

HELPFUL TIPS

In an effort to assist the NIH administrative community with the recruitment and retention of foreign national scientists, the Division of International Services (DIS) is providing the following tips/best practices when submitting cases to us, as well as post-submission reminders.

BEFORE SUBMISSION:

- **Submit a request or case for any foreign national scientist employed or hosted by the NIH who will be placed at NIH facilities.**
 - Any foreign national scientist placed at NIH who is **not** a U.S. citizen or permanent resident must be cleared by the DIS.¹ The DIS must verify that these individuals are lawful in the U.S. AND permitted to work at the NIH. This remains the case even when:
 1. The NIH sponsors the individual's immigration status; **OR**
 2. The individual is sponsored by another organization (e.g. F-1 students); **OR**
 3. The individual possess his/her own work authorization (e.g. Employment Authorization Document); **OR**
 4. The individual is funded by an organization outside the NIH.
- **Learn the [Processing Times](#) by the DIS and other agencies for an estimate of how long your case will take.**
 - If you require expedited processing (i.e. processing shorter than our posted processing times) for any case type (e.g. new or renewal), include a justification memo signed by the IC Scientific Director requesting expedited DIS processing. The memo must describe *why* expedited treatment is needed and what caused the *delay* in submitting the case to the DIS. Note that if other government agencies are involved, the DIS can only expedite our internal process—not those of the other agencies.
- **Use our [Checklists](#) to learn what forms and documents need to be prepared.**
- **Be complete and accurate on all materials submitted.**
 - Request a [realistic start date](#) on the case. If you are still not certain what date to list, consult with the [DIS](#).
 - In addition, try to ascertain when the scientist is ready to come to the NIH. We often receive cases with a date when the scientist is not ready or able to start, resulting in us re-doing all the forms, some of which require certifications by other government agencies.
 - Obtain all appropriate IC approval signatures.
 - It is not necessary to submit an advanced copy of a case that is still pending IC approvals.
 - Enter the scientist's personal information accurately and include a copy of his/her passport.
 - Watch dating formats – many countries use DAY/MONTH/YEAR as opposed to the U.S. format of MONTH/DAY/YEAR.
 - Watch city of birth vs. province/state of birth – these are not the same!
 - Fully describe the details of the planned fellowship/appointment/assignment.
 - Provide a complete description of the research activities/duties.
 - List all possible work locations—within or outside the NIH, including placement abroad.²
 - Indicate if there are plans for multiple/intermittent visits to/from the NIH.
 - If the IC notes a start date and end date on the request form (e.g. Jan. 15, 2014 as the start date and Jan. 15, 2015 as the end date), we assume that this is a CONTINUOUS one-year period at the NIH unless told otherwise.

¹An exception applies to those placed at NIH as contract workers, since NIH is not the sponsoring host or employer in those cases. However, DIS clearance is required for NIH ID Badge Issuance. See our web site for more [information](#) on this process. For those brought on for a short time (less than two weeks), please consult with the DIS if a case is necessary. For requests for email/systems access only, the DIS does not need a case since the foreign national scientist will not be physically placed at NIH facilities.

²Note that placement outside NIH facilities requires approval by the NIH Office of Intramural Research (OIR), Office of the Director (OD), for non-FTE appointments.

- **Make a copy of all forms and documents BEFORE submitting the case to the DIS.**
 - The DIS staff is often requested to provide copies of documents, and these requests take time away from our usual duties. We ask that you make a copy of all items before submission to allow us to continue to provide you with the best possible and timely service.
- **Submit original cases by mail.**
 - The DIS currently does not have an electronic submission process and are unable to accept e-mailed or other electronically submitted cases. In addition, we require original signatures on our forms, so copies are not acceptable. We continue to explore an effective electronic submission process. In the meantime, we must still rely on hard-copies. We recommend using hand-carry to ensure delivery to us.

AFTER SUBMISSION:

- **Check the status of your case via the [DIS Case Status and Reports System](#).**
 - Follow-up with the [DIS](#) if your case has not been completed once the processing time has elapsed.
- **For new scientists:**
 - Keep us apprised of any start date delays as we are required to amend starting dates with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), particularly for J-1 Exchange Visitors.
 - It is strongly recommended that the scientist brings a completed and signed “[Appointment Start Date Confirmation](#)” form when reporting to our office for check-in / EOD (enter-on-duty).
- **Carefully review and keep a copy of the DIS clearance form, Notice of Action (NOA), which is issued after the EOD or extension/conversion/transfer action.**
 - This form provides important information regarding the authorized time period at the NIH. Pay attention to the not-to-exceed date on the NOA. Use the [DIS Case Status and Reports System](#) (available to your IC’s Lead Liaison) to keep track of not-to-exceed dates and submit timely renewal/extension requests.
- **Report any changes that impact the scientist BEFORE they occur to comply with DHS reporting requirements. Such changes include:**
 - Changes in NIH Designation (e.g. Special Volunteer → Post-doctoral Visiting Fellow; or Pre-doctoral Visiting Fellow → Post-doctoral Visiting Fellow)
 - Promotions (e.g. Research Fellow → Staff Scientist)
 - Changes in laboratory/branch, such as:
 - Transfer to a new laboratory/branch (includes both inter- and intra-IC transfers, as well as any temporary details)
 - New supervisor/sponsor
 - New or additional work locations (whether within or outside the NIH, including placement abroad)³
 - Research activities/ duties
 - Extended leave of absence, whether the leave occurs in the U.S. or abroad, such as:
 - All Leave Without Pay (LWOP) or Absence Without Stipend (AWOS) actions
 - Extended leave *with* pay
 - Family leave (maternity/paternity)
 - If the extended leave will occur abroad, work with your scientist to submit a completed [Request for Extended Absence Abroad](#) form to the DIS.
 - Outside Activities
 - Work with your scientist to submit a completed [Request for Outside Activity](#) form to the DIS.
 - Leaving NIH
 - Submit completed and signed [termination notices](#) to the DIS. For full-time equivalent (FTE) appointments, we will also accept a copy of the SF 52.
 - Receipt of U.S. permanent residence status (“green card”)
 - Submit a copy of the scientist’s U.S. permanent resident card so that we can authorize the conversion from the Visiting Program (VP) to the domestic program. We will send you a Notice of Action (NOA) for this authorization. Once the NOA is sent, the IC has two (2) weeks to process the conversion. After two weeks, the DIS will formally close our file on the scientist. Please be mindful to act on this conversion as not doing so could affect the scientist’s pay and/or badge issuance.

³ Note that placement outside NIH facilities requires approval by the NIH Office of Intramural Research (OIR), Office of the Director (OD), for non-FTE appointments.