

# **NRC Research Associateship Programs**

## **Travel Guide**

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The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine is a private, nonprofit organization that provides independent advice and expertise to policymakers, the private sector, and the public. The NRC Research Associateship Programs is administered by the Fellowships Office within the National Academies, which offers opportunities for graduate, postdoctoral, and senior researchers to conduct research in a variety of fields.

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# Introduction

Welcome to the NRC Research Associateship Programs (RAP)! During your tenure, you will likely engage in various professional development activities, including presenting at conferences, attending workshops, or conducting field research. When these activities require you to travel, you will need to complete and submit documentation to receive authorization for your travel and request reimbursement for the expenses incurred while on travel. This document provides guidance on the full travel process.

Associate travel is governed by three levels of policy, regulations, and laws; these are program, institutional, and federal. This Travel Guide should not be considered all-inclusive as it is not possible to cover every scenario that you may experience as you plan and take a trip. Under limited circumstances, the NRC may seek sponsor approval for an exception to a condition out in this guide subject to a timely request and written approval of the Contracting Officer at the applicable sponsor.

The National Academies require use of the services of Vai Travel for air and train travel arrangements for NRC Research Associates. Use of Vai allows your airfare to be direct billed, reducing your out-of-pocket expenses. Further, use of Vai ensures compliance with all applicable federal travel regulations and avoids possible disqualification of expenses.

## 1. Types of Travel

### 1.1. Professional development travel

1.1.1. Professional development travel is defined as travel that is considered part of your career development, which may include:

- (a) Travel to a scientific meeting or conference
- (b) Travel to conduct field work
- (c) Attending a workshop or training event

### 1.2. Relocation travel

1.2.1. Relocation travel is defined as travel that is required to relocate to the vicinity of the laboratory where you will be conducting your research. You must reside more than 50 miles from the laboratory location to qualify for relocation travel. More information about relocation is detailed in [Section 5](#).

### 1.3. Local travel

1.3.1. Any professional travel that occurs within 50 miles of the laboratory location is considered local travel and does not require submission of a Travel Authorization request prior to travel.

### 2. Travel Authorization

- 2.1. All professional and relocation travel undertaken during your tenure as an NRC Research Associate requires submission of a Travel Authorization request (TA) prior to travel.
  - 2.1.1. While personal travel does not require submission of a TA, extended absences from the lab should be communicated to your Adviser and Program Coordinator.
  - 2.1.2. Foreign nationals on an F- or J-visa must notify the RAP Visa Officers in advance of any international travel, whether it is for professional or personal purposes.
- 2.2. Once award-related contingencies are satisfied you will be granted access the online TA system within InfoRAP where you will be able to initiate and submit a TA to request authorization for travel. The following award-related contingencies need to be satisfied:
  - (a) Submission of a doctoral degree proof, with an exception for Senior Research Associates.
  - (b) Provision of immigration documents for non-U.S. citizens.
  - (c) For agencies that require a security review prior to relocation, the laboratory must officially notify both the awardee and their NRC Program Coordinator of a successful security review clearance.
- 2.3. Once a TA is submitted, it will be sent to your Research Adviser and RAP Travel for approval before it is sent to your Laboratory Program Representative (LPR) or other designated agency official for final approval.
  - 2.3.1. Research Adviser and LPR approvals are not required for relocation but are required for all other travel.
  - 2.3.2. To allow adequate time for the approval process, a TA should be submitted at least 4 weeks in advance of domestic travel and at least 6 weeks in advance of international travel.
- 2.4. For a TA to be processed, it must include the following details: travel type, travel itinerary, travel purpose, and cost estimates.
  - 2.4.1. For professional travel to a meeting or conference, include the name of the event and a link to the event's website.
  - 2.4.2. If a workshop requiring a special fee is included as part of a professional meeting, please list the workshop in the "Other" section on the TA to claim reimbursement for the expense.
  - 2.4.3. If you are an exchange visitor (J-1 visa holder) undertaking international travel, your TA will be forwarded to the NRC RAP Visa Officer for approval (See [Section 6](#) for more information about visa requirements when traveling).

- 2.4.4. Any unusual circumstances surrounding your travel should be noted in the "Comments" section of the TA.
- 2.4.5. Cost estimates should be as accurate as possible and include any expense for which you plan to request reimbursement from the National Academies. Expenses claimed on the Travel Expense Report (see [Section 7](#)) that were not listed on the approved TA will require additional approval and may not be reimbursed.
- 2.4.6. If another organization is reimbursing you for part of your travel, this should be noted in the TA.
- 2.4.7. When personal travel is combined with official NRC RAP travel, make sure to clearly state on the TA the dates for professional travel and the dates for personal travel. Any increases in travel expenditures, inclusive of airfare and associated change fees, resulting from combining personal and professional travel will be your financial responsibility.
- 2.5. Use of a rental car requires prior approval.
  - 2.5.1. Please include a justification for the use of a rental car on the TA in the "Additional Comments" section.
  - 2.5.2. If approved by the National Academies, you must make rental car reservations through Vai Travel, which will guarantee that you are automatically insured at no additional cost to you. . Additional insurance is your financial responsibility.
- 2.6. Once your TA is approved, a copy will be provided to you and Vai Travel
  - 2.6.1. You are responsible for reviewing the approved TA and contacting Vai Travel to make your travel arrangements (see [Section 3](#)).
- 2.7. An approved TA authorizes you to travel and incur approved expenses in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.
  - 2.7.1. All expenses that are approved on the TA and require reimbursement must adhere to program, institutional, and federal government policies, regulations, and laws. Expenses that do not comply with these policies will not be reimbursed.
  - 2.7.2. Any changes to the original approved TA, including cancellations or changes to the travel dates, destination and/or cost estimates should be communicated by email to [raptravel@nas.edu](mailto:raptravel@nas.edu) as soon as possible. Substantial changes may require the submission of a revised TA.
  - 2.7.3. Changes cannot be approved after travel occurs.

