

NSF Policy on Visa Fees

Princeton University recently requested clarification from NSF's Division of Grants and Agreements on the question of whether the cost of obtaining a visa for an individual who will be working on an NSF-funded project may be legitimately charged to the award. I would appreciate you sharing the following guidance provided by DGA with your faculty and others who may be preparing NSF budgets or reviewing expenditures on NSF awards.

This guidance generally applies to most federal funding, but contact your ORPA administrator with any specific questions.

NSF RESPONSE

Visa fees tend to fall into three different categories:

1. **U.S. Scientists going to another country to conduct research or attend a conference.** This could also include scientists from another country to traveling to a third country to attend the conference or otherwise participate in a research project. The visa and other travel fees required by the hosting country would be considered an allowable expense. These would be less than \$100.00.

The awardee is required by NSF grant terms and conditions to comply with the laws and restrictions of the host country and obtain the necessary permits, etc. These are not normally very expensive and typically of limited duration. Of course any visas required would have to relate to the purposes of the award, i.e., they must be allocable to the research project (a grantee traveling to Spain for a conference could not charge for a visa to France to take his wife to Paris while he was over there.) Note that reasonable and necessary travel expenses required to obtain/receive a visa (e.g., the train ride to NY to the consulates office) would normally be allowable. Costs exceeding this small amount would need to be specifically requested and approved by the sponsor prior to initiating the travel.

2. **Visas, green cards, or other arrangements for foreign scientists or graduate students to come to the United states and work for an extended period of time on an NSF award.** These costs can be considerably more expensive (potential legal fees) and NSF would not typically pay this type of expense—the basic premise being that NSF expects that individuals proposed to work on an NSF award would have the status or standing to legally work in the United States. This includes the new premium process for H visas (typically \$1,000 per visa) and the \$100.00 SEVIS fee for J visas. However, special consideration could be made in situations particular necessity (I.e., we really need scientist X because he/she is the only one who knows how to do this). Consultation with NSF would be required in advance. The most common scenario is universities asking NSF to cover the costs of bringing foreign graduate students and post docs into the U.S. to participate on a research project. These can run up to \$1,000 or \$2,000 and such costs would not be considered allowable grant expenses.

3. **Foreign scientists invited to the U.S. to attend a meeting or workshop supported by a federally-funded project.** Visa fees for such attendance may be charged to the relevant grant. This is also true for conference grants, since the attendance of such individuals is the objective of the award. Thus it would be acceptable for foreign scientists attending an NSF sponsored programs conference in the U.S.

The information provided above is taken from the Princeton University web site, Office of Research and Project Administration.