



MEETING PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL



For Immediate Release
February 9, 2009

Contacts: Kristy Chandler
202.408.2172
kchandler@ustravel.org

Travel Community Issues Guidelines for Use of Meetings and Events by Recipients of Emergency Government Assistance

Policies Support Prudent Use of Taxpayer Dollars, While Preserving Downstream Creation of Jobs, Economic Growth

Meetings and Events are Lifeblood of Many Local Communities

Washington, D.C. – Leaders from key organizations representing the meetings, events and incentive travel industries united to issue guidelines on acceptable business travel practices to companies that have received emergency government lending. The guidelines, built upon existing corporate best practices, are designed to ensure transparency and accountability and protect the one million American jobs supported by corporate meetings and events.

“The business practices of our customers impact the welfare of our industry, our employee base and the economic health of the communities where we do business,” said Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association. “Working collaboratively, associations representing the meetings, events and incentive travel industries are addressing an urgent public need by developing clear, prudent guidelines for companies that have received taxpayer dollars.”

The standards support President Obama’s recent call for the boards of directors of companies that have received emergency government lending to develop guidelines on conferences, events and employee recognition programs. Highlights from the guidelines include:

(more)

- Conferences or events with a cost exceeding \$75,000 must be supported by a written business case identifying a specific business purpose and positive return on objective and investment metrics;
- At least 90 percent of incentive program attendees shall be other than senior executives (as defined by Treasury Department guidelines) from the host organization; and
- Total annual expenses for meetings, events and incentive/recognition travel shall not exceed 15 percent of the company's total sales and marketing spend.

Meetings and events are responsible for 15 percent of all travel-related spending, create nearly \$40 billion in tax revenue at the federal, state and local level and generate more than one million jobs. Without the jobs generated by meetings, events and incentive travel, the current unemployment rate of 7.6 percent would rise to 8.2 percent and cost the average American household an additional \$136 in taxes annually.

“At a time when the Department of Labor reports a loss of nearly 200,000 travel related jobs in 2008 and U.S. Commerce Department data predicts a loss of an additional 247,000 travel related jobs in 2009, it is critical that every effort be made to protect beneficial meetings and events,” said Dow. “Our associations are hopeful that with stringent, transparent standards in place, policymakers and the business community can embrace meetings, events and incentive travel as responsible economic stimulants.”

While the metrics outlined in the guidelines are intended for the recipients of emergency government lending, the drafters understand that many other organizations may consider the policy. In those cases, it should be noted that the metrics may vary based on industry size, company size and market sectors.

***American Hotel and Lodging Association
Destination Marketing Association International
International Association of Exhibitions and Events
Meeting Professionals International
National Business Travel Association
Professional Convention Management Association
Site (Society of Incentive & Travel Executives)
U.S. Travel Association***

To view full list of guidelines, please visit www.ustravel.org.

###

The U.S. Travel Association is the national, non-profit organization representing all components of the \$740 billion travel industry. U.S. Travel's mission is to promote and facilitate increased travel to and within the United States. For more information, visit www.ustravel.org.

Read the Model Board Policy for Approval of Meetings, Events and Incentive/Recognition Travel