



Annual Conference Report Fiscal Year (FY) 2024

The Peace Corps was established by President John F. Kennedy by executive order on March 1, 1961, and formally authorized by Congress with the passage of the Peace Corps Act, shortly thereafter. The Peace Corps is an independent agency in the executive branch of the U.S. government. The agency was founded with the mission of promoting world peace and friendship by fostering relationships between the people of the United States and the people in countries where Volunteers serve.

Domestic and overseas conferences are a critical mechanism for the delivery of essential training and for collaboration among staff members regarding agency programs, operations, and procedures. The Peace Corps recognizes that conferences improve performance and increase the competencies of its staff. Nevertheless, the Peace Corps has a responsibility to act as a careful steward of taxpayer dollars, ensuring that funds are used for purposes that are appropriate, cost effective, and important to the agency's core mission. The Peace Corps exercises discretion and judgment in ensuring that conference expenses are appropriate, necessary, and managed in a manner that minimizes expense.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued Memorandum M-17-08, amending M-12-12, Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations, which directs agencies to report conferences with expenses that exceed \$100,000 for the previous fiscal year on their public website by January 31 of each year. This report lists all conferences that were sponsored by the agency during FY 2024 that meet the reporting threshold. Conference expenses were tracked by the sponsoring office; conference costs include participant travel costs, lodging, and meals and incidental expenses, as well as food, audio-visual and supplies, and venue expenses.

Peace Corps FY 2024 Annual Report on Conferences with Expenses in Excess of \$100,000

Name of Conference	Conference Description	Start Date	End Date	Location	Attendee Count	Conference Cost
Africa (AF) Region Country Director (CD) Conference	The purpose of the conference is to bring together AF Region CDs and relevant HQ offices to collaborate on and to discuss topics of regional importance.	9/30/2023	10/6/2023	Accra, Ghana	56	\$ 286,573
Safety and Security Manager (SSM) and Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer (PCSSO) Conference	This global PCSSO and SSM conference focuses on updated Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) trainings, investigations and resources. This biennial conference is a statutory requirement and closes out several outstanding Sexual Assault Advisory Council recommendations.	10/7/2023	10/21/2023	Houston, TX	133	\$ 566,082
Inter-America and Pacific (IAP) Region Programming and Training (P&T) Conference	The purpose of this conference is to bring together IAP P&T team members to discuss core training-related topics of regional importance, including effective learning assessments design, fully leveraging the Volunteer competency model, blended learning approaches and incorporating Intercultural Competency, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (ICDEIA) into the training continuum.	11/27/2023	12/1/2023	Quito, Ecuador	53	\$ 150,334
AF Region Climate Change Conference	The purpose of this conference is for participating posts to be able to access relevant and host country-specific climate change information and use it to implement an informed process to identify opportunities and integrate activities into current sector development programming that address host country and community-level climate change risks.	12/4/2023	12/8/2023	Windhoek, Namibia	65	\$ 241,177
President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Implementation Conference	The purpose of this conference is to standardize PEPFAR implementation training across all PEPFAR funded posts, to help align post programs and operations to the new Peace Corps HIV strategy, and to refresh post staff on PEPFAR objectives and financial management.	4/8/2024	4/11/2024	Cape Town, South Africa	69	\$ 235,396
IAP Region P&T Conference	The purpose of this conference is to bring together IAP P&T team members to discuss core P&T topics of regional importance, including effective management practices, support for service, and centering communities in P&T approaches.	4/22/2024	4/26/2024	Miami, Florida	47	\$ 152,625
Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia (EMA) Region CD Conference	The purpose of this conference is to bring together EMA Region's CDs to discuss topics of regional importance, including effective management practices, support for Volunteers, and Volunteer resiliency and retention.	6/1/2024	6/7/2024	Skopje, North Macedonia	43	\$ 152,146
Global Small Grants Coordinators (SGC) Workshop	The purpose of this conference is to train SGCs on small grants policies and procedures, grant design, application review, the Volunteer Reporting and Grants tool, grant closeout, and the various grant funding sources.	6/10/2024	6/14/2024	Atlanta, GA	69	\$ 307,582
AF Region CD Conference	The purpose of this conference is to bring together AF Region's CDs and HQ offices to collaborate on and share best practices and to discuss implementation of HQ policies and procedures, ICDEIA, SAPR, and other topics of regional importance.	6/24/2024	6/28/2024	Dar es Salaam, Tanzania	63	\$ 251,000
Volunteer Recruitment and Selection (VRS) All-Staff Training	The purpose of this conference is to provide VRS staff with training to meet their goals and recruit future Volunteers through sharing of best practices and lessons learned and the introduction of innovative approaches to recruitment and selection.	7/15/2024	7/19/2024	Atlanta, GA	160	\$ 518,658
Volunteer Support Coordinator (VSC) Community of Practice Workshop	The purpose of this conference is to provide technical, practical knowledge and standardized operational tools for VSCs across posts to streamline post operations and to ensure quality service to Volunteers.	8/5/2024	8/9/2024	Washington, DC	31	\$ 154,174

