

Job Search Allowances under the TAA Program

The Job Search Allowance is an under-utilized benefit available to adversely affected workers (AAW) under the TAA Program authorized under Sec. 237 of the Trade Act and explained in Subpart D of the TAA Program regulations at 20 CFR Part 618. This benefit provides for payment of 90 percent of allowable costs - up to \$1,250 - for an AAW to seek employment or engage in related job search activities outside of their regular commuting area.

The average amount paid for a Job Search Allowance in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 was only \$306. Less than 1 percent of all TAA Program participants utilize this benefit each year. In FY 2020, for example, only 90 AAWs received a Job Search Allowance.

AAWs that received a job search allowance have a higher fourth quarter post-program employment rate and a wage replacement rate above 90 percent.

Job Search Allowances under the TAA Program – 618.405(a)

(A non-limited list of allowable activities with examples.)

TAA Job Search Allowances can be approved for, but is not limited to, any or all of the following:

- Travel to and attendance at job fairs and interviews;
- Travel to and attendance at prevocational workshops;
- Making an in-person visit with a potential employer who may reasonably be expected to have openings for suitable employment;
- Completing a job application in person with a potential employer who may reasonably be expected to have openings for suitable employment;
- Going to a local one-stop, copy shop, Post Office, or similar entity to print, copy, mail, email, or fax a job application, cover letter, and/or a resume;
- Going to a local one-stop, public library, community center, or similar entity to use online job matching systems, to search for job matches, request referrals, submit applications/resumes, attend workshops, and/or apply for jobs; and,
- Attending a professional association meeting for networking purposes.

Application of Job Search Allowance Example Scenario: A worker group was certified under the TAA Program. The commuting area for the state in which the worker group is located is 40 miles.

(1) Travel to and attendance at job fairs and interviews:

A two-day job fair is scheduled in another area of the state, 60 miles from an AAW's home. Based on the definition of commuting area, this job fair would be outside the AAW's commuting area. The TAA Program would pay 90 percent of allowable costs, which would include: transportation to and from the AAW's home, any registration fees for attending the job fair, up to 50 percent of the per diem costs for lodging and meals and incidentals expenses (M&IE) under the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR), and any costs for producing copies of résumés, cover letters, or similar portfolios to present to perspective employers. The eligible mileage for reimbursement would be 40 miles in addition to any tolls or parking costs. (60 miles one way – 40 miles commuting area = 20 miles x 2 round trip = 40 miles).

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(2) Travel to and attendance at prevocational workshops:

One of the AAWs has little or no experience with computers. The AAW is finding that many job postings now require individuals to be familiar with using computers. An American Job Center (AJC) in another area of the state is offering a series of computer training classes. These classes would provide the AAW with the ability to utilize a computer and several software titles that would improve their job prospects. The TAA Program would pay for the transportation cost to and from the AJC for purposes of attending the computer training classes. Any costs for the actual training would be covered under employment and case management funds.

(3) Making an in-person visit with a potential employer who may reasonably be expected to have openings for suitable employment:

One of the AAWs learned of a possible job opening through a networking group at their local AJC. Another member of the networking group arranges a meeting with a hiring official at the employer. The employer is located 50 miles away from the worker's home. The AAW travels to the employer to discuss potential employment opportunities. The TAA Program would pay for the transportation cost for purposes of meeting with this employer. Reimbursement would be for the roundtrip mileage beginning at the first mile outside of the commuting area in addition to any tolls or parking costs. (50 miles – 40 miles = 10 miles x 2 = 20 miles roundtrip.)

(4) Completing a job application in person with a potential employer who may reasonably be expected to have openings for suitable employment:

An employer 45 miles away from an AAW's home is hosting an on-site job fair. The AAW travels to the location to attend the job fair. The TAA Program would pay for the transportation cost for purposes of attending the job fair. Reimbursement would be for the roundtrip mileage beginning at the first mile outside of the commuting area in addition to any tolls or parking costs. (45 miles – 40 miles = 5 miles x 2 = 10 miles roundtrip.)

(5) Going to a local one-stop, copy shop, Post Office, or similar entity to print, copy, mail, email, or fax a job application, cover letter, and/or a resume:

Although many applications are made online, there is often still demand for paper versions of resume to be produced. There are also AAWs who may not have access to a computer, a printer, or the Internet at home. Some employers may also ask for materials to be faxed to them. In these instances, an AAW may need to travel to an AJC or other location to print, copy, mail, email, or fax a job application or other materials to an employer. In certain locations, the nearest AJC or location that provides these services may be outside of the AAW's commuting area. In this scenario, the TAA Program would pay for the roundtrip mileage outside of the commuting area, as well as the costs for production of and transmission of the materials.

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(6) Going to a local one-stop, public library, community center, or similar entity to use online job matching systems, to search for job matches, request referrals, submit applications/resumes, attend workshops, and/or apply for jobs:

Although access to the Internet is broader than ever before, there are still AAWs who do not own a computer or have adequate access at home to attend virtual services or access digital services or systems. Additionally, many workshops at AJCs are not available remotely. In addition, the variety of and schedule for workshops varies from AJC to AJC and from local area to local area. There may be a workshop that would benefit an AAW that is being held in an AJC outside of their commuting area. In this scenario, the TAA Program would pay for the roundtrip mileage outside of the commuting area in addition to and costs for tolls or parking.

(7) Attending a professional association meeting for networking purposes.

An AAW learns of a professional association meeting that will occur a few states away. There will be opportunities for networking with employers in the industry in which the AAW is likely to find suitable employment. The TAA Program would pay up to \$1,250 to cover transportation to and from the event, attendance at the event, and other allowable costs.