



### Why This Matters

In June 2011, the President's Executive Order "Delivering an Efficient, Effective and Accountable Government" launched the Campaign to Cut Waste, which intensified efforts to identify areas across the Government where waste or excess may exist, and to take immediate steps to address them. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) followed by issuing specific guidance over conferences. These efforts curtail conference spending and institute strict policies and controls over conferences to ensure that conference expenditures are cost-effective, clearly advance the mission and programmatic goals of the agency, and represent the optimal use of Federal funds.

### DHS Response

DHS concurred with our recommendation to assist in improving oversight and reporting of conference planning and approval of activities across the Department. DHS responded it has taken positive steps to comply with applicable policies and requirements over conferences. The Department will continue to improve on its processes, working toward sustainable conference controls and ensuring that conference spending is driven by critical mission requirements and is in the best interest of the Government and taxpayers.

### For Further Information:

Contact our Office of Public Affairs at (202)254-4100, or email us at [DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@oig.dhs.gov](mailto:DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@oig.dhs.gov)

## DHS' Policies and Procedures Over Conferences

### What We Determined

This audit was conducted in response to a mandate from the House Appropriations Committee, which directed the Office of Inspector General to report no later than 30 days after the date of enactment of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Fiscal Year 2013 Appropriations Bill whether it has effective procedures in place to ensure compliance with all applicable Federal laws and regulations on conferences. The Fiscal Year 2013 Appropriations Bill was enacted on March 26, 2013.

DHS conducts and participates in conferences for various purposes, including employee and stakeholder training, information sharing, and mission support. According to the Department, it participated in 1,094 conferences in fiscal year 2012, with expenditures totaling approximately \$21.6 million.

DHS has established policies and procedures to ensure conference spending is appropriate and in the best interest of the U.S. Government and taxpayers, but further improvements are needed. Although the Department complies with most aspects of the Office of Management and Budget's guidance, it has not finalized its guidance on conferences, and has not always adhered to its policies on conference oversight. To that end, DHS cannot be assured that all conference spending is appropriate or in the best interest of the U.S. Government and taxpayers.

### What We Recommend

The Chief Financial Officer, Department of Homeland Security:

Comply with OMB and Departmental guidance to ensure that—

- Components are submitting all conferences for review and approval;
- The attendance tracking tool actually captures attendance data and is being used by all Components;
- All Components have updated their Conference policy requirements to ensure compliance with DHS-wide policy requirements; and
- The Annual Quality Control Review is conducted for FY 2013, and a plan is implemented to conduct testing for all future fiscal years.