



March 3, 2009

The Honorable Timothy F. Geithner  
Secretary  
Department of the Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Geithner:

Political and media criticism of decisions made by a few businesses that received Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP) support is resulting in massive cancellations of legitimate meetings and events and is severely hurting hourly wage workers nationwide.

On behalf of the entire travel, meetings and events industries, I am writing to express our deep concern with how this important issue is being handled. I urge you to work with us to devise sensible meetings and events guidelines for recipients of taxpayer dollars.

One out of every eight Americans is employed in the travel industry. Business travel annually creates 2.4 million jobs, \$240 billion in spending and nearly \$40 billion in tax revenue. But, according to data from the U.S. Departments of Labor and Commerce, nearly 450,000 travel-related jobs will be lost between 2008 and 2009 – and these projections were issued before some chose to turn meetings, events and the hourly jobs they create into a political punching bag. The travel community can adapt to economic cycles, but not to government-led efforts that deter consumers from using our products and services.

The Administration announced that the recently signed economic recovery legislation would create or save nearly 500,000 jobs in the travel industry. That goal will not be reached unless you calm the marketplace by immediately devising sensible travel guidelines for companies receiving emergency government lending. It is critical that a strong signal be sent to American business that meetings, events and other forms of travel are essential components to strengthening America's economy.

The U.S. Travel Association, in partnership with other leading meetings and events organizations, recently released a ten-point policy for companies using taxpayer dollars. Our Code of Conduct, enclosed and available at [www.ustravel.org](http://www.ustravel.org), demands transparency, accountability and a clear business case for corporate meetings and events.

Secretary Geithner, the industry stands ready to work with you to create jobs, increase consumer spending and restore the American economy. I look forward to meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss the nationwide crisis that our industry and workers are experiencing. I am confident that if we work together, we can help you to devise meaningful and sensible guidelines that will both stabilize our industry and responsibly revitalize American business travel.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger Dow". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Roger Dow  
President & CEO

This model Code of Conduct is intended for adoption by companies receiving emergency lending from the federal government. If other companies are interested in adopting these guidelines, they may choose to alter metrics based upon industry size, company size and market sector.

## **Model Board Policy for Approval of Meetings, Events and Incentive/Recognition Travel**

1. General policy statement: The CEO shall be responsible for implementing adequate controls to assure that meetings, events and incentive/recognition travel organized by the company serve legitimate business purposes and are cost justified.
2. All proposed meetings, events and incentive/recognition travel organized by the company must serve one or more specified legitimate business purposes (see representative listing attached). Each proposed meeting, event or incentive/recognition travel with a cost exceeding \$75,000 must be supported by a written business case identifying a specific business purpose.
3. Total annual expenses for meetings, events and incentive/recognition travel shall not exceed 15 percent of the company's total sales and marketing spend.
4. The amount spent for an employee performance incentive/recognition event shall not exceed two (2) percent of the total compensation of eligible participants or 10 percent of total award earners' compensation.
5. The process for approving meetings, events and incentive/recognition travel, and the procedures for assuring adherence to this policy, will be subject to independent audit to confirm policy adherence.
6. At least 90 percent of incentive program attendees shall be other than senior executives (as defined by applicable Treasury Department guidelines) from the host organization.
7. Performance incentives shall not promote excessive or unnecessary risk-taking or manipulation of financial results.
8. All internal meetings or events attended only by senior executives (as defined by applicable Treasury Department guidelines) and/or board members shall be devoted to specific business purposes, and participating senior executives shall be responsible for any expenses incurred for non-business related activities.
9. The CEO of the company shall certify to the board at least annually that the foregoing policies are being followed, and are sufficient to provide reasonable assurance that the company's expenditures for such purposes are not excessive.
10. These policies shall be subject to modification only with board approval stating the specific business rationale for the change in policy.

*Developed by the 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, Society of Incentive Travel Executives and the U.S. Travel Association in consultation with Maritz.*

**Examples of Legitimate Business Purposes for Meetings, Events, Incentive/Recognition Travel**

As with all business expenditures authorized in these challenging circumstances, all proposed expenditures for meetings, events and incentive/recognition travel should be made to strengthen the competitive position of the company in the marketplace and position the company for the creation of long-term value and growth. Below is a representative list of legitimate business purposes for meetings, events and incentive/recognition travel.

- Effective product launches to educate sales force, channel partners and customers.
- Sales conferences and employee meetings to align vision, strategy and tactics.
- Training and staff development meetings - learning environments conducive to adult learning and professional development, improving participants' skills at their trade and/or their familiarity with the company's products or services.
- Employee recognition programs to motivate and reward employees for achievement and productivity.
- Professional conferences that provide networking, education and best practice sharing across companies and industries.
- Performance incentives with clear rule structures that are designed to motivate and reward high performers for exceeding established goals that generate incremental revenue growth for their respective organizations and that are beyond the investment in the program.
- User conferences for customers utilizing the company's products or services to obtain feedback, build networks, provide product training and capture ideas for enhancements to the company's product offerings.
- Product development events designed to generate feedback for research and development purposes.
- Corporate-sponsored events that further charitable purposes.
- Trade shows and similar events that bring prospective buyers and sellers together.
- Strategic, business and financial planning and review meetings.
- Employee meetings as a result of company mergers and/or acquisitions for the purpose of alignment of products, brands and cultures.