



MANAGEMENT OF CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE & ASSOCIATED COSTS STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP)

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE			
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PORTFOLIO	Deputy Chief Constable (DCC)		
OWNER	Head of Strategic Development Department		
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0.7	9.07.10	N/A	Mark Wilson Ed Edoghogho Enabulele Policy team
0.8	4.08.10	Further amendments	SDD
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MANAGEMENT OF CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE AND ASSOCIATED COSTS SOP

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) outlines the framework for improved control, monitoring and management of attendance and the amount spent by British Transport Police (BTP) on conference fees during any financial reporting year.
- 1.2 It aims to ensure that appropriate assessments are made of requests for conference attendance and that in sanctioning or declining such expenditure line managers (or appropriate senior member of an Area Senior Management Team (SMT)), Heads of Department or portfolio leads (which will be referred to as the appropriate manager in this SOP) in conjunction with the Strategic Development Department (SDD) Corporate Support and the FHQ Finance Department will always ensure that all requests to attend a conference meet the listed **'tests for fitness'** described in section 4 below.
- 1.3 This SOP applies to all Areas and Departments (including all Support Groups and Advisory Groups¹) in Scotland, England and Wales, and commences on 08 August 2010. The SOP also applies to all types of external conferences (see definitions listed in section 3 below) where a delegate attendance fee is payable. Where there is no direct conference fee involved, consideration should also be given to the associated costs such as travel, accommodation and subsistence. In such situations, parts of this SOP will still apply such as the 'tests for fitness' principles and availability of funds at the time. These will ultimately determine whether attendance at any particular conference will be authorised.
- 1.4 Internal conferences organised by BTP are also covered by this SOP.

¹ **Support Groups** – Association of Muslim Police (AMP), Christian Police Association (CPA), Disability Equality Support Association (DESA), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Support Network (LINK), Support Association for Minority Ethnic staff (SAME), Women's Support Forum (WSF).

Advisory Groups – National Independent Advisory Group (NIAG), Independent Advisory Group (IAG) and Independent Advisory Network (IAN)

- 1.5 The principle of **'zero based budgeting'**² will apply in that no ring-fenced areas of spending on conference attendance are allowed. It is mandatory that all Areas, Portfolios and Departments justify their expenditure and maintain spending within approved budgetary limits in accordance with this SOP.
- 1.6 At the beginning of every financial year, a budget for conference attendance will be set through the normal BTP budget approval process. The approved budget will be held centrally and managed by SDD Corporate Support. However, the conference attendance budget for London Underground will continue to be held locally.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following reviews of overall conference attendance expenditure for 2009/10 and the budget statements for 2010/11, it was apparent that a control strategy was required in order to introduce new protocols to govern conference attendance and manage costs more effectively.
- 2.2 The new protocols are intended to increase control of conference attendee numbers, provide effective and consistent management practices, and encourage Force-wide knowledge sharing in order to justify spend.

3 DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 **Conference** – any formal event held for people with a shared interest, whether internal or external, which requires staff attendance. The event may include the word conference, seminar, briefing or other similar description in the title.
- 3.2 **Conference Fees** – costs incurred to attend a conference and which specifically relate to the fees required for attendance.

² **Zero-based budgeting** is a technique used in financial planning and decision-making which involves the allocation of funding based on current priorities, rather than historically – in effect starting with a clean sheet. Zero-based budgeting requires the budget request to be justified in complete detail by each budget holder starting from the zero-base. The zero-base is indifferent to whether the total budget is increasing or decreasing.

- 3.3 **Other Costs** – include all associated costs such as travelling, accommodation, subsistence and allowances that **directly** relate to the attendance of a conference.
- 3.4 **Budget Holder** – is the person(s) authorised to be responsible for sanctioning such expenditure within the prescribed guidelines.

4 THE 'TESTS FOR FITNESS'

- 4.1 Each application for conference attendance will need to fulfil the 'tests for fitness' requirements before attendance can be authorised via the Conference Attendance Gateway process.
- 4.2 Whilst making a decision to sanction or decline expenditure on conference attendance, the approving manager and SDD Corporate Support will assess each request against the following 'tests for fitness':
1. The knowledge value that attendance at the conference will gain for:
 - a) The organisation and
 - b) The individual attending.
 2. The nature and type of the conference including those conferences which relate to employee representation such as unions, police federation or those that are equality and diversity related. (In some cases, there may be a legal requirement for BTP to send a representative).
 3. A thorough analysis of the overall cost of attendance including travel, accommodation, subsistence and allowances that directly relate to the conference. In some cases, there may be no conference fees involved, but consideration must be given to the other costs (see definition in section 3.3 above) associated with attendance at the conference such as travel etc.
 4. Ensure that funds are available within the central budget to cover the conference fees only. (See section 5.4).
 5. The effect on the reputation of BTP from attending or not attending a particular conference.

6. SDD Corporate Support will ensure that there are no duplicate attendees at a conference unless it is authorised for more than one attendee to attend and the other 'tests for fitness' are passed.
7. Attendance is required in order to maintain a relevant professional accreditation or qualification, or as part of a continuous professional development towards an individual's membership of a professional body, which must be relevant to the individual's role or to maintain a licence to practice in some specialised areas such as Human Resources, Finance or Forensics.

