Office of the Secretary

Quarterly Conference Reporting Processes Need Improvement

OIG-13-001-I

What We Found

Our review found that, for this first conference report, the Department established initial operational processes and reporting guidance. However, these processes are still in development and need to become clearly established before the information in its periodic reports is fully reliable. We noted that:

- The bureaus over- and under-reported costs by $37,000 and $70,000, respectively, and reported $280,000 in unsupported costs.
- The Department accepted bureaus’ conference spending data with only a limited validation of the reported data and planning procedures, which resulted in incorrect reporting for select conferences.

The Department needs to address these concerns to ensure the reliability of conference data in future submissions.

What We Recommend

We recommend that the Director of the Office of Administrative Services:

1. Strengthen operating policy to ensure bureaus accurately report actual conference spending data, identify estimated costs, and provide updates to these estimates when actual costs become available.
2. Require bureaus to maintain supporting documentation for costs incurred, planning considerations, and decision justifications.
3. Acquire assurances from bureaus that all required conferences are included in the quarterly report.
4. Provide training to ensure clear understanding of developed policies, documentation requirements, and the conference spending data report process.
5. Develop a process to examine questionable costs and document results.
6. Conduct and document tests of the reasonableness of second quarter FY 2012 conference expenditure data provided by the bureaus.
7. Review bureau procedures for planning conferences and selecting facilities to ensure compliance with Departmental policies and procedures.