### 3. Use of Vai Travel

- 3.1. The National Academies requires that you use Vai Travel for both domestic and international travel to ensure that your itinerary conforms to Federal Travel Regulations and avoids the possibility of unallowable expenses.
- 3.2. Once your TA has been approved, a copy will be forwarded to Vai Travel.
- 3.3. With an approved TA, your airline/train tickets and/or rental car will be billed directly to the National Academies.
  - 3.3.1. Vai Travel can also assist you in locating and/or booking lodging that is within federal Per Diem rates.
    - 3.3.1.1. Lodging reservations must be guaranteed with a personal credit card as lodging cannot be direct billed to the National Academies.
- 3.4. Vai Travel's hours of operation are Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. You may contact the office at:  
  
Phone: 301-948-2448  
Email: [NAS@VaiTravel.com](mailto:NAS@VaiTravel.com)  
Emergency after-hours number: 1-888-565-9174  
Access code: DCA352100
- 3.5. When communicating with Vai by email, you must include "Associate Travel Request" in the subject line.
- 3.6. Vai Travel will provide you with documentation including necessary information for travel such as details on transportation, and rental car (if applicable).
- 3.7. For combined personal and professional trips, secure an airfare constructive cost from Vai Travel before booking. Any constructive cost obtained elsewhere will not be accepted, risking partial or full non-reimbursement of your airfare.
- 3.8. For changes in travel itinerary due to missed connections, cancellations, or scheduling changes, contact Vai using the emergency number.

### 4. Travel Expenses

#### 4.1. **Conference Registration**

- 4.1.1. For professional meetings, conferences, training events or workshops with registration fees of \$250 or more, the Fellowships Office will provide advance payment, which can be requested by checking the Direct-Billed box and completing the conference registration section of the TA.
  - 4.1.1.1. Please note that if for some reason you choose not to attend the meeting/conference after your meeting registration request has been processed by the Fellowships Office, the registration fee will be deducted from your NRC travel funds.
- 4.1.2. The Fellowships Office will only pay the registration costs for the meeting, conference, or training. Additional costs, such as membership dues, are non-reimbursable.

#### 4.2. **Air Travel**

- 4.2.1. You are expected to travel the most expeditious and economical route when traveling between two points, which is usually by air.
- 4.2.2. Travel by another mode of transportation when air is the most expeditious route requires justification supported by constructive costs issued by Vai Travel or the Fellowships Travel Office.
- 4.2.3. For both domestic and international, you must use coach-class accommodations, however you may seek approval for other than coach-class accommodations if any of the following apply:
  - 4.2.3.1. No coach-class accommodations are reasonably available.
  - 4.2.3.2. When use of other than coach- class is necessary to accommodate a medical disability or other special need
  - 4.2.3.3. When exceptional security circumstances require other than coach-class airline accommodations.
- 4.2.4. The Fly America Act requires that you travel on United States flag carriers whenever such carriers exist between points of travel.
  - 4.2.4.1. Travel on non-United States flag carriers will not be allowed--regardless of cost, routing, convenience, or preference--if a United States carrier serves the route. No exceptions are made to this regulation.

- 4.2.4.2. Costs incurred for using the airline's wireless service during the flight will be reimbursed if there is an adequate business reason to use the service.

### 4.3. **Bus and Rail Travel**

- 4.3.1. Reimbursement for bus and rail service transportation charges will be provided, as long as they do not exceed the cost of the lowest available airfare.

### 4.4. **Privately Owned Vehicles (POVs)**

- 4.4.1. Should you choose to use a POV rather, you will be reimbursed at the current government mileage rate plus any applicable tolls and/or parking expenses.
- 4.4.2. The Fellowships Office verifies trip mileage, so if you claim more than 20 miles over the verified mileage, a justification must be provided.
- 4.4.3. Gasoline costs are included in the government mileage rate and will not be reimbursed separately.
- 4.4.4. Travel by personal vehicle is reimbursable up to the constructive cost of a comparable airfare.
- 4.4.5. A POV may be used for local travel within a 50-mile radius of your host laboratory.

### 4.5. **Rental Car**

- 4.5.1. Rental cars are approved on a case-by-case basis.
- 4.5.2. You may request the use of a rental car when circumstances make it impractical, or more costly, to use other modes of commercial and/or public transportation.
- 4.5.3. A justification for the use of a rental car must be included in the "Additional Comments" section of your TA.
- 4.5.4. Rental car reservations must be made through Vai Travel.
- 4.5.5. Insurance will automatically be provided. Any additional insurance expenses incurred by you will not be reimbursed.

