

# Intergovernmental Personnel Act Toolkit



# Office of Evaluation Sciences

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## Introduction

The Office of Evaluation Sciences (OES) at the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) uses the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) mobility program to bring on unique talent to support agency priorities and evidence needs.

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) describes the purpose of the IPA program as:

*Assignments to or from state and local governments, institutions of higher education, Indian tribal governments and other eligible organizations, intended to facilitate cooperation between the Federal Government and the non-federal entity through the temporary assignment of skilled personnel.*

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide internal guidance on how OES has utilized the IPA mobility program in the past, filling highly technical positions quickly where there might otherwise be capacity gaps. Individuals on IPA assignments at OES have served as evaluators, data scientists, and academic affiliates.

OES has utilized the IPA program with dozens of nonprofit and academic institutions in order to bring on behavioral science experts to conduct low-cost, rapid-cycle evaluations across government. This internal toolkit is not meant to be a comprehensive summary of the IPA program, but rather to share information on how we have previously conducted IPA agreements.

This toolkit includes:

- [General overview](#)
- [Past roles for OES IPAs](#)
- [Benefits of an IPA assignment](#)
- [Executing an IPA agreement](#)

Complete, current guidance from OPM on the IPA mobility program can be found [on the OPM website](#).

## General overview

### Objectives

The goal of the Intergovernmental Personnel Act mobility program is to facilitate the movement of employees for short periods of time, when this movement serves a sound public purpose. Mobility assignments may be used to achieve objectives such as:

- Strengthening the management capabilities of federal agencies, state, local and Indian tribal governments, and other eligible organizations;
- Assisting the transfer and use of new technologies and approaches to solving governmental problems;
- Facilitating an effective means of involving state and local officials in developing and implementing federal policies and programs; and,
- Providing program and developmental experience which will enhance the assignee's performance in his or her regular job.

### Eligibility

- Participants must be employees in career positions at a non-federal organization, who have been employed for at least 90 days prior.
- A non-federal organization can be a state, local, or Tribal government, academic institution, non-profit organization, or other eligible organization as defined in the Code of Federal Regulations, [5 CFR 334.102](#).
  - Agencies are responsible for certifying the authenticity of a partner institution categorized as an “other organization.” If an organization has already been certified by an agency, this certification is permanent and may apply throughout the Federal Government.
- Individuals **excluded** from participation in the Intergovernmental Personnel Act mobility program include:
  - Federal, State, or local government employees serving under time-limited, temporary or term appointment, non-career or limited SES appointments, or Schedule C appointments;
  - Elected Federal, State, or local government officials;
  - Members of the uniformed military services and the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; and

- Students employed in research, graduate, or teaching assistant and similar temporary positions.

### Time commitment

- Employees may serve on detail assignments or receive temporary appointments on an intermittent, part-time, or full-time basis.
  - OES IPAs serve on detail assignments, and time commitments have ranged from 5% to 100% time, for at least six months and up to four consecutive years.
- Assignment agreements can be made for up to two years. The agency head, or their designee, may extend an assignment for an additional two years when the extension will be to the benefit of both organizations.

### Employee status

- Detailees to federal agencies remain employees of their permanent organizations for most purposes.
- Detailees will continue to be paid by their permanent employer, are covered under their permanent employer's leave system, and their position is subject to any personnel actions that may occur.

### Costs

IPA assignments may be organized on a reimbursable or non-reimbursable basis. Cost-sharing arrangements for mobility assignments are negotiated between the participating organizations. The federal agency may agree to pay all, some, or none of the costs associated with an assignment [according to the OPM guidance](#). Costs may include:

- Basic pay
- Supplemental pay
- Fringe benefits
- Travel expenses
- Other direct costs

OES has executed IPA agreements that were non-reimbursable, partially reimbursable, and fully reimbursable. For example, in the case where an academic has an internal fellowship or is on sabbatical, reimbursement may not be needed.