5 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 SDD Corporate Support will assess requests on a case by case basis, according to the 'tests for fitness' (as detailed in section 4) and availability of funds to meet the costs of attendance. SDD Corporate Support will have responsibility for managing the centralised budget for conference attendance.
- 5.2 Details of the approved budget will be cascaded to Heads of Departments and SDD Corporate Support who will implement the policy and SOP.
- 5.3 Other costs directly associated with attendance at a conference will continue to be met via existing local budget arrangements. Bookings for travel and accommodation associated with a conference will continue to be arranged locally and not via the Conference Attendance Gateway.
- 5.4 A register of known conferences will continue to be published on the intranet by SDD (Horizon Scanning Manager). Approving managers can also liaise with the Horizon Scanning Manager to add other suitable conferences to the register that their staff have expressed an interest in.
- 5.5 Procurement cards should not be used to pay for conferences until SDD Corporate Support gives authorisation that the conference attendance request has been approved via the mandated Conference Attendance Gateway process.

- 5.6 Approving managers will need to determine who is best placed to attend or represent BTP at specific conferences and apply the 'tests for fitness' rationale to all requests. Support Groups will need to submit their applications to the Equality and Diversity Team Leader for authorisation. Advisory Groups will need to submit their applications to the Assistant Chief Constable of Territorial Policing or the Superintendent of Community Engagement. Upon satisfaction of the 'tests for fitness', requests should then be channelled via the Conference Attendance Gateway (BTP-Conference-Gateway@btp.pnn.police.uk).
- 5.7 When deciding whether to sanction or decline attendance to a conference; approving managers and SDD Corporate Support staff need to be mindful that decisions made should comply with the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Discrimination Act 2010.
- 5.8 On return from a conference, attendees should write a summary report using the sample conference attendance standard report template provided (see Appendix B) within two weeks of attending the conference. This should outline what the conference was about, the knowledge and value gained, and whether it could be recommended to future attendees. The completed conference report should be sent to the approving manager for review. The approving manager should then send this to (BTP-Conference-Gateway@btp.pnn.police.uk), for publication on the intranet.
- 5.9 The process map at Appendix B summarises the processes described above.

5.10 Cancellations and Non-Attendance

- 5.10.1 If for any reason, an approved conference is cancelled either by the organiser or due to circumstances outside BTP's control, every attempt should be made by the person attending the conference to ensure that any monies paid by BTP are reimbursed as quickly as possible.
- 5.10.2 There may be some circumstances where attendance to an approved conference is subsequently cancelled by BTP, due to operational requirements or because the employee who originally applied for the event cannot attend. Alternative arrangements

should be made to enable another appropriate BTP employee to attend the conference by the approving manager.

6 CONTROLS

- 6.1 To assist with the control and monitoring of expenditure in this area, FHQ Finance Department will ensure that the expenditure codes used and associated guidance are robust and fit for the purpose of control and monitoring; and that such guidance and instructions are understood by Area Finance Departments, Heads of Departments and budget holders.
- 6.2 Attendance of events that by their nature would be described as training, education or learning events is excluded from this. Detailed checks are carried out on each conference application on a case by case basis by SDD Corporate Support, FHQ Finance Department and the Procurement team. However, conferences relating to continuous professional development are included (see 'tests for fitness' in section 4 above).
- 6.3 Similarly, care needs to be taken to identify expenditure covered by this SOP that relates to **internal** conference and events organised by BTP. Measures are being taken by SDD Corporate Support and FHQ Finance Department to ensure that all expenditure relating to either external or internal conference attendance is appropriately recorded whether the payment is by way of invoice, procurement card or other means.
- 6.4 In the event of a conference supplier not being registered on the Finance System due to the nature of the business or because it is a one-off transaction, an alternative payment method such as procurement card (subject to transaction limits) could be used, provided all the required approvals have been obtained first. When submitting transaction logs, the card holder will ensure that the approved conference attendance application form is attached ([see Appendix A](#)) and that the correct cost centre and account code is included.



7 MANAGEMENT OF RECORDS

- 7.1 The records and data maintained in respect of the SOP have to be justified. As such, the Conference Register entries will be kept for four financial years from the creation date. At the beginning of the fourth financial year, the first year's data will be deleted.
- 7.2 Application forms will be deleted immediately after the conference date has passed in order to protect the personal details of applicants.

8 MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

- 8.1 This SOP will be regularly monitored for compliance through a combination of activities such as the four weekly meetings between FHQ Finance Department management accountant and SDD Corporate Support, checks for spend within approved budget, fitness for purpose, compliance testing and a general review of spend on conferences. SDD Corporate Support and FHQ Finance Department will monitor the general practice.
- 8.2 Periodically, SDD Corporate Support may request FHQ Finance Department to provide information and data, in a timely manner, on all expenditure made on conference attendance including those paid for using the BTP procurement card.

9 RELATED DOCUMENTATION AND APPENDICES

[Appendix A: Conference Attendance Standard Report Template](#)

[Appendix B: Process Map of the Management of Conference Attendance](#)

[Appendix C: Conference Attendance Application Form](#)