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I Visa Overview

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Journalists/Media Visas

The "media (I)" visa is a nonimmigrant temporary visa for people who are representatives of the foreign media traveling to the United States. Such members of the foreign media must be engaging in their profession and the foreign media must have their home office in a foreign country. Please note in considering whether to grant media visas to foreign media representatives of a particular country, the U.S. considers whether the visa applicants own government grants similar privileges or is ?reciprocal? to representatives of the media/or press from the United States.

Qualifying for a Media (I) Visa

The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) is very specific with regard to the requirements, which must be met by applicants to qualify for the media (I) visa. Applicants must demonstrate that they are properly qualified for a media visa. Under immigration law, media visas are for ?representatives of the foreign media,? including members of the press, radio, film or print industries, whose activities are essential to the foreign media function, such as reporters, film crews, editors and persons in similar occupations, traveling to the U.S. to engage in their profession. The applicant must be engaging in qualifying activities for a media organization having its home office in a foreign country. The consular officer will determine whether or not an activity qualifies for the media visa. The activity must be essentially informational, and generally associated with the news gathering process, reporting on actual current events, to be eligible for the media visa. For example, reporting on sports events are usually appropriate for the media visa. Other examples include, but are not limited to, the following media related kinds of activities:

Primary employees of foreign information media engaged in filming a news event or

documentary.

Members of the media engaged in the production or distribution of film will only qualify for a media visa if the material being filmed will be used to disseminate information or news. Additionally, the primary source and distribution of funding must be outside the United States

Journalists working under contract- Persons holding a credential issued by a professional journalistic organization, if working under contract on a product to be used abroad by an information or cultural medium to disseminate information or news not primarily intended for commercial entertainment or advertising. Please note that a valid employment contract is required.

Employees of independent production companies when those employees hold a credential issued by a professional journalistic association.

Foreign journalists working for an overseas branch office or subsidiary of a U.S. network, newspaper or other media outlet if the journalist is going to the United States to report on U.S. events solely for a foreign audience.

Accredited representatives of tourist bureaus, controlled, operated, or subsidized in whole or in part by a foreign government, who engage primarily in disseminating factual tourist information about that country, and who are not entitled to A-2 visa classification.

Technical industrial information- Employees in the United States offices of organizations, which distribute technical industrial information.

Spouses and Children

Spouses and/or children under the age of 21 who wish to accompany or join the principal media visa holder in the United States for the duration of his/her stay require media visas (derivative I visas). The application procedure is the same as for a primary media visa applicant. The spouse and/or children of a media visa holder here in the U.S. may not work. The spouse and/or children of a media visa holder who are in the U.S. on a media visa may study in the U.S. without also being required to apply for a student (F-1) visa.

Applying for a Media Visa - Required Documentation

As part of the visa application process, an interview at the embassy consular section is required for visa applicants from age 14 through 79. Persons age 13 and younger, and age 80 and older, generally do not require an interview, unless requested by embassy or consulate. Making your appointment for an interview is the first step in the visa application process. Visa wait times for interview appointments and visa processing time information for each U.S.

Embassy or Consulate worldwide is available at [Visa Wait Times](#) [2], and on most embassy websites. During the visa application process, usually at the interview, a ink-free, digital fingerprint scan will be quickly taken. Some visa applications require further [administrative processing](#) [3], which takes additional time after the visa applicant's interview by a Consular Officer. Each applicant for a media visa must submit these forms and documentation, and submit fees as explained below:

An application, Nonimmigrant Visa Application, Form DS-156, completed and signed. Select [Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form DS-156](#) [4] to access the electronic version of the DS-156.

A Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application, Form DS-157 provides additional information about your travel plans. Submission of this completed form is required for all male applicants between 16-45 years of age. It is also required for all applicants from state sponsors of terrorism age 16 and over, irrespective of gender, without exception. Four countries are now designated as state sponsors of terrorism, including Cuba, Syria, Sudan, and Iran. [Select Special Processing Procedures](#) [5] to learn more. You should know that a consular officer may require any nonimmigrant visa applicant to complete this form. Here is [Form DS-157](#) [6]

A passport valid for travel to the United States and with a validity date at least six months beyond the applicant's intended period of stay in the United States (unless [country-specific agreements](#) [7] provide exemptions). If more than one person is included in the passport, each person desiring a visa must make an application;

One (1) 2x2 photograph. See the required photo format explained in [Nonimmigrant Photograph Requirements](#) [8]

Proof of employment ? Provide the following:

Staff Journalist: A letter from the employer that gives the employees name, position held within the company, and purpose and length of stay in the United States.

Freelance Journalist under contract to a media organization: A copy of the contract with the organization, which shows the employees name, position held within the company; purpose and length of stay in the United States and duration of contract.

Media Film Crew: a letter from the employer which gives the following information: name; position held within company; title and brief description of the program being filmed and period of time required for filming in the United States.

Independent Production Company under contract to media organization: a letter from

the organization commissioning the work which gives the following information: name; title and brief description of the program being filmed; period of time required for filming in the United States and duration of contract.

Working Media Cannot Travel Without a Visa on the Visa Waiver Program

Please note citizens from a country participating in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), who want to enter the United States temporarily, as representatives of the foreign media traveling to the United States, engaging in their profession, as media or journalists, must first obtain a media visa to come to the U.S. They cannot travel without a visa on the Visa Waiver Program. Those who attempt to do travel without a visa, on the Visa Waiver Program may be denied admission to the United States by the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. immigration inspector at the port of entry. For more information on VWP, see [Visa Waiver Program](#) [9]

Note: It is important that you refer to the Embassy Consular Section website in the traveler's country of residence to determine visa processing timeframes and instructions, learn about interview scheduling, and find out if there are any additional documentation items required. Learn more by contacting the [Embassy Consular Section](#) [10]

Nonimmigrant Visas:

[I Visa](#) [11]

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Links:

- [1] <https://immigration.com/visa/i-visa-overview>
- [2] http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html
- [3] http://travel.state.gov/visa/a_zindex/a_zindex_4353.html
- [4] <http://evisaforms.state.gov/>
- [5] http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/info/info_1300.html
- [6] http://travel.state.gov/visa/forms/forms_1342.html
- [7] <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/104770.pdf>
- [8] http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/info/info_1287.html
- [9] http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html
- [10] <http://www.usembassy.gov/>
- [11] <https://immigration.com/visa/nonimmigrant-visas/i-visa>