According to OPM, other prohibited costs might include reimbursement or payment for employer contributions to employee benefit programs, tuition costs, family member benefits, office space,

staff support, furnishings, and computer time. Outside consulting earnings may not be reimbursed, unless the assignee's regular tour of duty in the non-federal organization included consulting time that cannot be continued due to the IPA assignment.

OES will reimburse an IPA participant's permanent employer for all allowable costs up to an established limit, which is posted alongside any [open opportunities](#).

## Additional guidance from OPM

OPM encourages agencies to re-think the following myths and misperceptions:

1. **Myth:** IPAs are a popular and a widely used flexibility.

**Truth:** Agencies do not take full advantage of the IPA program which, if used strategically, can help agencies meet their needs for "hard-to-fill" positions such as Information Technology and Nurses.

2. **Myth:** IPAs are cumbersome to use and require OPM approval.

**Truth:** Agencies do not need OPM approval to make assignments under the IPA authority. Federal agencies interested in using the authority simply enter into a written agreement.

3. **Myth:** IPAs are expensive to use.

**Truth:** Agencies may enter into IPA assignments on a reimbursable or non-reimbursable basis. This means they may be cost-neutral to federal agencies. Whether an IPA assignment is reimbursable is determined by the agency and non-federal entity involved in the assignment.

4. **Myth:** An agency may only enter into an IPA agreement with a State Government entity.

**Truth:** An agency may enter into an IPA agreement with State and local governments, institutions of higher education, and Indian tribal governments.

5. **Myth:** Agencies receive no recruitment benefit from sending employees on IPA assignments.

**Truth:** Federal employees serving in IPA assignments can serve as both recruiters and ambassadors for positions in your agency. For example, federal nurses sent to colleges and universities as teachers/instructors can inspire students about federal employment and encourage them to consider employment with your agency via the Pathways Program. This results in a win-win for the academic institution as well as your agency.

6. **Myth:** An agency may document IPA assignments for full-time employment only.

**Truth:** An agency may document IPA assignments for intermittent, part-time, and full-time employment.

## Past roles for OES IPAs

OES has brought on team members through the IPA to fill a variety of roles.

### Associate Evaluators, Evaluators, and Senior Evaluators

OES Evaluators come from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and utilize a unique set of technical and professional skills to lead evaluations for agency partners.

#### Responsibilities

- Work directly with agency partners to design and rigorously evaluate interventions
- Translate findings from the social and behavioral sciences into concrete recommendations
- Perform data analysis and interpretation
- Distill findings into reports, policy memos, and academic publications
- Represent the team by presenting at government and external conferences and meetings
- Collaborate on and contribute to internal team tasks and evaluations, including by assisting on additional evaluations managed by other team members

### Data Scientists

OES Data Scientists contribute to research designs and analysis plans, craft guidance on methodological issues, and conduct lead analysis, as well as reanalysis.

#### Responsibilities

- Conduct full replications of statistical analyses of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and quasi-experimental evaluations, including preparing and cleaning data, conducting statistical analysis, recording analytical methods and results, and collaborating with team members to diagnose and resolve any discrepancies with initial analysis
- Advise team members on the design of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and other rigorous evaluations, including estimating statistical power and advising on sample sizes required for achieving adequate power
- Consult on and contributing to statistical analysis plans for analyzing randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and other rigorous evaluations
- Contribute to occasional written guidance for the team on key methodological/statistical issues that arise in the course of OES projects

## Academic Affiliates

OES Academic Affiliates support OES projects and may be academics, practitioners, and other technical advisors.