### 4.6. **Baggage Fees**

- 4.6.1. You are authorized to receive reimbursement for fees for the first checked bag, which will be treated as an airline fee.
- 4.6.2. With prior approval by the Fellowships Office, additional bags may be covered.

### 4.7. Lodging, Meals, and Incidental Expenses

- 4.7.1. The Per Diem rate is the maximum daily allowance for which you will be reimbursed for lodging, meals, and incidentals. The reimbursement is based solely on the location of the hotel you choose within or outside of the United States. Meals in home locations may not be reimbursable.
- 4.7.2. Please note that Per Diem rates may change at the start of the federal fiscal year and the current rate will be applied to your Travel Expense Report if it has changed since your TA was approved.
- 4.7.3. Meals and lodging are not allowable expenses for local travel (within 50 miles from your duty station).
- 4.7.4. For travel more than 50 miles from your duty station, you are eligible to be reimbursed for lodging, meals, and incidentals based on the maximum Per Diem rate established by the United States government.
  - 4.7.4.1. Domestic Per Diem rates can be found on the [U.S. General Services Administration \(GSA\) website](#).
  - 4.7.4.2. Foreign Per Diem rates can be found on the [U.S. Department of State website](#).
  - 4.7.4.3. The travel day per diem is 75% of the daily per diem.
- 4.7.5. For domestic travel, if your hotel is in a city that is not listed for the state to which you will travel, you must use the Per Diem for the county in which the city is located.
  - 4.7.5.1. If neither the city nor the county in which the hotel is located is listed, you must use the current standard Per Diem rate.
- 4.7.6. For international travel and travel to Hawaii, Alaska, and other U. S. territories, if the city or province in which the hotel is located is not listed, you must use the rate prescribed for "Other".
- 4.7.7. Per Diem expenses for international travel include lodging and applicable lodging tax, meals, tips, and incidental travel expenses within the foreign country.
- 4.7.8. To guarantee compliance with Federal Travel Regulations, lodging is limited to facilities that meet the requirements of the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act of 1990.
  - 4.7.8.1. For a list of approved lodging, refer to the [U.S. Fire Administration website](#).
  - 4.7.8.2. Costs incurred from booking nonconvention lodging, such as Airbnb or VRBO, are considered non-reimbursable.

4.7.8.3. If you have difficulty securing conventional lodging within Per Diem rate, please contact [rap@nas.edu](mailto:rap@nas.edu) for assistance.

4.7.9. When personal is combined with professional travel, you will not be reimbursed for per diem expenses on personal days. Travel days are the day before and after the meeting days. Further, if your airfare is higher due to the addition of personal travel days, you will be required to charge the airfare to your personal credit card. Vai Travel will document a constructive cost in your invoice, and after your travel is complete, you will be reimbursed up to the constructive cost.

### 4.8. **Non-Reimbursable Expenses**

4.8.1. Unless explicitly specified as allowable, all expenses are deemed non-allowable unless otherwise confirmed by the Fellowships Travel Office ([raptravel@nas.edu](mailto:raptravel@nas.edu)) or other relevant programmatic authority.

4.8.2. Non-allowable expenses typically pertain to personal conveniences, non-essential items, or services that exceed the primary purpose or basic requirements of the travel or event.

## 5. Relocation and Movement of Household Goods

### 5.1. Requirements for Relocation

- 5.1.1. Associates should complete a TA prior to relocation and return relocation.
- 5.1.2. Relocation reimbursements cover one-way expenses and movement of household goods for tenures of six months or longer, but only if you reside more than 50 miles from the laboratory.
- 5.1.3. If you already reside within a 50-mile commuting distance to the laboratory, relocation expenses are not typically eligible for reimbursement.
  - 5.1.3.1. For exceptions or unusual circumstances, consult the NRC Program Coordinator/Program Administrator.
- 5.1.4. You will be reimbursed for the relocation expenses of a spouse, domestic partner, and/or dependent family member(s) under the age of 21 who will reside with you.
- 5.1.5. If you are a Senior Research Associate moving to a laboratory for a tenure period of less than six successive months, you will be reimbursed for travel and for transportation of belongings, but not for the movement of household goods.
- 5.1.6. For a Senior Research Associate returning to a permanent position after a tenure period of less than six successive months, you will be reimbursed for travel and for transportation of belongings brought to the area at the beginning of tenure, but not the movement of household goods.

### 5.2. Travel Authorization Request for Relocation

- 5.2.1. Please refer to [Section 2.2](#) for information regarding access to the online Travel Authorization system.
- 5.2.2. After you and the laboratory have decided upon a mutually agreeable starting date, and you begin to plan your relocation, you should submit a completed TA for your relocation no later than four weeks before your proposed travel date(s).
- 5.2.3. Relocation travel can begin no earlier than 30 days prior to tenure start date.
- 5.2.4. If your spouse, domestic partner, and/or dependent family member(s) will relocate at a different time from you, you must complete and submit a separate TA for their travel. Additional subsistence in the vicinity of the laboratory cannot be claimed for your spouse and/or dependent family member(s) if they relocate separately.
- 5.2.5. Travel advance requests are not allowed for relocation.

