breaks and lunches at conferences and conventions. These fees are charged to Account 532930 - "Registration Fees." The agency may require itemization and/or documentation of expenses. Conferences sponsored or co-sponsored by a State department are authorized when they meet the limitations and requirements listed below.

5.8.2 Exception Regarding Conference Meals

Pursuant to G.S. 138-6(a)(3) , a university or State agency cannot use funds to pay for conference meals for state employees at which a conference fee was not charged, unless the following conditions are met:

Federal grants, other grants, state, or institutional trust funds (as defined in G.S. 116-36.1) may be used for meals if the conditions attached to those funds allow for the provision of meals for a conference. The university or agency must have documentation of the conditions. If this is the case, then meals may be provided to state employees even if a registration fee was not charged. The employee may not request reimbursement for the meal.

5.8.3 Requirements and Limitations for External Conferences

- The conference is planned in detail in advance, with a formal agenda or curriculum.
- There is a written invitation to participants, setting forth the calendar of events, the social activities, if any, and the detailed schedule of costs.
- Assemblies should be held in State facilities; however, non-state facilities can be rented and the cost charged to a State agency without allocation to participants' daily subsistence allowances.
- The sponsoring department may charge registration fees to participants for costs of external conferences.

Registration fees may not include costs of entertainment, alcoholic beverages, setups, flowers and/or promotional (gift) items. Registration fees collected and not used to defray expenses of the particular conference may not be used for other programs and must revert to the general or highway fund as applicable (G.S. 138-6(a)(4)) .

Sponsoring departments may provide refreshments for "coffee breaks" provided there are twenty or more participants and the costs do not exceed five dollars (\$5.00) per participant per day.

When assemblies are to be held under the sponsorship of a State department in which the funding for all participants is budgeted, lump-sum payments to a conference center or an organization may be made upon written authorization from the department head or his or her designee. The authorization

must provide the following:

- The number of persons expected to attend;
- The purpose and duration of the conference;
- The specific meals to be served at the conference (law prohibits lunches being provided to state employees unless registration fees are charged to all attendees);
- The approximate daily subsistence cost per person;
- The name of the conference center, hotel, caterer, or other organization providing the service.

It is the responsibility of the departments to ensure that reimbursement for meals included in the lump-sum payment is not also included in reimbursement payments made to state employees who are conference participants.

5.8.4 Internal Conference Definition

Internal conferences are those that involve the attendance of employees within that particular department, institution or agency only. No payment for meals is allowable unless overnight travel criteria are met. A routine staff meeting is not an internal conference.

5.8.5 Requirements and Limitations for Internal Conferences

- The conference is planned in detail in advance, with a formal agenda or curriculum.
- There is a written invitation to participants, setting forth the calendar of events and the detailed schedule of costs.
- No excess travel subsistence may be granted for internal departmental meetings, conferences, seminars, etc., and such meetings must be held in state facilities when available. No registration fee may be charged.
- Sponsoring departments may provide refreshments for "coffee breaks" provided there are twenty or more participants and costs do not exceed five dollars (\$5.00) per participant per day.
- Low cost conference items that are intended to promote employee recognition, improve morale or appreciation, communicate agency contact information when compared to more expensive pay and salary adjustments, are permissible as long as they are infrequent, prudent, and reasonable in their scope.
- A department cannot use State funds to support or underwrite a meeting, assembly, conference, seminar, or similar function by whatever name called that promotes any cause or purpose other than the mission and objective of the department.

5.8.6 Training Session Definition

Employee training involves courses that further develop an employee's knowledge, skill, and ability to perform the duties of his/her present job, such as courses on computer usage or management skills development. These courses generally have a set fee, are of relatively short duration, and are not part

of a curriculum the employee is participating in leading to an educational degree.

5.8.7 Requirements and Limitations for Training Sessions

- Fees for training courses that provide training in specific areas are charged in the accounting system to "Employee Training" under "Other Services."
- Departments sponsoring training sessions may provide refreshments for "coffee breaks" provided there are twenty or more participants and costs do not exceed five dollars (\$5.00) per participant per day.
- Departments may reimburse employees for training books and materials related to training sessions, provided those books are required to participate in the training sessions. These books are considered property of the department and not the personal property of the employee.

5.8.8 Management Retreat Definition

A management retreat is a meeting or series of meetings consisting of a department or division head and his or her top assistants and coworkers. Retreats are sometimes held at a site other than the usual workplace and are held no greater than once a year.

5.8.9 Requirements and Limitations for Management Retreats

State employees who are elected by a vote of the people or appointed by the governor, the president of The University of North Carolina, the chancellors of the constituent institutions of the university, the executive director of University of North Carolina Hospitals at Chapel Hill, chairman of the State Board of Education, and the president of the North Carolina Community College System may authorize an annual management retreat. Expenditures are permissible in a manner as if it were an internal conference.