US Visa Information Guide

Introduction

This guide provides essential information for Page and Page Up members traveling to the United States for Page events. We understand that navigating visa requirements can be complex, and we want to ensure you have the information needed for a smooth experience.

Determining Your Visa Requirements

Visa Waiver Program (ESTA)

Citizens of 40 countries may be eligible to travel to the U.S. without a visa through the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) using the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA).

Key points:

- Valid for business meetings, conferences, and similar professional events
- Maximum stay of 90 days
- Must have a valid e-passport and approved ESTA before travel
- The application should be completed at least 72 hours before departure
- ESTA approval is valid for two years or until your passport expires
- Official application website: https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov

VWP-eligible countries include:

Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Chile, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, and United Kingdom.

B-1 Business Visitor Visa

For travelers not eligible for the VWP or those planning activities beyond what ESTA permits:

- Appropriate for attending professional conferences and business meetings
- Valid for up to 6 months with possible extensions
- Application processing can take 2-6+ months, depending on your location
- Apply through your local U.S. Embassy or Consulate

Application Process and Timeline

For ESTA (Visa Waiver Program)

1. Apply at least 3-4 weeks before travel (though 72 hours is the minimum)
2. Complete the online application at https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov
3. Pay the application fee (currently $21)
4. Check your application status regularly

For B-1 Business Visa

1. Begin your application process 4-6 months before your planned travel
2. Complete the DS-160 Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application
3. Pay the application fee (currently $185)
4. Schedule an interview at your local U.S. Embassy or Consulate
5. Prepare documentation for your interview

Required Documentation

For All Visa Types

- Valid passport (valid for at least 6 months beyond your planned stay)
- Documentation proving the purpose of your trip
- Proof of funds to cover your expenses during your stay
- Evidence of ties to your home country (employment, property, family)
- Details of your accommodation in the U.S.

Additional Documentation for Page Event Attendance

- Official invitation letter from Page (Contact: Dan Strouhal at dstrouhal@page.org)
- Copy of event registration confirmation
- Event agenda/program
- Letter from your employer confirming your attendance is for business purposes

Interview Preparation Tips

If an in-person interview is required (typically for B-1 visas):

1. Be concise: Prepare clear, direct answers about your purpose of travel
2. Demonstrate ties to home: Be ready to show evidence of your intent to return
3. Know your itinerary: Be familiar with your travel plans and event details
4. Bring all documentation: Organize your paperwork in advance
5. Professional appearance: Dress professionally, as you would for a business meeting

Navigating Recent Changes and Potential Hurdles

Since 2024, there have been several changes to US visa procedures that may impact international travelers:

- Enhanced screening: Be prepared for more detailed questions about your purpose of travel, professional background, and social media presence
- Longer processing times: Application backlogs may extend wait times beyond historical averages
- Additional documentation requests: You may be asked to provide supplementary materials after your initial application

Strategies to Address Potential Challenges

1. Apply early: Start your visa application process as soon as possible
2. Be thorough: Complete all application fields with detailed, accurate information
3. Expedited processing: Check if expedited processing is available in your region (additional fees apply)
4. Consult experts: Consider working with an immigration attorney if your case is complex
5. Stay informed: Monitor the US Embassy website in your country for updates on processing times and requirements

Special Considerations for Specific Regions

For EMEA Members
- European citizens generally have good approval rates, but should still apply early
- Middle Eastern and certain African countries may face additional screening requirements

For APAC Members
- Processing times may be longer in certain countries
- Technical specialists may face additional scrutiny

For Americas (non-US) Members
- Canadian citizens typically do not require visas for business visits
- Other North, Central, and South American countries have varying requirements

Additional Resources
- US Department of State Visa Wizard: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/wizard.html
- US Embassy and Consulate Finder: https://www.usembassy.gov/
- Page Team Contact: Dan Strouhal (dstrouhal@page.org)

Page Support for Visa Applications
Page is committed to supporting your participation in our US-based events. We can provide:
- Customized invitation letters
- Documentation of event registration and agenda
- General guidance on visa application processes
- Connections to other Page members who have recently navigated the process

If you encounter challenges with your visa application, please contact our team member, Dan Strouhal, at dstrouhal@page.org as soon as possible.

We look forward to welcoming you to our upcoming events in the United States and are here to support you throughout the visa application process.