Peace Corps FY 2024 Annual Report on Conferences with Expenses in Excess of \$100,000

Name of Conference	Conference Description	Start Date	End Date	Location	Attendee Count	Conference Cost
Human Resources (HR) Community of Practice Workshop	The purpose of this conference is to build HR staff capacity at posts, to share best practices, and to connect HR Specialists with agency HR resources to be able to fulfill the broader range of HR duties needed at posts.	8/12/2024	8/16/2024	Washington, DC	57	\$ 194,950
IAP Region CD Conference	The purpose of this conference is to bring together the IAP Region's CDs with HQ offices to discuss topics of regional importance, including effective management practices, Volunteer support, and upcoming staffing and operating plans.	9/8/2024	9/13/2024	Panama City, Panama	41	\$ 175,658
AF Region Programming, Training, and Evaluation (PTE) Leaders Conference	The purpose of this conference is to share PTE best practices, address key agency P&T initiatives, including improving site management, staff training and development, training design and assessment, climate change, pre-service training implementation, integration of technology, enhancing language learning throughout service, and fostering a diverse and inclusive culture of Volunteer support.	9/16/2024	9/20/2024	Mbabane, Eswatini	42	\$ 113,121



May 3, 2023

DECISION MEMORANDUM TO THE DIRECTOR

TO: Carol Spahn, Director

THROUGH: Thomas Peng, Chief of Operations and Administration **LAUREN STEPHENS**

FROM: John Allen, Acting Associate Director for Safety and Security **JOHN ALLEN**

SUBJECT: **Approval for Safety and Security Conference over \$500,000**

Digitally signed by LAUREN STEPHENS
Date: 2023.05.10 14:58:20 -04'00'

Digitally signed by JOHN ALLEN
Date: 2023.05.04 15:23:34 -04'00'

Purpose: This request is for the Director's approval of the 2023 Combined Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer (PCSSO) and Safety and Security Manager (SSM) Global Conference, planned for October 2023 in Houston, TX. The projected estimate for the conference could possibly exceed \$500,000.

Background: The Office of Safety and Security (OSS) conducts training conferences for SSMs every two years and professional staff training for PCSSOs every year. OSS periodically combines the two conferences when an important change in policy or procedure requires a uniform message, as is the case for this year's conference. The focus of the conference will be on training all security staff on implementing new and improved SAPR trainings for Volunteers, victim-centered and trauma informed interviewing techniques, and enhanced victim support resources that will close out several outstanding Sexual Assault Advisory Committee (SAAC) recommendations.

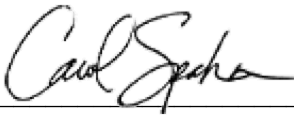
As preparations and research began for the conference, OSS and Regions agreed to include Safety and Security Assistants (SSAs) and other SSM backup staff in the training. Since OSS's conference budget could not accommodate the roughly 30 additional staff, Regions agreed to fund the extra participant costs. The attached pre-conference approval form includes those extra Region-funded participants which puts the cost above OSS's conference budget of \$330,000, but a request for additional funds is not necessary.

OSS has labored to reduce the projected costs, moving the initial desired location from Atlanta to Houston to save approximately \$40,000 on per diem costs alone. Although the estimated conference cost is \$460,000, an amount below the \$500,000 threshold, the pre-conference approval form automatically builds in a contingency for unanticipated expenses and generated a not-to-exceed amount of approximately \$575,000. Thus, this request for the Director's approval is for that contingency.

Timeline: Request approval by **COB May 10, 2023.**

Recommendation: The Office of Safety and Security recommends the Director's approval of the 2023 Combined PCSSO and SSM Global Conference, which may exceed the federal \$500,000 threshold for conferences.

