

# Administration of USG-Sponsored Conferences

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

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### **Overview:**

The University System of Georgia (USG) organizes conferences for various functional areas in support of the USG's mission to create a more educated Georgia. These conferences include those organized by Academic Affairs, Communications, Fiscal Affairs, HR, Legal, ITS, Internal Audit, Real Estate and Facilities and occasionally other USO departments or USG institutions. Many of these conferences involve representatives from each campus. The administration of these conferences is highly visible to campus staff and employees as well as to the general public through various social media outlets. The following are a list of frequently asked questions regarding conference planning and activities.

### **Funding by Vendors / Solicitation of Vendor Support**

- Q: Can USG employees contact USG vendors and other companies for the purposes of soliciting financial support for USG conferences to include conference receptions, conference meals, gifts and entertainment?
- A: No. DOAS guidance to the USG is that employees should not directly solicit conference sponsorships from current or prospective USG vendors. USG employees may charge vendors a reasonable registration or booth fee to help cover conference costs. Vendors and other companies may provide indirect external support of conferences so long as: 1) additional support is organized primarily by the vendor and paid for directly by the vendor; 2) vendor-provided support is available equally to all conference attendees; 3) the conference event is voluntary and not mandatory for employees to attend; 4) total expenses incurred by the vendor are less than \$100 per person, and; 5) there is not a purchasing solicitation in process for services or products provided by the vendor.

### **Door Prizes, Raffles & Giveaways**

- Q: Can employees accept giveaways at conferences?
- A: Yes. Promotional items from vendors, that are generally available to the public, can be accepted by employees. For example, it is permissible to provide attendees with a conference bag for them to place promotional items and literature from vendors. As a general rule, promotional items will typically display the vendor's name or logo. Examples include shirts, rulers, cups, can openers, hand sanitizers and stress balls.
- Q: Can vendors offer raffle tickets for prizes that are subsequently awarded at USG conferences?
- A: No. Employees cannot accept prizes from vendors that are not promotional items generally distributed to the public. Such a prize would be considered a gift and is prohibited by BOR policy.
- Q: Can attendee gifts such as t-shirts, umbrellas, sunglasses and coolers be purchased with registration fees and given away at USG conferences?
- A: As a general rule, registration fees for USG-sponsored conferences are E&G funds (state dollars) and should not be used for employee gifts. Some items directly related to employee job duties or the conference may be appropriate such as portfolios, pens, safety items, or items of limited to no value outside of their job duties.

Q: Can registration fees or other state funds be used to purchase raffle prizes or door prizes to be given away at USG-sponsored conferences?

A: No. Registration fees and other state funds should not be used for door prizes or similar employee gifts. Since registration fees are paid with E&G funds, their use should comply with rules surrounding E&G funds. Business supplies for conference attendees are an acceptable use of registration fees.

### **Entertainment & Team-building**

Q: Can registration fees or other state funds be used to provide entertainment to include live bands, disc jockeys, casino nights, fireworks, or golf tournaments at USG-sponsored conferences?

A: As a general rule, state dollars cannot be used for entertainment at USG-sponsored conferences. Legitimate team-building activities are permissible. Concerts, fireworks, poker nights, and visits to theme parks are not generally considered team-building events. These types of events are also discouraged at USG-Sponsored Conferences even if paid for by a vendor. Human Resources should be consulted in advance for guidance on the effectiveness and appropriateness of team-building activities that involve the use of USG resources.

If you have any questions regarding the planning of USG conferences, you should contact your immediate supervisor or the Controller's Office.

### **Relevant Resources:**

[BOR Ethics Policy](#)

[BOR Gratuities Policy](#)