

Letter of Invitation & Visa Information

Letter of Invitation

Invitation letters take 3-4 days to process. Please contact Ellen Tralongo at Ellen.Tralongo @informs.org to request a letter.

Important information regarding Visa Invitation Letters (please read):

- Your name must be listed exactly as it appears on your passport. Any differences between the name on your passport and the name on your invitation letter or other documentation could lead to a delay and/or denial of your visa.
- If you are presenting a paper, include the title and session in which the paper will be presented, or if you are exhibiting, please indicate so in your request.
- All letters will be sent in PDF form to the email address provided.
- INFORMS reserves the right to request further information regarding the company or affiliation of the attendee to ensure the validity of requests. Meeting attendees need not wait until their paper is accepted to request a Visa Invitation Letter. INFORMS is unable to contact U.S. Embassies in support of an individual attempting to gain entry to attend a meeting.
- We recommend that you secure your travel visa before registering for the conference as cancellations after the preregistration cutoff may result in a cancellation fee.



Visa Information

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Apply now for your Visa

The visa application process to enter the United States has become subject to greater degrees of scrutiny than in the past. For this reason, the application process can take up to six months or more. You will need to apply for your visa as early as possible, but no later than three months before you wish to enter the United States.

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 purposes (B-1/B-2).

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. Embassy or Consulate website](#) where you will apply.

Visa Waiver Program

There are [38 countries](#) that participate in the [Visa Waiver Program](#). If your country is on this list, and you are traveling to the United States for tourism or business for 90 days or less with a valid passport that meets U.S. requirements, and the listed conditions do not apply to you, you do NOT need a visa. Otherwise, you need to obtain a visa.

Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA)

ESTA is an automated system that determines the eligibility of visitors to travel to the United States under the [Visa Waiver Program \(VWP\)](#). Authorization via ESTA does not

determine whether a traveler is admissible to the United States. U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers determine admissibility upon travelers' arrival. The ESTA application collections biographic information and answers to VWP eligibility questions. ESTA applications may be submitted at any time prior to travel, though it is recommended that travelers apply as soon as they begin preparing travel plans or prior to purchasing airline tickets.

Please note that as of January 2016, the Visa Waiver Program has changed. Under the new changes, the following categories of travelers are no longer eligible to travel or be admitted to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program, and will need to apply for, and go through the standard Visa application and interview process:

- Nationals of VWP countries who have traveled or been present in Iran, Iraq, Sudan, or Syria on or after March 1, 2011 (with limited exceptions).
- Nationals of VWP countries who are also nationals of Iran, Iraq, Sudan, or Syria. (Travelers who are known to fall into the dual national category noted above should have received notice via email on or about January 21, 2016 that their current ESTA is no longer valid).

These restrictions do not apply to VWP travelers whose presence in Iraq, Iran, Sudan, or Syria was to perform military service in the armed forces of a program country, or in order to carry out official duties as a full-time employee of the government of a program country. These military and official government services exceptions, however, do not apply to the dual national restriction.

The Act includes other changes to the VWP to promote enhanced information sharing of terrorism and criminal data, and use of INTERPOL databases and notices for border screening purposes. The vast majority of VWP eligible travelers will not be affected by the legislation.

- [Enhancements to the VWP as of January 2016](#)
- [ESTA application](#)



Visa Application Guidelines

Complete the Online Visa Application

Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application, [Form DS-160](#) – [Learn more](#) about completing the DS-160. You must:

- 1) complete the online visa application
- 2) print the application form confirmation page to bring to your interview.
- Photo – You will upload your photo while completing the online Form DS-160. Your photo must be in the format explained in the [Photograph Requirements](#).

Schedule an Interview

Personal interviews can be critical to successfully and efficiently obtaining a visa to enter the United States. One factor contributing to the increase in the processing time is a personal interview that is now required for most applicants as a standard part of visa processing. Group interviews are not recommended. Applicants need to be prepared to clearly present their intent to return from the U.S. as well as explain in detail how they will be spending their time while in the United States. It is not enough to just state “I will be attending a meeting”. Embassies are looking for more details as well as documents and information that demonstrate and support these intents.

Individuals are strongly encouraged to contact the embassy or consulate to schedule a personal interview as soon as it is known a visa is necessary for travel. Be aware that it may be difficult to qualify for a visa outside of your place of permanent residence. Wait times for interview appointments vary by location, season, and visa category, so you should apply for your visa early.