



# What Federal Employees Say About Government Meetings

Leaders across industries are asking: What will it take to make government more collaborative, innovative and effective? Here, Meetings Mean Business (MMB) goes directly to the source. By polling federal employees, MMB offers important insight on the value of government meetings and the impact of current government meetings and travel policies. Below are quotes from 15 federal employees, all of whom organize, attend or influence meetings and travel as part of their jobs.\*

## The Value of Government Meetings

- “There is nothing more important than meeting people face-to-face.”
- “In-person meetings allow for networking [and] relaxed conversations that establish important relations between different parties.”
- “True collaboration is best advanced in-person so you don’t lose tone, body language and other nonverbal forms of communication.”
- “The agency I’m with has a lot of outside stakeholders... We keep our ears to the ground in face-to-face meetings. We can report to [stakeholders] and listen to what they have to say.”
- “Personal delivery is best in communicating messages clearly, avoiding misinterpretation. It allows for immediate dialogue and not delayed email exchanges.”
- “At my agency, some in-person meetings are panel reviews and people fly in from all over the United States to review things related to academia.”
- “There’s a lot to be said about face-to-face meetings to exchange ideas.”

## The Impact of Government Meetings and Travel Restrictions

- “The general attitude is that traveling for any reason is frowned upon and is under great scrutiny, so it’s just easier to not do it than deal with potential negative connotations.”
- “Due to previous scandals and waste and excessive spending, there is much more scrutiny. Travel has been made much more difficult for legitimate employee travel.”
- “There are policies that limit the number of personnel from each federal agency to attend conferences. This seems prohibitive for training [and] educational purposes. The budget alone is restrictive.”
- “While an employee with the government, I basically couldn’t travel – even for legitimate purposes – simply because of perception.”
- “There are conversations within government about the policies that make it difficult for travel meetings and conferences, so we use more video conferencing to save funds. We use our best judgment to use our travel funds where a face-to-face conference is most needed.”
- “All federal government employees are being punished for the errors of a few.”
- “Many of our agency’s meetings had to be cancelled. Because of the Spartan downplay imposed upon all by the foolish behavior of a few, attendee numbers at meetings have declined overall.”
- “Government travel guidelines and policies are highly regulated and provide strict guidance for agencies to follow. Often such restrictions are at the cost of not allowing much needed in-person professional development opportunities to enrich government employee staff.”

*\*These quotes were collected as part of a survey, commissioned in March 2015 by MMB and conducted by APCO Insight. Participants’ names and organizations are omitted to preserve their anonymity.*