### Responsibilities

- Support delivery of rigorous evaluations with actionable findings for agency partners in collaboration with full-time OES team member
- Contribute to understanding bottlenecks and agency challenges, and designing evidence based interventions in response to specific agency needs
- Assist in designing rigorous evaluation design to test intervention within agency constraints
- Perform data analysis and interpretation
- Distill findings into project reports and policy memos for academic, agency, and public audiences

## Benefits of an IPA assignment

The Intergovernmental Personnel Act mobility program is an outstanding opportunity for individuals and institutions to lend time, expertise and energy to serve the public and improve government. It's an opportunity for individuals and institutions to learn and gain unique firsthand experience and exposure to government programs, policies, and operations. Participation in this program has numerous benefits to participants and their organizations. These include:

### For participating individuals:

- Individuals have a unique opportunity to work directly on and with high priority programs which reach millions of individuals and in their specific areas of policy expertise
- Individuals can directly impact and improve federal programs based on their knowledge and expertise
- Individuals can conduct and be involved in evaluations and other research activities that would otherwise not be possible, including initiating new and novel research or improving ongoing or planned research
- Individuals will learn specific programmatic and policy details which can inform and improve future research and areas of study, making future research more policy relevant and actionable
- Individuals will build networks and contacts across government, sometimes leading to many year and future collaborations after the end of the IPA agreement
- Individuals can conduct research and evaluations which lead to academic publications in peer reviewed journals ([see selected OES publications](#))

### For partner institutions:

- Institutions gain recognition for the high-impact, public service work they facilitate
- Institutions can highlight the fellow's contributions to the government on their web pages and in other promotional material, including high-profile speaking opportunities the fellow engages in and important moments where results inform decisions
- Institutions gain reputation and visibility across the federal government through fellows' interactions with federal agency staff and leadership
- Institutions gain the opportunity to have OES and other fellows present their policy-relevant work to students, staff, and other members of the host institution
- Institutions gain better understanding and experience with the IPA mechanism, which can facilitate collaborations with other federal teams

## Executing an IPA agreement

Once a participant is selected for an IPA assignment and the details of the assignment are finalized (including dates, time commitment, and fiscal obligations), they will need to work with their permanent employer to complete [OPM Optional Form 69](#) and its attachments.

Once the assignment has been arranged, OES will provide a draft copy of OF-69 containing pre-populated details for all required fields **except**:

- Part 2: Information on participating employee
- Part 4A: Position currently held
- Part 8, Boxes 23 and 24: Employee benefits
- Part 9: Fiscal obligation
- Part 11, Box 31: State or local agency benefits
- Part 14: Employee signature
- Part 15, Boxes 39, 41, and 43: Institution signature

OES will also provide a draft copy of GSA Attachments A & B (reproduced below), pre-populated except for:

- The fiscal obligation to OES
- Institution points of contact

The employee and their organization must complete these fields (as applicable), sign, and return the form to OES for final processing and signature.

## Attachment A

### Part 9 – FISCAL OBLIGATION

The reimbursed cost to Institution for Employee Name covers salary, fringe benefits, and travel. This time with the Office of Evaluation Sciences (OES) during the FYXX fiscal year, totaling \$XXX,XXX USD.

Salary and Benefits	\$XXX,XXX
Travel	\$X,XXX
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$</b>

This amount was calculated based on an estimated XX% over the period of X/XX/20XX to XX/XX/20XX.

Invoices for salary and benefits reimbursement should be submitted on a monthly or quarterly basis. Invoices for travel-related costs should be submitted based on the cycle of expenditures.

### The organization must email invoices to:

<b>GSA Reference #:</b>
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(Please reference the GSA reference number on all invoices being submitted)

The following hereby authorizes funds approval of this agreement.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Budget Analyst  
Office of Budget, OCFO  
General Services Administration

## Attachment B

### **Points of Contact**

#### **General Services Administration**

Agency	General Services Administration
Program POC	
Street Address	1800 F Street, NW
City, State, Zip Code	Washington DC 20405
Phone Number	
Email Address	

Agency	General Services Administration
Financial POC	
Street Address	1800 F Street, NW
City, State, Zip Code	Washington DC 20405
Phone Number	
Email Address	

#### **Name of Institution (complete all fields)**

Organization	
Program POC	
Title	
Street Address	
City, State, Zip Code	
Phone Number	
Email Address	

Financial POC	
Title	
Street Address	
City, State, Zip Code	
Phone Number	
Email Address	

#### **REMIT PAYMENT TO**

Organization Tax ID #	
Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)	
Organization / Name	
Street Address	
City, State, Zip Code	