The National Institutes of Health (NIH) issued a new notice on January 27, 2012 which modifies longstanding grants policy. Effective immediately, NIH will implement the HHS Policy on Promoting Efficient Spending: Use of Appropriated Funds for Conferences and Meetings, Food, Promotional Items, and Printing and Publications. Please review the NIH Policy on Efficient Spending Related to Grants Supporting Conferences and Meetings (NOT-OD-12-041) in its entirety at the provided link.

The new policy applies to NIH Grants and Cooperative Agreements where the primary purpose of the grant is to support a Conference and/or Scientific Meeting (i.e. R13s and U13s); however per the NIH’s notice, other grant mechanisms that are specifically issued to support conferences will be considered on a case by case basis. Highlights from the notice are provided below:

New Policy Affecting Grant Awards: Effective with grant awards issued on/after 1/27/2012, a new term and condition which prohibits food/meal costs from being supported or charged to NIH-supported conference grants will be included on all competing and noncompeting NIH R13 and U13 awards. Specifically, the following term will apply:

“Direct charges for meals/food and beverages are unallowable charges to this project.”

For conference grants previously awarded with Federal FY2012 funds, NIH will not revise the award to modify the terms and conditions of the grants. However, grantees are strongly encouraged to apply this new policy broadly to all active R13 and U13 awards. The Office of Grant and Contract Financial Administration (GCFA) will be contacting Business Offices that are currently awarded and manage these type awards to ensure the proper awareness of the new policy.

New Policy Affecting Applications: The parent conference grant funding opportunity announcement (FOA) and other active R13/U13 FOAs will be revised to specify that meals/food and beverages are unallowable charges to NIH-supported conference grants. Applicants preparing applications for the April 12, 2012 and subsequent due dates must submit application requests in accordance with this new policy.

For applications already submitted, the NIH awarding component will ensure all applications selected for funding are awarded in accordance with this new policy.

Research Grants and Other Mechanisms that are not Awarded Specifically to Support Conferences: The policy does not apply to research grants and other mechanism that are not awarded specifically to support conferences. Any meetings conducted under these programs are considered an ancillary effort under the grant and cooperative agreement and are not subject to the new policy. In these cases, the allowability of food-related costs is governed by the respective cost principles and the terms of award which include references to the NIH Grants Policy Statement.

Please feel free to contact your GCFA representative if you have any questions or need additional assistance.