

Professional development in the New Orleans? Use federal funds for LRP's 2026 National Institute

IDEA funds can be used for registration to attend professional development workshops, including LRP's National Institute on Legal Issues of Educating Individuals with Disabilities® in New Orleans, April 26 - 29, 2026. At the 2026 National Institute, experts will deliver compliance strategies, best practices, and case law updates that districts can turn to throughout the school year.

The cost of registration to attend professional development workshops is allowable for IDEA Part B grantees as long as the professional development relates to the provision of special education and related services. It must also comply with U.S. Education Department guidance and with the general cost principles of the *Uniform Guidance*:

Title 2—Federal Financial Assistance
CHAPTER III—DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
PART 376—NONPROCUREMENT DEBARMENT AND SUSPENSION
Subpart C—Responsibilities of Participants Regarding Transactions

§ 376.332 What methods must I use to pass requirements down to participants at lower tiers with whom I intend to do business?

To communicate the requirements to lower-tier participants, you must include a term or condition in the lower-tier transaction requiring the lower-tier participant's compliance with 2 CFR part 180, as supplemented by this subpart.

Federal education grantees should "consider whether the goals and objectives of the grant can be achieved without attending the meeting or conference and whether there is an equally effective and more efficient way (in terms of time and money) to achieve the goals and objectives of the grant," according to *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to Assist U.S. Department of Education (ED) Grantees to Appropriately Use Federal Funds for Food, Conferences, and Meetings*, 124 LRP 36359 (EDU 08/01/24), Q-15. If there is no other way to achieve the goals and objectives of the grant than attending the meeting or conference, the cost could be considered necessary.

The guidance says grantees should compare the costs of attending the conference with similar events and consider "whether the public would view the expenses as a worthwhile use of federal funds." If the expenses would be worthwhile, they could be considered reasonable.

If the travel costs meet both the necessary and reasonable standards, federal grant funds may pay for travel expenses of grantee employees, consultants, or experts to attend a meeting or conference.

The guidance notes that allowable travel expenses may also include reasonable and necessary costs for transportation, per diem, and lodging. However, federal funds must never be used for alcohol. *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to Assist U.S. Department of Education (ED) Grantees to Appropriately Use Federal Funds for Food, Conferences, and Meetings*, 124 LRP 36359 (EDU 08/01/24), Q-17.

Uniform Guidance provisions to know

According to the Uniform Guidance, federal funds can be used for the following if they are properly accounted for and meet the reasonable and necessary standards:

- Attending a conference, including registration, room, and travel. 2 CFR 200.432.
- Hosting a conference, such as speaker fees, facility rental fees, and transportation costs, unless restricted by the federal program. 2 CFR 200.432.
- Membership in business, technical, or professional organizations. 2 CFR 200.454 (a).
- Online professional courses. 2 CFR 200.473.
- Subscription to a business, technical, or professional periodical. 2 CFR 200.454 (b)

To make sure you are in compliance, consult your state and local spending rules and regulations. Also, maintain adequate documentation to meet reporting requirements under the federal Education Department General Administrative Regulations and the Uniform Guidance.