

International Travel to ISDC® 2023

If you plan to attend ISDC® 2023 and you require a visa for travel to the United States, you must apply for a nonimmigrant visa with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate with ample time for processing, typically as much as 2-3 months pre-pandemic (but because of the pandemic it could take much longer). Advance travel planning, early visa application, and providing a clear explanation that you are traveling to the U.S. to attend a conference are very important. We strongly suggests that you submit your formal application to U.S. authorities as early as possible in advance of the date of anticipated travel. The earlier, the better.

Overview

Generally, a citizen of a foreign country who wishes to enter the United States must first obtain a visa, either a nonimmigrant visa for temporary stay, or an immigrant visa for permanent residence. Visitor visas are nonimmigrant visas for persons who want to enter the United States temporarily for business (visa category B-1), tourism, pleasure or visiting (visa category B-2), or a combination of both.

Please visit <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html> for more information about the visa application process and U.S. Department of State requirements for travel to the United States.

NSS will provide an official letter of invitation to the event upon the request of a prospective attendee who requires a visa to travel to the United States. This letter and a copy of event materials (such as an event announcement, call for papers) should be presented along with the required documentation to the U.S. consular officials as part of the formal application process.

To request a letter of invitation, please fill out and submit the online Visa Invitation Letter request form at <https://isdc2023.nss.org/isdc-2023-invitation-request-form/>

NSS cannot directly contact the U.S. Department of State, consular offices, or embassies on behalf of individuals applying for visas.

How to Apply

There are several steps to apply for a visa. The order of these steps and how you complete them may vary at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate where you apply. Please consult the instructions available on the U.S. State Department website where you will apply at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas.html>.

Applying for a visa requires completing the visa application, collecting the necessary documentation and an interview at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the country where you live. You may schedule your interview at any U.S. Embassy or Consulate, but be aware that it may be difficult to qualify for a visa outside of your place of permanent residence.

As part of the documentation required, accommodations in the U.S. must be already booked (with arrival and departure dates) before the visa interview. Immigration officials will verify the dates and the location.

Who Doesn't Need A Visa?

The Visa Waiver Program (VWP), administered by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in consultation with the Department of State, permits citizens of 40 countries to travel to the United States for business or tourism for stays of up to 90 days **without** a visa. (www.dhs.gov/visa-waiver-program)

There are currently 40 countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program:

Andorra (1991)	Finland (1991)	Latvia (2008)	Portugal (1999)
Australia (1996)	France (1989)	Liechtenstein (1991)	San Marino (1991)
Austria (1991)	Germany (1989)	Lithuania (2008)	Singapore (1999)
Belgium (1991)	Greece (2010)	Luxembourg (1991)	Slovakia (2008)
Brunei (1993)	Hungary (2008)	Malta (2008)	Slovenia (1997)
Chile (2014)	Iceland (1991)	Monaco (1991)	Spain (1991)
Croatia (2021)	Ireland (1995)	Netherlands (1989)	Sweden (1989)
Czech Republic (2008)	Italy (1989)	New Zealand (1991)	Switzerland (1989)
Denmark (1991)	Japan (1988)	Norway (1991)	Taiwan (2012)
Estonia (2008)	Korea, Republic of (2008)	Poland (2019)	United Kingdom (1988)

In most cases, Canadian citizens do not require visitor, business, transit or other visas to enter the United States.

Nonimmigrant Aliens

Section 214(b) of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act

(b) Every alien (other than a nonimmigrant described in subparagraph (L) or (V) of section 101(a)(15), and other than a nonimmigrant described in any provision of section 101(a)(15)(H)(i) except subclause (b1) of such section) **shall be presumed to be an immigrant until he establishes to the satisfaction of the Consular Officer, at the time of application for a visa, and the Immigration Officers, at the time of application for admission, that he is entitled to a nonimmigrant status** under section 101(a)(15).

Sec. 101. [8 U.S.C. 1101] (a) As used in this Act

(3) The term "**alien**" means any person not a citizen or national of the United States.

(15) The term "**immigrant**" means every alien except an alien who is within one of the following classes of **nonimmigrant aliens**

(B) an alien (other than one coming for the purpose of study or of performing skilled or unskilled labor or as a representative of foreign press, radio, film, or other foreign information media coming to engage in such vocation) **having a residence in a foreign country which he has no intention of abandoning and who is visiting the United States temporarily for business or temporarily for pleasure**

Qualifying for a Visitor Visa

There are specific requirements which must be met by applicants to qualify for a visitor visa under U.S. immigration law. **The Consular Officer at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate will determine whether you qualify for the visa.**

The required presumption under U.S. law is that every visitor visa applicant is an intending immigrant until they demonstrate otherwise. Therefore, applicants for visitor visas must overcome this presumption by demonstrating:

- That the purpose of their trip is to enter the United States temporarily for business or pleasure;
- That they plan to remain for a specific, limited period;
- Evidence of funds to cover expenses in the United States;
- That they have a residence outside the United States as well as other binding ties that will ensure their departure from the United States at the end of the visit.

Visa Interview Guidelines

Nonimmigrant visa applicants must demonstrate to the **Consular Officer's satisfaction** that they have **strong ties** to a permanent residence outside of the U.S. which would compel them to leave the U.S. upon completion of their authorized stay. The Consular Officer evaluates the applicant's economic, social and cultural ties to his/her residence in order to determine whether it is more probable that the applicant will return to their home country within the period of authorized stay in the U.S. or whether it is more likely that the applicant will remain in the U.S. There is no set "list" of documents an applicant should bring; rather, an applicant who can convincingly explain the reasons for travel, present believable business or personal documents to substantiate his/her ties to their home country and who answers questions in an open manner is more likely to be issued a visa than someone who comes in with a huge folder of irrelevant or clearly questionable documents. You must clearly demonstrate your intent to depart the United States after your trip.

What are considered strong ties to my home country?

Ties are the various aspects of your life **that bind you to your home country**. Strong ties vary from country to country, city to city, and person to person, but examples include:

- Your job or school;
- Your home; and/or
- Your relationships with family and friends.

While conducting visa interviews, Consular Officers look at each application individually and consider the applicant's circumstances, travel plans, financial resources, and ties outside of the U.S. that will ensure the applicant's departure after a temporary visit.

Misconceptions

One common misconception about applying for a visa is that **qualifying for a visa is just a matter of providing more documents**. As has been noted above, a visa decision is not simply based on documents. **Rather, the visa interview itself is critical**. The required documents allow you to apply for a visa and help the Consulate Officer make a proper decision based on the given information. No one document or information guarantees visa eligibility.

Denials for nonimmigrant visas are usually because:

- Did not sufficiently demonstrate to the Consular Officer that you qualify for the nonimmigrant visa category you applied for; and/or
- Did not overcome the presumption of immigrant intent, required by law, by sufficiently demonstrating that you **have strong ties to your home country that will compel you to leave the United States at the end of your temporary stay**.

Summary

U.S. law places the burden on nonimmigrant visa applicants to show that they are not intending to be immigrants. Nonimmigrant visitor visa applicants must show that they have a foreign residence and life that they have no intention of abandoning and are visiting the U.S. temporarily for business or pleasure.

The importance of the interview cannot be underestimated. How the applicant conducts himself; his honesty in answering questions; how he is dressed; reactions; facial expressions; eye contact; hesitation in answering questions; discrepancies in answers to questions and information contained in the application form; nervousness — all go into weighing the applicant's intentions, credibility, and eligibility for a visa.