### 5.3. Relocation from within the United States

- 5.3.1. Please refer to [Section 4](#) for information about allowable expenses during travel, which includes travel related to relocation.
- 5.3.2. To be reimbursed, you must complete and submit a Travel Expense Report within 10 days after arriving in the vicinity of the laboratory.
- 5.3.3. After arriving in the vicinity of the laboratory, subsistence costs for a maximum of seven days may be allowed until living arrangements are made. Relocation expenses cannot be incurred/reimbursed if tenure has started. Please contact [raptravel@nas.edu](mailto:raptravel@nas.edu) with any questions prior to relocating.
- 5.3.4. The cost of a rental car for a maximum of seven days may be allowed as part of your relocation with a proper justification included in the relocation TA.

### 5.4. Travel for House Hunting

- 5.4.1. This section applies only to new Associates who currently reside within the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii.
- 5.4.2. Transportation for house hunting is a non-reimbursable expense when claiming reimbursement for relocation. Only Per Diem may be claimed for house hunting trips.
- 5.4.3. Any time spent house hunting will reduce the number of days available at the time of relocation. For example, if three days are spent house hunting, only four days would be available for local subsistence at the time of relocation.
- 5.4.4. A TA must be submitted and approved prior to initiating travel for house hunting.
- 5.4.5. Reimbursement for house hunting cannot be processed until the Associate has officially started tenure and submitted a Travel Expense Report along with required receipts.

### 5.5. Movement of Household Goods

- 5.5.1. The Fellowships Travel Office will authorize the reimbursement of certain moving expenses incurred by awardees who have been offered a tenure period of six successive months or more and who are relocating more than 50 miles outside the vicinity of the laboratory. This section of the Travel Guide provides information on the overall policy covering the movement of household goods (MOHG). Associates have two options when relocating: the use of the Fellowships Travel Office contracted commercial moving company or a self-move.
- 5.5.2. New Associates cannot begin tenure and/or move household goods until they have satisfied all contingencies of the award (see [Section 2.2](#)).

- 5.5.3. Associates eligible for movement of household goods will be reimbursed for transport of personal belongings and household items from their address at the time of application.

- 5.5.3.1. If the Associate's home address has changed after the application date, this must be updated in InfoRAP.

- 5.5.4. Associates who voluntarily terminate their tenure prior to the completion of six successive months will be required to repay the Fellowships Travel Office for the costs incurred for moving their household goods.

- 5.5.5. Reimbursement for return relocation/movement of household goods is provided only for Senior Associates who are on a leave of absence from a permanent position to which they will return after completing their tenure. Prior approval of return relocation by the NRC Program Administrator is required.

- 5.5.6. Senior Associates moving to the laboratory for a tenure period of six months or less will be reimbursed for the transport of needed belongings, but not for movement of household goods.

### 5.6. **Use of the Fellowships Travel Office Contract Moving Company**

- 5.6.1. The Fellowships Travel Office will make the necessary arrangements through a national moving company, for the packing, unpacking, and shipment of items normally considered to be household goods. A minimum of 1,000lbs of household goods is suggested.

- 5.6.2. To initiate a move, Associates must include information on the TA. The Fellowships Travel Office will notify the moving company, which will then contact the Associate directly to make arrangements. The Fellowships Travel Office will pay all allowable moving expenses directly to the moving company for the movement of household goods and the Associate will be billed by for any unallowable items.

- 5.6.3. Associates should make every effort to coordinate their arrival in the vicinity of the laboratory with the arrival of their household goods.

- 5.6.4. Pick-up of household goods will be from one location only. The Associate will be billed directly by the carrier for any additional pick-ups regardless of mileage between pickups.

- 5.6.5. The following services relating to transport of personal goods will not be reimbursed:

- (a) Any poundage in excess of 11,000lbs. for Regular Associates or 13,500lbs. for Senior Associates.
  - (b) Storage of household goods.
  - (c) Shipment of pianos, automobiles, boats, trailers, motorized vehicles, animals, or frozen foods.

- (d) Removal of all curtain rods, draperies, window cornices, mirrors, and other items attached to walls, as well as the removal of attached floor coverings.
  - (e) Dismantling or installation of plumbing or electrical connections for appliances, clothes dryer ventilation pipes, stereos, televisions, or television or radio antennae.
  - (f) Maid service or other comparable special services.
  - (g) Installation of attached floor coverings.
  - (h) Exclusive use of a moving van or expedited service.
  - (i) Articles such as documents, valuable papers, collector's items, money, jewelry, or other items of high value, are not covered by the carrier's insurance. These items should be carried with personal luggage.
  - (j) Fresh fruits, plants, and flammables, including paints and ammunition, cannot be transported by the commercial moving company. Personal arrangements must be made to transport these items.
- 5.6.6. The Fellowships Travel Office pays insurance on the household goods shipment at the rate of \$3.00 per pound. If more coverage is desired, the additional cost must be paid by the Associate.
- 5.6.7. If there is any loss or damage during shipment, the Associate should make annotations on the carrier's inventory at the time of delivery. These annotations provide initial documentation but do not constitute a formal written claim. Any subsequent damage claims will be handled directly between the Associate and the mover.
- 5.6.8. Claims for loss or damage must be filed in writing with the destination agent as the driver is not responsible for reporting damage. The carrier is required to acknowledge claims within 30 days and to either pay, decline, or make a firm compromise settlement offer within 120 days of receipt of the claim. If some reason beyond the carrier's control delays action on the claim for an extended period, the carrier is required to notify the Associate each 30 days thereafter until final action is taken.
- 5.6.9. In most cases of loss or damage, the carrier's destination agent, if immediately notified by telephone, can assist in making an equitable adjustment as quickly as possible and with minimal delay. This action is recommended especially when an item necessary to everyday living is involved.

