

OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments

AGENCY: Office of Management and Budget.

ACTION: Final Revision to OMB Circular A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments".

SUMMARY: An interagency task force was established to review existing cost principles for Federal awards to State and local governments. The task force studied Inspector General reports and recommendations, solicited suggestions for changes to the Circular from State and local governments, and compared for consistency the provisions of other Office of Management and Budget cost principles covering non-profit organizations and universities. Proposed revisions reflecting the results of those efforts were published on October 12, 1988 (53 FR 40352-40367) and August 19, 1993 (58 FR 44212-44234). The extensive comments received on these proposed revisions, discussions with interested groups, and other related developments were considered in developing this final revision.

DATES: Agencies shall issue codified regulations to implement the provisions of this Circular by September 1, 1995.

ADDRESSES: Office of Management and Budget, Office of Federal Financial Management, Financial Standards and Reporting Branch, Room 6025, New Executive Office Building, Washington, DC 20503. For a copy of the revised Circular, contact Office of Administration, Publications Office, Room 2200, New Executive Office Building, Washington, DC 20503, or telephone (202)395-7332.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Non-Federal organizations should contact the organization's cognizant Federal funding agency. Federal agencies should contact Gilbert H. Tran, Financial Standards and Reporting Branch, Office of Federal Financial Management, Office of Management and Budget, telephone: (202)395-3993.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

A. Background

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) received about 200 comments from governmental units, Federal agencies, professional organizations and others in response to the **Federal Register** notice of August 19, 1993 (58 FR 44212). All comments were considered in developing this final revision.

OMB also considered the National Performance Review's recommendations to reduce paperwork and red tape. Changes were made to the Circular to streamline the cost negotiation process and defer to State and local accounting procedures whenever possible. Also, the policy guides in the Circular were amended to provide that Federal agencies should work with States or localities which wish to test alternative mechanisms for paying costs for administering Federal programs.

Section B presents a summary of the major public comments grouped by subject and a response to each comment. Other changes have been made to increase clarity and readability. Section C addresses procurement issues. Section D discusses the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act of 1994.

B. Public Comments and Responses

Basic Circular

Comment: The policy subsection states that "no provision for profit or increment above allowable cost is intended." This statement is currently contained in the Circular, but it is different from that contained in other OMB cost principles circulars and is literally incorrect. This seems to say no profit or increment above cost is permitted.

Response: This sentence was changed to conform with the other OMB cost principles circulars. There is no policy change intended by this change.

General Principles for Determining Allowable Costs—Attachment A

Comment: The requirement in the basic guidelines that "a cost may not be assigned to a Federal award as a direct cost if any other cost incurred for the same purpose in like circumstances has been allocated to a Federal award as an indirect cost" appears to be too expansive and should be clarified.

Response: There is no policy change intended from that in the existing Circular. The wording in the consistency provision was changed to make it clear that all costs incurred for the same purpose in like circumstances are either direct costs only or indirect costs only with respect to final cost objectives (e.g., grants). No final cost objective shall have allocated to it as an indirect cost any cost if other costs incurred for the same purpose, in like circumstances, have been included as a direct cost of that or any other final cost objective. For example, a grantee normally allocates all travel as an indirect cost. For purposes of a new grant proposal, the grantee intends to allocate the travel costs of personnel

whose time is accounted for as direct labor directly to the grant. Since travel costs of personnel whose time is accounted for as direct labor working on other grants are costs which are incurred for the same purpose, these costs may no longer be included within indirect cost pools for purposes of allocation to any other grant.

Comment: The Circular lists the market price of comparable goods or services as one test of reasonableness. This statement may cause problems for State agencies that are required to make purchases from State-wide contracts.

Response: OMB recognizes that market fluctuations may result in a State paying higher prices on State-wide contracts. However, significant differences between State prices and market prices should be analyzed. For example, Federal awards should not be paying higher prices for State awards based on geographical preferences.

Comment: The prohibition against shifting costs allocable to a particular Federal award or other cost objective to other Federal awards needs to be clarified. Governmental units should not be precluded from shifting allowable cost in accordance with program agreements.

Response: This section was expanded to recognize that there are instances when it may be appropriate for governmental units to transfer costs from one cost objective to another cost objective.

Comment: It is not logical to require governmental units to allocate indirect costs to all activities including donated services.

Response: The Circular is designed to provide that Federal awards bear their fair share of costs. If non-Federal activities use donated services that require a substantial amount of support costs, it would be inequitable to charge these costs to Federal awards.

Comment: The section on applicable credits needs to be clarified.

Response: The language in this section has been revised to remove inappropriate examples of applicable credits and references to program income which are covered by the grants management common rule.

Selected Items of Cost—Attachment B

Advertising and Public Relations Costs

Comment: Clarify the allowability of certain public relations type costs, such as job fairs and activities to promote ridership on public transportation.

Response: The allowability of these types of costs depends upon the circumstances surrounding the individual case. In determining whether