Decision:

Approve/date  05/11/2023

Disapprove/date _____

Needs discussion/date _____

By the Director:

Attachment: Pre-Conference Approval Form



June 26, 2024

DECISION MEMORANDUM

TO: Carol Spahn, Director

THROUGH: Lauren Stephens, Chief of Staff **LAUREN STEPHENS** Digitally signed by LAUREN STEPHENS Date: 2024.06.28 10:01:13 -04'00'

FROM: Jennifer Brown, Associate Director, Volunteer Recruitment and Selection **Franklin, Darren** Digitally signed by Franklin, Darren Date: 2024.06.27 09:02:38 -04'00'

SUBJECT: Approval for All Volunteer Recruitment and Selection (VRS) Training Conference Spending Exceeding \$500,000

PURPOSE

In accordance with Domestic Financial Manual Handbook 38.5.2 and OMB Memorandum M-17-08, this request is for the Director's approval of the 2024 All Volunteer Recruitment and Selection Training (AVT) planned for July 15, 2024 to July 19, 2024 in Atlanta, GA, given that estimated spending for the conference will exceed \$500,000.

BACKGROUND

It is the mission of the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection (VRS) to promote the Peace Corps and to recruit and place qualified people who represent the diversity of the United States to serve in overseas programs to meet the needs of Peace Corps' host countries. VRS consists of five Peace Corps Headquarters sub-offices: Recruitment and Diversity, the Office of Assessment and Placement, the Office of Administrative Operations, the Office of Analysis and Evaluation, and the Office of University Programs. VRS staff work throughout the U.S., in multiple duty stations across the country.

The total estimated cost for the four-day Atlanta, GA conference is \$521,102. This is based on estimated travel, lodging, and per diem costs for attendees from VRS and partner offices that will require travel and other accommodations. This total also includes costs associated with supplies for the conference, speaker accommodations, and miscellany detailed in the attached Pre-Conference Approval Template.

Multiple locations were researched and reviewed as possible event locations. Atlanta and the conference venue were selected after an evaluation and assessment process of locations and

venues that considered conference space capacity, proximity to public transportation and dining, and fit within local per diem rates. Atlanta proved to be the most cost-effective option, with availability of hotel options and flights for people flying in from across the country.

The overall mission of VRS, is to work in partnership with agency stakeholder teams, to significantly increase the number of accepted invitations by qualified candidates who reflect the diversity of the U.S. The AVT is directly aligned with and supports the performance goals outlined in the VRS FY 2024 Strategic Plan, and will assist VRS offices to:

1. Develop and implement a VRS recruitment strategy that has “platinum customer service” as a core principle, and maximizes opportunities to attract and place quality candidates that reflect the diversity of the U.S.
2. Revise and implement VRS strategy that strengthens Volunteer selection, retention, and placement through streamlined processes that ensure equity for both candidates and posts.
3. Improve data management capacities and implement business process solutions to strengthen VRS operations and improve decision-making.
4. Create a VRS team culture where people want to work and stay.
5. Proactively engage, coordinate, and advocate for support from senior leadership and agency stakeholders.

To carry out VRS’ mission and implement the VRS strategic plan, extensive in-person training is required. The AVT is specifically designed to promote VRS’ mission by providing staff with the training required to meet their goals and recruit future Volunteers. This training will facilitate knowledge sharing, an exchange of lessons learned and best practices, discuss innovative approaches, and introduce innovative concepts to the VRS Team. Sessions will address individual and team professional development in support of effective, and efficient VRS programming, all of which advances the agency's mission.

In collaboration with VRS staff working toward these goals, agency stakeholders will attend and participate in the training. Invited stakeholders include representatives from the Office of the Director, Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Office of Acquisition and Contract Management, Office of Staff Learning and Development, Office of the General Counsel, Peace Corps Response, Office of External Affairs, and others. Furthermore, attendees will have the opportunity to speak and connect with returned Peace Corps Volunteers and community stakeholders.

The AVT is an annual event. Based on feedback from the 2023 AVT, staff attendees requested to have more dedicated time for learning and collaboration with colleagues. This year's AVT addresses that critical need by extending the conference from a three-day to a four-day conference.

ATTACHMENT
Pre-Conference Approval Form

RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Volunteer and Recruitment Services (VRS) recommends the Director's approval of the 2024 All VRS Training, which will exceed the \$500,000 threshold for conference spending.

DECISION

- Approve
- Not Approve
- Needs Discussion



Carol Spahn, Director

7/1/24

Date