### 5.6.10. To file a claim:

- (a) Send a letter reporting a claim to the destination agent as soon as possible after delivery. The agent will send the necessary claim documents.
- (b) Return claim documents with complete information on all items claimed.
- (c) Maintain regular contact with the agent until a mutually satisfactory settlement has been reached.
- (d) Report any difficulties or concerns to the Fellowships Travel Office at [raptravel@nas.edu](mailto:raptravel@nas.edu). (All correspondence concerning the claim for loss or damage should be between the Associate and the moving company.)

## 5.7. Self-Move

- 5.7.1. Associates with a small amount of household goods may choose to rent a moving truck, van, trailer, or POD to move themselves. A self-move must be requested on the TA and approval by the Fellowships Travel Office must be obtained prior to the move. An estimate of the total cost should be included on the TA.
- 5.7.2. The Associate is responsible for making all arrangements and paying all costs associated with a self-move. Immediately following the move, a claim for reimbursement must be made using Concur. Detailed receipts for costs associated with a self-move must be provided on the Travel Expense Report. Only allowable expenses will be reimbursed (see [Section 4](#)).
- 5.7.3. The following expenses may be reimbursed for a rental vehicle during a self-move:
  - (a) Cost of a one-way truck, van, or trailer rental
  - (b) Gasoline and tolls for the rental truck only
  - (c) Packing supplies
  - (d) If applicable, a temporary tow hitch to transport your personal vehicle
  - (e) Insurance on a rental truck can be reimbursed if you are not covered by your personal auto insurance policy or by a credit card that you use to rent the truck. You should always verify any existing coverage you might have with your personal, auto, home, credit card or AAA insurance. If you are not covered and must purchase insurance from the rental company, contact the Fellowships Travel Office [raptravel@nas.edu](mailto:raptravel@nas.edu) to receive approval in advance.
- 5.7.4. If another family member drives your personal vehicle, you may request mileage reimbursement for this vehicle in addition to the costs of the rental truck or trailer. A second personal vehicle is a non-reimbursable expense.

### 5.8. **Limitations of Reimbursement for Transportation of Household Goods**

- 5.8.1. A relocation budget will be provided to a new Associate as part of the award offer. The relocation budget includes transportation (airfare or POV costs), per diem (during travel and for up to seven days at the destination) and an estimated cost for movement of household goods.
- 5.8.2. Expenses for movement of household goods, incurred by the Associate more than those budgeted and authorized by the Fellowships Travel Office, will be the responsibility of the Associate. The Associate will be billed directly by the moving company for those additional expenses.
- 5.8.3. An accurate completion of the MOHG section by the Associate will assist the Fellowships Travel Office in anticipating additional costs associated with the MOHG.

### 5.9. **Domestic Return Relocation**

- 5.9.1. You must submit a TA for your return relocation at least four weeks before your proposed travel dates(s). You may be reimbursed for domestic return relocation costs if you are a Senior Associate on leave from a permanent position of employment within the United States to which you will return.
- 5.9.2. To be reimbursed, you must complete your relocation travel within 30 days of your last day of tenure and submit a Travel Expense Report within 10 days of relocation.
- 5.9.3. The TA should be as specific as possible, making sure that you include the name of spouse and/or the name(s) and age(s) of any dependent family member(s) traveling with you. Please note prior approval is needed for a spouse and/or dependents not on the initial relocation TA. Also, any unusual circumstances surrounding your return relocation should be noted in the "Additional Comments" section.
- 5.9.4. Once an approved Travel Authorization has been received, prepaid one-way airline tickets should be obtained from Vai Travel.
- 5.9.5. Rules for Per Diem (lodging, meals, and incidental expenses) associated with return relocation are the same as described in [Section 4](#).
- 5.9.6. If return relocation involves the movement of household goods, this move may be by either commercial moving company or self-move. The same rules described for relocation will apply to return relocation/movement of household goods.

### 5.10. Relocating from Outside the United States

5.10.1. This section applies to an Associate or Senior Associate who has applied from anywhere outside the United States, whether a United States citizen or a foreign national.

5.10.1.1. Prior to relocating, Associates who are neither U.S. citizens nor legal permanent residents must first obtain an appropriate visa and submit relevant visa documentation within InfoRAP. Please refer to *Visa Options for International Associates* for more information.

5.10.2. As part of your award, the National Academies will reimburse you for relocation expenses from the current address on your application to the vicinity of the laboratory. Relocation reimbursement will include one-way transportation, rental car (with justification and prior approval), a Per Diem allowance during travel, and a maximum of seven days of subsistence (lodging, meals, and incidentals) upon arriving at the vicinity of the laboratory.

