

FACT SHEET: U.S. Business Visas (B-1) and Allowable Uses

The following information provides a summary of the categories of business travel allowable on B-1 visas and is not to be construed as legal advice.

Applicants who desire to enter the United States for business and who are otherwise eligible for visa issuance may be classifiable as nonimmigrant B-1 visitors if they meet the criteria described in [9 FAM 402.2-5\(B\)](#) through (F). Admission with Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) approval allows for the same activities as contemplated for a B-1 visa holder admitted in that status.

Engaging in business using a B-1 visa entails business activities other than the performance of skilled or unskilled labor. Thus, the issuance of a B-1 visa is not appropriate for applicants who intend to obtain and engage in employment while in the United States.

If a business traveler seeks to engage in activity not clearly covered in this guidance, the traveler should apply for a more appropriate visa, such as a petition-based work visa, at their U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Allowable uses of B-1 visas include:

- **Applicants Traveling to the United States to Engage in Commercial Transactions, Negotiations, Consultations, Conferences, Etc. – 9 FAM 402.2-5(B):** Applicants may be classified as B-1 visitors if they are otherwise eligible and are traveling to the United States to: 1) Engage in commercial transactions which do not involve gainful employment in the United States (such as a merchant who takes orders for goods manufactured abroad); 2) Negotiate contracts; 3) Consult with business associates; 4) Litigate; 5) Participate in scientific, educational, professional, or business conventions, conferences, or seminars; or 6) Undertake independent research.
- **Applicants Coming to the United States to Pursue Employment as a Necessary Incident To their Professional Business Activities – 9 FAM 402.2-5(C):** Applicants *may* be eligible for a B-1 visa if they meet the criteria of one of these categories: 1) Members of religious groups; 2) Participants in voluntary service programs; 3) Members of board of directors of a U.S. corporations; 4) Professional athletes and personnel necessary to the performance of an individual athlete or sports team; 5) Yacht crewmen; 6) Coasting officers; 7) Investor seeking investment in the United States; 8) Equestrian sports; 9) Visa for transit or travel to the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS); and 10) Participants in international sporting events.

Certain other business activities classifiable as B-1 include:

- **Commercial or Industrial Workers – 9 FAM 402.2-5(E)(1):** An applicant coming to the United States to install, service, or repair commercial or industrial equipment or machinery purchased from a company outside the United States or to train U.S. workers to perform such services. However, in such cases, the contract of sale must specifically require the seller to provide such services or training and the visa applicant must possess unique knowledge that is essential to the seller's contractual obligation to perform the services or training and must receive no remuneration from a U.S. source. These provisions do not apply to an applicant seeking to perform building or construction work, whether on-site or in-plant. A applicant who is otherwise qualified as a B-1 nonimmigrant and is applying for a B-1 visa to supervise or train other workers engaged in building or construction work, but not actually to perform any such building or construction work, may qualify as a B-1 visitor.
- **Specialized Trainers – 9 FAM 402.2-5(E)(2):** An applicant may qualify as a specialized trainer eligible for a B-1 if they are traveling to the United States for a temporary period in order to provide training or transfer knowledge to U.S. workers, including on specialized or proprietary techniques, skills, or know-how necessary for industrial equipment, machinery, or processes that have been acquired or are sourced from a company outside the United States, in support of a qualifying project. **In such cases the applicant must possess unique knowledge that is not widely available in the United States and must receive no remuneration from a U.S. source.** B-1 visas issued in accordance with this guidance must be annotated as such. The annotation should read: "B-1 SPECIALIZED TRAINER".
- **NOTE:** Other business activities classifiable as B-1 include but not limited to: Foreign Airline Employees; Clerkship; Participants in Foreign Assistance Act Program; Peace Corps Volunteer Trainers; and Applicants Involved in International Fairs or Expositions.

NOTE: Incidental expenses or remuneration – 9 FAM 402.2-5(F)(1): A nonimmigrant in B-1 status may not receive a salary from a U.S. source for services rendered in connection with their activities in the United States. A U.S. source, however, may provide the applicant with an expense allowance or reimbursement for expenses incidental to the temporary stay. Incidental expenses may not exceed the actual reasonable expenses the applicant will incur in traveling to and from the event, together with living expenses the applicant reasonably can be expected to incur for meals, lodging, laundry, and other basic services.

Additional Resources:

AILA Doc. No. 26060809. (Posted 6/8/26)

USCIS: B-1 Temporary Business Visitor

<https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/temporary-visitors-for-business/b-1-temporary-business-visitor>

Department of State: Visitor Visa

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/tourism-visit/visitor.html>

9 FAM 402.2

<https://fam.state.gov/fam/09fam/09fam040202.html>