

Traveling for the Pacific & Virgin Islands Training Initiatives Graduate School, USDA

This document has been prepared for consultants and instructors traveling for the Pacific & Virgin Islands Training Initiatives (PITI-VITI), of the Graduate School, USDA.

THE TYPICAL TRAVEL PROCESS

Typical travel for PITI-VITI would adhere to the following process:

1. The PITI-VITI program manager and the consultant come to agreement on the scope of work, reimbursement rate, deliverables, and timing of trip. A task order is developed by the PITI-VITI program manager and signed by both parties.
2. If not already in place, consultant will complete a Graduate School, USDA Master Contract Agreement and W9 form (or comparable tax identification information, if not a U.S. citizen).
3. Instructor will make travel arrangements with one of the Graduate School travel agencies. For travel to the United States and Virgin Islands, contact Michelle Stockhaus at World Travel Service (michelles@worldtravelservice.com, (202) 728-4040 x104). For travel to the Pacific, arrangements are typically made through Continental Airlines, and one of the Graduate School Program Managers.
4. Travel agent will contact program manager for final approval of itinerary. Upon approval, final itinerary will be sent to consultant.
5. PITI-VITI program manager signs a GS travel authorization for consultant travel.
6. PITI-VITI will process MedEx evacuation insurance, and, if necessary, embassy notification (for FSM, RMI and Palau).
7. PITI-VITI will process a travel advance for the consultant. The 80% advance per diem is the estimated hotel plus meals & incidental expenses, as authorized by existing federal laws and regulations at time of travel.
8. Consultant makes hotel and car rental (when authorized) arrangements using preferred hotel list attached below, except for instances in which PITI-VITI staff need to contact the hotel directly in order to get a preferred rate.
9. PITI-VITI will provide a pre-travel packet to the consultant which contains a travel authorization form, MedEx insurance, and any relevant information pertaining to the trip.
10. Upon conclusion of travel, consultant submits boarding passes, original receipts and expenses eligible for reimbursement (receipts required for any expenses over US \$15).
11. Consultant submits trip report to program manager.
12. Consultant submits invoice for payment. The program manager will approve the invoice upon receipt of a final trip report and fulfillment of contract deliverables. Typically invoices are processed within thirty days.

II. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Will I get an advance?

Travel advances will be processed by default for consultants. The consultant will be provided an 80% advance per diem, which is estimated hotel plus meals & incidental expenses as authorized by existing federal laws and regulations at time of travel.

Do I need to keep receipts?

Yes. Required receipts include those for hotel bills, taxi, photocopying, faxes, official telephone calls, postage, airport departure tax, and any other out of pocket expenses valued at \$15 or higher. Car rental reimbursement is only allowed if pre-authorized by the Graduate School, USDA. Receipts are not required for any meals or incidental expenses. All required receipts must be submitted within two weeks of the contract completion date. Used airline ticket stubs and boarding passes are also required for submission.

Are international telephone calls home a reimbursable expense?

Personal telephone calls can be claimed following Department of the Interior (DOI) regulations. DOI permits one (1) five minute call to a residence every other day, the first call being made upon arrival at the first destination of the trip. The consultant must submit an itemized telephone bill which includes telephone number called, total number of minutes, and charge.

How is reimbursement calculated?

A reimbursement worksheet will be prepared by a staff member and, upon request, shared with the instructor. The worksheet will be calculated as follows: (a) Adjusted per diem. Add the hotel rate paid to the allotted money for meals and incidental expenses. If the real per diem cost is less than the maximum (estimated) per diem allowed, the real per diem cost is the adjusted per diem. If the real per diem cost is greater than the maximum per diem allowed, the consultant can only claim the maximum per diem. (b) Total per diem. Multiply the adjusted per diem by the number of nights the consultant stayed at each site. If the consultant does not have a hotel receipt, but was on-site (validated by airline ticket), the consultant may be reimbursed for meals & incidental expenses only. (c) Additional expenses include things such as taxis, postage, photocopying, airport departure tax, and other out of pocket expenses. (d) Amount owed to traveler. Add the adjusted total per diem allowed and the total additional expenses. Subtract the 80% advanced per diem

What type of immunizations should I have prior to travel?

The United States Department of State maintains current country information for all of the Pacific islands at <http://travel.state.gov>. In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) maintain lists of recommended immunizations at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/>.

Do I need a Country Clearance from the U.S. Embassy in order to travel?

Because the Graduate School, USDA is not a government agency country clearances are not required to travel to the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands or the Republic of Palau. However, PITI-VITI staff will send a courtesy e-mail to the U.S. embassies in those countries to make them aware of your visit and associated activities.

Will I have medical and/or evacuation insurance?

PITI-VITI will provide MedEx insurance for all official travel to the Pacific and Virgin Islands. For more information on the insurance we provide, please visit <http://www.medexassist.com>.

Where can I get a template to submit an invoice for payment?

PITI-VITI keeps a template invoice on the PITI-VITI website, <http://www.pitivit.org>. Just look under training > instructor resources.