5.10.3. Relocation reimbursement will not include movement of household goods.

5.10.4. To be reimbursed, you must complete and submit a Travel Expense Report within 10 days after starting tenure.

#### 5.10.5. Transportation

5.10.5.1. You will be reimbursed for a single one-way trip (air, train, or personal vehicle) to the vicinity of the laboratory.

5.10.5.2. You must contact Vai Travel to make your travel arrangements to ensure that the airline tickets comply with the Fly America Act. Air travel must be coach/economy class.

5.10.5.3. Travel costs for your spouse and/or dependent family member(s) will be reimbursed with prior approval.

5.10.5.4. Only one-way airline tickets may be purchased from Vai Travel for relocation. There are no exceptions to this policy.

5.10.5.5. Taxi, or other ground transportation costs from the airport to your place of residence or lodging will be reimbursed based on actual cost.

#### 5.10.6. Subsistence: Lodging, Meals, and Incidental Expenses

5.10.6.1. The cost of lodging, meals, and incidental expenses incurred during relocation will be reimbursed on an itemized, actual cost basis.

5.10.6.2. The maximum allowable reimbursement for lodging, meals, and incidental expenses during relocation is based on the prescribed maximum Per Diem rates established by the United States government. Associates accompanied by a spouse and/or dependent family member(s) shall be reimbursed an additional three-fourths of the allowable meals, and incidental expenses rate for a spouse and an additional one-half of the allowable meals, and incidental expenses rate for each child. Expenses that exceed Per Diem will not be reimbursed.

5.10.6.3. After arriving in the vicinity of the laboratory, subsistence costs for a maximum of seven days may be allowed until living arrangements are made. Relocation expenses cannot be incurred/reimbursed if tenure has started.

### 5.10.7. Use of a Rental Car

5.10.7.1. If taxi service is not readily available from the nearest air, rail, or bus terminal to a place of lodging near the laboratory, a rental car may be used with prior approval.

5.10.7.2. You must include the request for the rental car on the relocation TA. Only compact or sub-compact sized cars are allowed.

5.10.7.3. You must make your rental car reservation through Vai Travel to be insured by the National Academies in case of accident. Car rentals not booked with Vai will not be reimbursed and any additional insurance may be purchased at your own expense.

### 5.10.8. Accompanied Airline Baggage

5.10.8.1. Associates will be reimbursed fees for two checked bags; you are required to provide justification on your TA for charges incurred for more than two bags.

5.10.8.2. Reimbursement may be made for excess baggage for no more than 25 pounds (11.4kg) additional for each traveler. Baggage charges beyond the allowable weight limits are your financial responsibility.

5.10.8.3. Excess baggage and accompanied baggage are usually insured by the airline. If you choose to purchase additional insurance, the cost of this insurance will not be reimbursed.

### 5.10.9. Unaccompanied Baggage

5.10.9.1. If you send unaccompanied baggage, you must submit an original receipt or Bill of Lading to be reimbursed. The total allowable cost for shipment of unaccompanied baggage is limited as follows:

- (a) Associate - \$4,000
- (b) Spouse - \$2,000
- (c) Dependent - \$1,000 (each)

5.10.9.2. You must make all arrangements for shipping unaccompanied baggage and provide paid receipts to be reimbursed. If the cost of shipping exceeds the allowances indicated above, those additional costs will be the responsibility of the Associate. All documentation of costs should be submitted with your TA and on your TER.

5.10.9.3. If you choose to purchase insurance for your unaccompanied baggage, you will be reimbursed for the cost of this insurance if you submit an original receipt or Bill of Lading, and the total cost of shipping and insurance does not exceed the limits indicated above.

5.10.9.4. Any deviation from this policy must have prior approval from your NRC Program Administrator and must be accompanied by supporting documentation.

### 5.11. **Return Relocation – Outside the United States**

5.11.1. You will be reimbursed for return relocation costs if:

- (a) You hold J-1 visa status, relocated from your home country or country of legal residence, and will return to your home country or country of legal residence; or
- (b) You are returning to a permanent position of employment outside the United States from which you were on leave during your Research Associateship award.

5.11.2. Check with your NRC Program Administrator for questions about eligibility for return relocation.

5.11.3. You should complete and submit a TA for your return relocation no later than four weeks before your proposed travel date(s).

5.11.4. To be reimbursed, you must complete your return relocation travel within 30 days of your last day of tenure and submit a Travel Expense Report within 5 days of relocation.

- 5.11.5. The TA should be as specific as possible, making sure that you include the name of any spouse and/or the name(s) and age(s) of any dependent family member(s) traveling with you. Also, any unusual circumstances surrounding your relocation should be noted in the "Additional Comments" section.
- 5.11.6. Once your Travel Authorization is approved, you may obtain direct-bill one-way airline tickets from Vai Travel.
- 5.11.7. You are limited to the same amount of accompanied, excess, and/or unaccompanied baggage as for your initial relocation.
- 5.11.8. The use of a rental car, whether in the vicinity of the laboratory or in the home country, is not an allowable expense. If you require the use of a rental car before your departure or after you arrive in your home country, the expense is your financial responsibility.
- 5.11.9. Subsistence in the vicinity of the laboratory or in the home country is not an allowable expense.

