

[ARS Guiding Principles for Mission Critical/Essential Travel Approval](#)
[August 2022](#)

Approval Authorities

- Location Coordinators have delegated authority to approve official domestic mission critical/essential travel to counties that are CDC designated as “Low” and “Medium”, in accordance with the below ARS Guiding Principles and as governed by the Federal Travel Regulations and USDA COVID Travel recommendations
- Area Directors and HQ Office Directors have delegated authority to approve official domestic mission critical/essential travel to counties that CDC designated as “High”, in accordance with the below ARS Guiding Principles and as governed by the Federal Travel Regulations and USDA COVID Travel recommendations
- ARS Associate Administrator for Research Operations has the delegated authority to approve official mission critical/essential international travel in accordance with the below ARS Guiding Principles and as governed by the Federal Travel Regulations and USDA COVID Travel recommendations
- ARS Associate Administrator for Research Operations has the delegated authority to approve (in conjunction with the Department’s COVID Coordination Team) hosted events with 50 or more participants
 - *NOTE: These approvals/guidelines do not extinguish the parallel requirement to obtain approval for conference attendance that meets the Departmental conference approval requirements.*

ARS Guiding Principles

- Ensure employee safety is our first priority
- Encourage virtual participation
- Ensure we sustain and improve our ability to develop and transfer solutions to agricultural problems of high national and international priority
- Ensure we sustain and improve ARS standing, reputation and support as the trusted leader and collaborator in agricultural research
- Consider collaboration a key component to research
- Acknowledge critical collaboration takes place in multiple ways to include but not limited to:
 - Presentations
 - Formal and informal meetings with collaborators and stakeholders
 - Participation in panels, working groups, and research visioning exercises
- Consider these important points for whether to approve travel/participation in-person:
 - sustains and improves development or transfer of solutions to important agricultural issues;
 - sustains and improves ARS standing, reputation and support as the trusted leader in agricultural research; or,
 - enhances career growth - scientist and especially early career scientist attendance at applicable scientific conferences and meetings are critical to their career as ARS scientists
- Follow USDA (<https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/future-of-work/travel>) and CDC ([Travel | CDC](#)) travel recommendations for COVID safety such as:

- Testing before and after travel
 - Applicable isolation/quarantine upon return from travel
- Prior to international travel, check Department of State's COVID-19 Country-Specific Information for destination(s). [COVID-19 Country Specific Information \(state.gov\)](#)
- Promote consistency in how we review and approve travel
 - Domestic travel will follow this document
 - International travel will follow this document and use a standardized request form