

The Value of Government Meetings and Conferences



Government travel for meetings and conferences not only improves public-sector performance and efficiency, it also boosts private-sector productivity.

The Value of Government Meetings was conducted by Rockport Analytics, a research and analytical consulting firm and included two online surveys conducted between December 2012 and January 2013. Nearly 600 corporate executives and senior government decision makers were surveyed to determine the benefits of government meetings for key stakeholders in the public and private sectors. These surveys explored what is gained by face-to-face interaction with government officials and agencies, as well as what is lost when government officials do not attend meetings or conferences.

Private-sector executives report that government meetings deliver information not available anywhere else and add value to their firms.

- Nearly three-quarters (74%) of private-sector executives agreed that meetings and conferences where government employees were present added value to their firm through knowledge transfer.
- More than four-in-ten executives (43%) reported that meetings and conferences where government employees were present allowed them access to knowledge not available anywhere else.
- Among the private-sector executives surveyed, a majority (62%) reported that spending on meetings and conferences where government employees were present had a positive return, while very few (12%) felt the return on investment was negative.

Government travel for meetings and conferences benefits Americans and makes government more effective.

- A strong majority of government supervisors (89%) believe that government meetings and conferences benefit U.S. citizens. Among the gains cited by senior government decision makers:
 - More than two thirds (67%) report benefits from the communication of government services or programs;
 - Two thirds (66%) report benefits through general knowledge transfer; and
 - More than half (53%) report benefits from the communication of regulatory and legal standards.
- A vast majority of government respondents (85%) agreed that meetings and conferences added value to employee development and training:
 - Nearly three-quarters (71%) reported that government meetings and conferences add value to knowledge transfer and bridging information gaps; and
 - More than half (51%) reported that government meetings and conferences benefit strategic planning.
- While many respondents (34%) identified employee development as the primary benefit of government meetings, others cited knowledge transfer and the bridging of information gaps (23%) along with improved efficiency of services to taxpayers (15%) as important benefits of government meetings.

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The Value of Government Meetings and Conferences (CONTINUED)

Cancelling government attendance at meetings and conferences increases costs to taxpayers in the long run and undermines the performance of both the public and private sectors.

- Federal agencies, NASA and the Air Force pulled out of this year's National Space Symposium (NSS), the premier event for international space exploration and policy – even though this year it was hosted in the U.S.
 - Not having representatives from NASA, the Air Force and other federal agencies undermines the nation's position in international space diplomacy, acquisition of education to solve critical space challenges and the development of America's future space leaders.
 - Nonparticipation in the NSS also voids the cost efficiency of bringing all international space leaders together at one event – many of the foregone face-to-face meetings having to be rescheduled later as more expensive transient government travel.
 - The long-term impact of nonparticipation is significantly greater than the federal government's short-term cost savings of approximately \$550,000.
- The Military Health Systems Conference, a government-sponsored event that provides training for continuing medical education credits and educational benefits training not available elsewhere, was canceled in 2013 as a result of budget cuts.
 - The cost savings and efficiencies of bringing all branches of the military under one roof where they can work together to streamline processes, eliminate redundancies and reduce health care costs was lost.
 - When factoring in the costs of paying for replacement travel and unfulfilled continuing education credits, as well as the lost revenues that would have accrued from private sector exhibitors, the conference's cancellation actually will have cost the government \$813,000.