### 6. International Travel and Visas

- 6.1. The following is intended as general guidance for NRC Research Associates and does not constitute legal immigration advice. For specific questions not covered below, contact the NRC Visa Officer.
  - 6.1.1. Most federal agencies have their own policies regarding international travel that supersedes RAP travel policy. Associates should contact their Laboratory Program Representative (LPR) prior to planning international travel.
- 6.2. United States Citizens
  - 6.2.1. If you are planning to travel abroad, you must carry a valid United States passport and a visa to the country you will visit, if required. Some countries require that your passport be valid for at least six months beyond the length of your visit.
  - 6.2.2. For information on entry requirements and other travel topics, refer to information provided [by the U.S. Department of State](#).
    - 6.2.2.1. If you are planning to travel within the Western Hemisphere (Canada, Mexico, Caribbean, Central and South America), please refer to guidelines set by the [U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#).
- 6.3. United States Lawful Permanent Residents
  - 6.3.1. If you are a U.S. permanent resident, you must carry your U. S. Resident Alien Card (green card) and passport to re-enter the United States.
    - 6.3.1.1. The country you plan to visit may additionally require you to carry visa for entry. You can obtain information on visas and how to apply for them by contacting the relevant embassy at [Foreign Embassies in the U.S.](#) and [U.S. Department of State Country Information](#).
  - 6.3.2. If you are not yet a permanent resident, but have applied for adjustment of status, you must obtain advance parole before traveling. Advance parole will enable you to travel abroad without abandoning your application for adjustment of status. Your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) may include the notation "Serves as I-512 Advance Parole.", which allows for employment and travel.
- 6.4. Foreign Nationals (F-1, J-1, and their dependents)
  - 6.4.1. If you are a foreign national in the United States, such as a J-1 exchange visitor or F-1 student, you must carry a passport valid for at least six months after your travel. You may also need a visa for the country you are planning to visit. To be readmitted to the United States after your trip, you must carry your passport, valid DS-2019 or I-20 form, and a valid J-1 or F-1 visa stamp. J-1 exchange visitors must have a valid Form DS-2019, endorsed for travel by your J-1 Responsible Officer (RO). F-1

students must carry a valid I-20 form, endorsed for travel by your university's Designated School Official (DSO). Dependent DS-2019 and I-20 forms also must be endorsed for travel.

- 6.4.2. Travel endorsement signatures are valid for 12 months for J-1 research scholars and F-1 students, and 6 months for J-1 short term scholars.

- 6.4.2.1. If the signature on your form is missing or has expired, send it to the NRC Visa Officer before you depart with the address and phone number where it should be returned to you by FedEx.

- 6.4.3. If your F-1 or J-1 visa stamp has expired and you will travel outside North America, you must plan extra time abroad to apply for a new U.S. visa to return to the United States. Though you can apply for a visa at any United States embassy or consulate abroad, it is advisable to apply for a visa in your home country if possible.

- 6.4.3.1. Be aware that visa application and processing may take days or weeks to be completed, especially if you are subject to background checks. For specific information on application procedures at United States posts, refer to the [U.S. Department of State Visas page](#) and the website of the consulate where you will apply for your new visa.

- 6.4.4. If you have changed status from F-1 or another status to J-1, you will need a J-1 visa stamp to return to the U.S., even if your current visa is still valid.

- 6.4.4.1. It is recommended that you carry a copy of your I-797 approval notice and a copy of your SEVIS fee receipt.

- 6.4.5. For travel to contiguous territories (Canada, Mexico, or adjacent islands) for less than 30 days, a valid visa is not required for return to the U.S. This is known as "automatic revalidation," and applies to J-1 exchange visitors or F-1 students (and their dependents) whose visas have expired. It also applies to those who have changed status to J-1, but don't have a currently valid J-1 visa stamp.

- 6.4.5.1. For information and conditions, please refer to the [U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#). Some travelers may be ineligible for automatic revalidation and must apply for a new visa before returning to the United States.

- 6.4.6. If you have had a child during your stay in the United States, you must obtain a U.S. passport for them as soon as possible after birth to ensure that they can travel with you. Information can be found [here](#).

- 6.4.7. It is recommended that travelers carry a copy of the [Revalidation Sheet](#) with them to show the legal references to any immigration officer who may ask questions.

- 6.4.8. Automatic revalidation may not be used for travel from a contiguous territory to a non-contiguous territory (e.g., from the U.S. to Canada to Ireland). The use of

automatic revalidation after travel to a third country is a violation of immigration law that can lead to deportation. Travelers to third countries must apply for a new U.S. visa before returning to the United States.

- 6.4.9. When you have been readmitted to the United States, please notify the NRC Visa Officer, and send a scan of your electronic arrival record and your new visa.

