Print

Human Resources: B Category: Visitors for Business or Pleasure

B-1 visa is appropriate for an alien who wishes to engage in temporary commercial, business, or professional activities related to their employment/business abroad.

B-2 visa is for short-term visits for pleasure or tourism, medical reasons and/or other health purposes, to participate in conventions, conferences, or convocation of fraternal, social/service organizations or prospective students.

A B-1 visa holder may stay in the US for a "reasonable" period of time for completion of the purpose of the trip, not to exceed one year. A B-2 visa holder is admitted for a standard period of 6 months.

No paid employment is permitted on a B-1. Visitors in B-1 status are able to receive reimbursements for receipted expenses incidental to their B-1 activity. *Certain honorarium payments and payments for associated expenses are possible if certain guidelines are met.

B-2 visitors are not permitted to engage in employment of any kind in the U.S. nor are they permitted to receive any other type of payments for reimbursement and per diem expenses. They may receive "academic honoraria" payments and payments for associated incidental expenses if *certain guidelines are met.

> *The "American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act of 1998" changed this so that certain payments are now permitted to nonimmigrants admitted to the US on a B-1 or B-2 visa. The nonimmigrant can now accept honorarium payment and associated incidental expenses for an activity lasting no longer than 9 days at any single institution. The payment has to be made for services conducted for the benefit of WHOI and the nonimmigrant cannot have accepted such payments or expenses from more than 5 institutions or organizations in the previous 6-month period.

Nonimmigrants in B-1 and B-2 status are prohibited from enrolling in a course of study or taking other actions unless and until USCIS has changed the B nonimmigrant status to an appropriate student nonimmigrant status.

Basic Procedures to Obtain B-1 and B-2 status

Applicants for visitor visas should apply at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate with jurisdiction over their place of residence. The visa application should include the following:

- Proof that applicant is properly classifiable as a B-1 visitor for business or B-2 visitor for pleasure
- Evidence of financial ability to meet expenses
- Proof of residence abroad and intent to return
- Passport, valid for travel to U.S. with a validity date at least six months beyond the intended period of stay in the U.S.
- Form DS-156 "Nonimmigrant Visa Application"
- Form DS-157 "Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application", if the applicant is male and between the ages of 16 and 45.
- Two photos, 1 and ½ inches square for each applicant, showing full face, without head covering, against a light background.
- Machine Readable Visa
- Visa reciprocity fee, if applicable

In order to extend B-1 or B-2 status, you must file for an extension with the USCIS before the expiration of your current period of stay.

Although the Institution does not stand as the sponsor for this type of visa, a letter of invitation from the Institution is needed by visitors who apply for a B-1 visa at the US Consulate in their home country.

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