Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) Mobility Agreements

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear guidance for the use and administration of Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) assignments within the Research Foundation. This policy ensures that IPA appointments are structured, approved, and managed in a manner that supports the Foundation's mission, advances collaborative research and programmatic objectives with government partners, and complies with applicable federal laws, regulations, and ethical standards. It further promotes transparency, accountability, and appropriate oversight of personnel assignments, cost sharing, supervision, and conflicts of interest associated with IPA agreements.

Definitions

Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) mobility agreement is a contract between the federal government and another organization for the temporary assignment of skilled personnel for work of mutual concern and benefits.

Policy

The act enables the mobility assignment of VHF personnel with specific skills to be assigned to work on VA research or education programs and projects which require a unique skillset. The act was created to facilitate benefit to both the "sending" and the "receiving" agencies and institutions, while preserving the rights and benefits for the employee on assignment. Agreements are meant to be temporary as a process for exchanging skills between organizations

VHF accepts mobility agreements on a very limited basis and reserves the right to reject sponsorship at any time. Agreements are NOT a funding mechanism for personnel but rather a mechanism for reimbursing one agency for work performed at another.

*Mobility agreements may not be used to:

- circumvent restrictions on hiring due to budget constraints, reductions-in-force, freezes on grade levels, or ceiling allocations.
- hire clinical staff or as a substitute for scarce medical specialists, sharing commercial item or other clinical services contracts
- hire clerical, administrative or support positions
- support temporary, term limited VA employees, including post docs and other trainees
- support Principal Investigator costs

Term Limits:

- An IPA can last up to 2 years
- An IPA can be renewed for a two-year extension
- After 4 years, the individual must return to VHF for at least 12 months before going on another IPA.
- Federal employees are subject to a 6-year cap on IPA assignments for life of Federal career (OPM may waive justifiable cases at VA's written request).

Initiating an IPA mobility assignment*:*

Assignments may be made on an intermittent, part-time, or full-time basis. The status for the first 90 days must be consistent with the remaining term of the IPA. A WOC appointment is not required for personnel assigned under an IPA agreement.

- Requests must be submitted at least 60 days prior to the start date to assure seamless implementation at the desired IPA start date.
- Per employee, all new IPAs will be billed a minimum $500 administrative fee, which will be billed the 1st month following IPA initiation. The initial $500 fee will offset the standard of 3% of the total direct IPA cost.
- Only when the cumulative 3% fee exceeds the initial $500 fee will the 3% administrative fee be applied. Administrative fees will not exceed $3,000 per employee in a fiscal year.
- Fees must be covered with administrative or other unrestricted funds. This fee cannot be billed to the IPA.
- Special attention must be made to the entries for the "Reason for Mobility Assignment" and the "Position Description" sections to demonstrate the scientific, technical, or hard-to-fill nature for the position.

Individuals who are on an IPA must follow the federal ethics rules and the federal conflict of interest statutes. (OPM Mobility Program). Also, individuals shall abide by both the VA and VHF rules and regulations. IPAs shall not be modified, except for administrative errors, and will not include travel costs for seminars that are tertiary to the IPA assignment. However, travel will be included in an IPA if it is necessary to disseminate scientific results from performing VA research.

All increases in salary must be justified and shall only be made on the IPA's annual renewal unless a special award is requested and justifiable. If an award is being requested outside of an annual renewal, a completed Request for Special Contribution Award must be completed and submitted.

Once the IPA is effective, VHF office staff will begin the billing procedures and prepare the invoices for approval and processing through the federal government's electronic invoicing system. On a monthly basis, office staff will review the complete IPA roster to determine continuation of the agreement and to alert the PI as to the ending date of the IPA. The PI is notified 90 days prior to the end date with a request for a plan for the continuation or

termination of the employee.

Changes to the Assignment Agreement

Any significant changes in an employee's duties, responsibilities, salary, work assignment location or supervisory relationships should be duly recorded as a modification to the original agreement. The assignment agreement for each employee must always be accurate, complete, and current. Minor changes such as salary increases due to annual pay adjustments, changes in benefits due to revised coverage, and very short-term changes in duties do not require a modification to the original agreement.

Termination of assignment

An assignment may be terminated at any time at the option of the Federal or non-Federal organization. Where possible, the party terminating the agreement before the original completion date should give 30-day notice to all parties involved. This notification should be in writing and should include the reasons for the termination. The Office of Personnel Management may terminate an assignment or take other corrective actions when an assignment is found to violate the Intergovernmental Personnel Act regulations. A mobility assignment must be terminated immediately whenever the assignee is no longer employed by his or her original employer, regardless of whether the assignment is a detail or an appointment.

References

a. Temporary Assignment of Employees Between Federal Agencies and State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments, Institutions of Higher Education, and other Eligible Organizations (5 CFR 334).
b. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) A Handbook on the Intergovernmental Personnel Act Mobility Program dated March 1998.
c. VHA Handbook 1200.17
d. VA Handbook 5005 Part I, Section C. https://vaww.va.gov/Ohrm/HRLibrary/Dir-Policy.htm