### 6.5. Useful Resources for International Travel

- (a) [U.S. State Department Travel Information](#)
- (b) [U.S. Bilateral Relations Fact Sheets](#)
- (c) [CIA World Factbook](#)
- (d) [U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#)

## 7. Travel Reimbursement

- 7.1. All National Academies sponsored travel must be accounted for by submitting a Travel Expense Report, whether reimbursement is due to you. Government regulations require that all airline tickets and/or rental cars provided by Vai Travel must be accounted for on a Travel Expense Report.
- 7.2. To uphold the integrity of our processes, travelers are expected to ensure their reimbursement claims accurately reflect the facts. Submitting accurate and truthful reports helps maintain trust and avoids complications.
- 7.3. **Electronic Travel Expense Report**
  - 7.3.1. Associates must contact the RAP Travel Office for access to Workday Expense to complete an Electronic Travel Expense Report (TER) with all required receipts.
  - 7.3.2. You must notify raptravel@nas.edu upon completion of your report within 10 days of your travel end date for your TER will to be processed.
  - 7.3.3. All entries on your TER must be reported in United States dollars at the [official exchange rate](#) on the day of the expenditure.
  - 7.3.4. Claims for unauthorized or unallowable expenditures will delay the reimbursement process.
  - 7.3.5. If you owe a refund on the unused portion of the travel advance, you will be notified by e-mail as to the amount you owe; this amount must be paid by a check or money order made payable to The National Academies. Please follow the instructions in the email message as to where to send the check or money order.
  - 7.3.6. You are advised to keep a copy of the completed Travel Expense Report and receipts for your records.
- 7.4. **Receipt Requirements**
  - 7.4.1. To be reimbursed for expenses incurred during travel, you must submit receipts with your Travel Expense Report. Receipts with handwritten notations, corrections, or changes will not be accepted.
  - 7.4.2. All expenses must be converted to United States dollars, and foreign receipts must be accompanied by an English translation. Receipts without English translation will delay the reimbursement process.
  - 7.4.3. Receipts are required for lodging, transportation, registration and abstract submittal fees, unaccompanied baggage, excess baggage, and rental vehicle gasoline expenses. Any other single expense of \$75 or more requires an itemized receipt. Missing receipts will delay the reimbursement process.

- 7.4.4. Third party payments (when another person or entity pays the expense on your behalf, and you reimburse that party) are not allowable and cannot be reimbursed.

### 7.5. **Meals**

- 7.5.1. The fixed meal per diem configuration in Workday Expense will automatically populate the meal per diem for the meeting location once the itinerary is completed.

### 7.6. **Lodging**

- 7.6.1. Receipts are required for lodging expenses regardless of cost. A valid lodging receipt includes the following:

- (a) Your name
- (b) Provider of and date(s) and service
- (c) Room and rate taxes
- (d) Total expense
- (e) Form of payment
- (f) Zero balance or other notation indicating full payment was made

- 7.6.2. When sharing lodging, your name is required to be listed on the receipt.

### 7.7. **Transportation**

- 7.7.1. An official paid invoice is required showing rail or bus travel.

### 7.8. **Rental Vehicle**

- 7.8.1. The use of a rental car must be pre-approved and will be direct billed.

- 7.8.2. A valid rental vehicle receipt includes the following:

- (a) Your name
- (b) Rental rate and applicable taxes and fees
- (c) Date(s) of rental
- (d) Total cost
- (e) Form of payment
- (f) Zero balance or other notation indicating full payment was made

### 7.9. **Checked Baggage including Excess Baggage**

- 7.9.1. Associates are authorized to receive reimbursement for all pertinent fees dealing with the first checked bag, which will be treated as a baggage fee on the TER. You may be reimbursed for fees from a second bag if you received approval from the Fellowships Travel Unit prior to your trip. Receipts for checked baggage fees must include the following:

- (a) Your name or that of any dependent family member(s) traveling during relocation
- (b) Total weight
- (c) Total cost
- (d) Form of payment
- (f) Zero balance or other notation indicating full payment was made

### 7.10. **Unaccompanied Baggage**

7.10.1.1. Receipts for unaccompanied baggage must include the following:

- (a) Your name or that of any dependent family member(s) traveling
- (b) Departure and destination locations
- (c) Weight or volume of shipment
- (d) Cost of insurance (if applicable)
- (e) Total expense
- (f) Form of payment
- (g) Zero balance or other notation indicating full payment was made

### 7.11. **Alternate Proof of Payment**

7.11.1. In the absence of an original receipt, please contact RAP Travel a [raptravel@nas.edu](mailto:raptravel@nas.edu) to discuss alternative forms of proof of payment.

### 7.12. **Travel Reimbursement Process**

7.12.1. The reimbursement process involves collaboration among the Fellowships Travel Unit, the National Academies' Travel Accounting Department, and, for Foreign Nationals, the National Academies' Payroll Office.

7.12.2. The reimbursement process takes approximately 4-6 weeks from the time the Fellowships Travel Unit receives the email that the TER is ready to be processed. Missing and/or incomplete receipts and/or travel documentation will delay reimbursement.

7.12.3. Within one week of NRC receipt of the Travel Expense Report, the TER will be audited to verify that the expenses claimed were indicated on the approved TA, match the receipt(s) submitted, and are in compliance with all applicable policies, rules, and regulations.

7.12.4. After the TER is audited by the Fellowships Travel Unit, it is forwarded to the Travel Accounting Department or, for foreign nationals, the Payroll Office for final review and issuance of an EFT payment or a check.

7.12.4.1. For Foreign Nationals, reimbursement payments are processed twice a month by the Payroll Office by direct deposit or a direct deposit included in stipend payment.