



IPA Assignments - Frequently Asked Questions

An Additional Help Document for ADS Chapter 437

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IPA ASSIGNMENTS - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

1. **Question:** What is the IPA Mobility Program?

Answer: The IPA Mobility Program is a personnel mechanism authorized under the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) of 1970. The program allows the temporary assignment of skilled personnel between Federal and non-Federal entities. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) oversees the program and maintains a Web site at www.opm.gov/programs/ipa.

2. **Question:** What is the legal authority for the program?

Answer: The legal authority for assignments under the IPA is [5 USC Sections 3371-3375](#). The [Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\), part 5, chapter 334](#) contains the Federal regulations implementing the IPA Mobility Program.

3. **Question:** How does the program benefit USAID?

Answer: The assignments enable the Agency to gain expertise that is not available in-house, so long as the personnel exchange fulfills a sound public purpose, such as:

- Strengthening USAID's management capabilities;
- Assisting in the transfer and use of new technologies and approaches to solving governmental problems; and
- Providing program and developmental experience that will enhance Agency employees' performance in their regular jobs.

4. **Question:** What is USAID's policy on IPA assignments?

Answer: USAID encourages the use of the IPA personnel mechanism to gain technical expertise from outside the Agency and to promote developmental opportunities for Agency employees. In addition to providing necessary expertise, IPA assignments should be viewed as opportunities to foster workforce diversity. [ADS 437](#) contains the policy directives, required procedures, and regulations that govern USAID's use of the IPA program.

5. **Question:** Which organizations can participate?

Answer: Any Federal agency and State, local, and Indian tribal governments, institutions of higher education, and non-profit organizations certified as eligible. A [list of certified non-profit organizations](#) is on the OPM Web site.

6. **Question:** What must non-profit organizations do to be certified?

Answer: The organization must be previously certified by another Federal agency, or if not, must request certification from USAID. The head of the Office of Human Resources (OHR) is the Agency's approving official. The organization must submit the following information for certification review:

- Articles of incorporation;
- By-laws;
- Internal Revenue Service nonprofit statement; and
- Any other information that shows that the organization offers, as a principal function, professional advisory, research, educational, and development services, or governments or universities-related services concerned with public management; **OR**
- Proof of previous certification signed by the other agency's authorizing official.

These requirements are on OPM's Web site at <http://www.opm.gov/programs/ipa/mobility.asp#CertificationOfOtherOrganization> S.

7. **Question:** Who is eligible to participate in the IPA program?

Answer: Eligible Federal employees include career or career-conditional appointees, career appointees in the Senior Executive Service, individuals under appointments of equivalent tenure in excepted service positions (including Presidential Management Fellows (PMFs)). Individuals employed for at least 90 days in a career position with a State, local, or Indian tribal government, higher education institution, or other eligible organization are also eligible to participate.

8. **Question:** Who is not eligible to participate in the IPA Program?

Answer: Individuals excluded from participation include:

- Federal, State, or local government employees serving under non-career, excepted service, noncompetitive, time-limited, temporary, or term appointments;
- Elected Federal, State, or local government officials;
- Members of the uniformed military services, the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); and
- Students employed in research, graduate, or teaching assistant positions or similar temporary positions.

9. **Question:** Is there a minimum employment requirement before an individual is eligible to participate in an IPA assignment?

Answer: Yes, just for employees of non-Federal organizations. An employee of a non-Federal organization must be employed at least 90 days in a career position by the eligible organization prior to the IPA assignment. For an eligible Federal employee, there is no minimum employment requirement before an individual is eligible to participate in an IPA assignment.

10. **Question:** Some university positions appear to be permanent but are not designated as career positions. Are professors in these positions eligible for IPA agreements?

Answer: Yes. If the employee has been working for the university and has every expectation of continuing to work at the university each year, he or she would be eligible for an IPA assignment.

11. **Question:** Can permanent employees from a foreign university participate on IPA assignments?

Answer: No. IPA regulations restrict eligibility to employees of accredited domestic universities, public or private.

12. **Question:** Can program funds be used for IPA assignments?

Answer: Yes, both program and OE funds may be used, depending on the nature of the assignment. See [ADS 601](#) for guidance.

13. **Question:** How long can employees serve in IPA assignments?

Answer: IPA agreements can be made for up to two years, and may be intermittent, part-time, or full-time. Assignments can be extended for an additional two years with approval of the USAID Administrator or designee. An employee who has served for four continuous years must return to his or her home organization for at least 12 months before being sent on another IPA assignment. Successive assignments without a break of at least 60 calendar days are regarded as continuous service. Federal employees cannot be on IPA assignments for more than a total of six years without a waiver from OPM.

14. **Question:** How do IPA employees come into USAID?

Answer: IPA employees can be given *excepted appointments* to new or established positions that have been classified by OHR without regard to the provisions governing appointment in the competitive service, or they may be *detailed* to specific assignments or projects that have not been classified.

15. Question: Can IPA employees supervise USAID staff?

Answer: Yes. According to OPM guidance, a non-Federal employee who is assigned to a Federal position, either by detail or by appointment, may exercise supervision over Federal employees. The decision to assign supervisory responsibilities to an IPA employee will depend on the nature of the position to be occupied and the functions to be carried out.

16. Question: How are IPA employees paid?

Answer: USAID and non-Federal IPA employees on detail are paid by their home organizations. USAID employees on IPA appointments (i.e., to established positions) must go on leave without pay, and are paid by the partner non-Federal organization. Non-Federal employees appointed to USAID under IPA agreements are paid by USAID.

17. Question: Can USAID pay travel costs for IPA employees?

Answer: Yes, for travel performed at the request of USAID, the bureau or office can arrange the travel and reimburse the IPA employee for travel expenses using our e2 system, or USAID can reimburse the non-Federal organization for the IPA employee's authorized official travel.

18. Question: Can IPA employees be hired on contracts, rather than be detailed or appointed?

Answer: No.

19. Question: Can consulting fees be included in salary calculations for IPA employees?

Answer: Yes, if an individual is earning an artificially low salary because he or she is working for a nonprofit organization, but earns a much higher rate of pay when he or she performs consulting services for other organizations, these higher consulting fees can be taken into account when setting the salary, as long as properly documented and reasonable cost standards are applied to ensure that monies paid are in the best interests of the Government. The same applies to university professors who routinely perform consulting or receive stipends over and above their university salaries.

20. Question: Can IPA employees receive training from USAID?

Answer: Yes. Non-Federal employees detailed or appointed to USAID can be admitted to USAID training programs in accordance with established Agency policies and procedures (see [ADS 458, Training and Career/Professional](#)

Development). The cost of training can be paid by the non-federal organization or by USAID with approval of OHR/TE.

21. Question: Can IPA employees receive awards?

Answer: Yes and no. All employees are eligible for honor awards. IPA employees on USAID appointments are eligible for cash awards; those on detail are not. A USAID employee can receive a cash award for exceptional performance related to the IPA assignment; such awards are extremely unusual however, and require substantial justification.

22. Question: What is the process for obtaining an IPA employee at USAID?

Answer: The process is described in the [IPA Program Overview and Process](#). USAID employees interested in IPA assignments should discuss this with their immediate supervisors; IPA assignments must be initiated by management.

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