

CAUTION: The following advice may be based on a rule that has been revised since the opinion was first issued. Consequently, the analysis reflected in the opinion may be outdated.

40 IAC 2-1-7(C)

A group of state employees wanted to participate in a German Culture/Vocational and Technical Education travel program for which the State would only incur travel expenses to and from Cincinnati, Ohio. SEC found there did not seem to be any problems with authorizing the trip or allowing the Goethe House Institute to pay for the necessary expenses in connection with the state employees' participation in the program.

No. 7 & 8 Travel

FACT SITUATION

The Goethe House Institute is providing an opportunity through a comparative education scholarship for some state employees to participate in a German Culture/Vocational Technical Education travel program. The aims of the Institute are the promotion of German language study abroad and the advancement of international cultural cooperation. The trip will provide first-hand information and experiences concerning German vocational education and training. Opportunities will be provided to talk with colleagues about various vocational and technical programs, observe classrooms in operation, meet with policymakers, visit industrial complexes to learn about technology and economic interdependence, tour major cultural and historic resources, and participate in seminars focusing on the key concepts of change, the environment, and the economy. An opportunity to develop dialogue with respect to specific educational fields will prove beneficial to the Commission on Vocational and Technical Education and the State of Indiana. Those attending the Goethe Institute do have an obligation to share their experiences within two years following the trip once they return by conducting two workshops or in-service training sessions for vocational and technical educators in the State. The Goethe Institute is funded by the German government and the Institute also uses other foundations as sources of funds. With the exception of travel to and from Cincinnati, Ohio, the cost of the trip will be paid by the Goethe Institute.

QUESTION

Is it permissible for a state employee to participate in the German Culture/Vocational and Technical Education Travel Program whereby the only expense incurred by the State would be the travel expense to and from Cincinnati, Ohio.

OPINION

The members of the State Ethics Commission agreed that there didn't seem to be any conflicts of interest or improprieties or other problems in authorizing this trip to take place and to allow the Goethe Institute to pay for the necessary expenses in connection therewith for the state employees attending.

The relevant rule, 40 IAC 2-1-7(C), provides, "State employees should utilize the normal state policy and procedures concerning travel expense and allowance provisions when attending events concerning state business. However, there may be instances where state employees may be considered in compliance with the letter and spirit of the Code (40 IAC) even if expenses are directly assumed by a sponsor. The Ethics Commission may review such event for any improprieties. Each case shall be evaluated on its individual merits."

4/19/89 (2 inquirers)