

# Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

December 2009



## Objective

To respond to Senator Grassley's July 16, 2009 letter requesting we (1) conduct an audit of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) July 2009 training conference in Phoenix, Arizona; (2) determine the number of training conferences conducted by the Agency over the past 8 years; and (3) provide information pertaining to all Office of the Inspector General investigations, audits, and evaluations conducted on conference events at SSA over the past 5 fiscal years.

## Background

From July 7 to 9, 2009, the San Francisco Region conducted a Regional Management Training Forum (Training Forum) at the Arizona Biltmore Hotel in Phoenix, Arizona. Approximately 670 SSA management officials from across the Region and Headquarters in Baltimore attended. The agenda included presentations from SSA and non-SSA speakers.

To view the full report, visit <http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO/BEPDF/A-05-09-29174.pdf>

## Congressional Response Report: San Francisco Regional Management Training Forum (A-05-09-29174)

### Our Findings

In general, we found the majority of the approximately \$675,000 in costs incurred at the Training Forum was properly supported and in compliance with Agency guidance and applicable laws and regulations. However, we found approximately \$13,400 in questionable costs related to refreshments at an employee reception the first night of the Training Forum. We do not believe this reception met the established criteria for such refreshments. We also found the Region may have inappropriately accepted gifts and donations for the conference. In addition, we found that regional staff could have maintained better contract procurement documentation related to the trainers.

While the training conference was consistent with the Region's 5-year training plan, we found the Agency's conference practices were inconsistent with its published policies calling for centralized approval and reporting on conferences. SSA management recently addressed this oversight issue by establishing new conference guidance.

In terms of prior conferences, we determined SSA had held approximately 180 conferences since January 1, 2001 for approximately 34,000 attendees at a cost to the Agency of about \$26 million. Our office has conducted three audits and one investigation related to training conferences at SSA in the past 5 years. One audit of administrative law judge conferences and the investigation of a Diversity Conference identified Agency oversight issues.