

U.S.-Singapore Free Trade Agreement Professional (H1B1) Visa

Overview

The U.S.-Singapore Free Trade Agreement, which took effect on January 1, 2004, created a new class of non-immigrant work visa for Singaporean citizens: the H1B1. Only Singaporean citizens are eligible as principal applicants. Singapore Permanent Residents who are citizens of other nations are not eligible for the H1B1, but non-Singaporean spouses and children of qualified Singaporean H1B1 applicants are eligible for H-4 visas as dependent family members.

The visa allows you to live and work in the United States accompanied by your spouse and dependent children.

Qualifications

To qualify for the USSFTA Professional visa, you must meet the following criteria:

1. The position must be a specialty occupation; that is, it must require theoretical and practical application of a body of specialized knowledge. Some examples of specialty occupations are jobs in the fields of engineering, mathematics, physical sciences, computer sciences, medicine and health care, education, biotechnology, and business specialties such as management and human resources.
2. You must have a post-secondary degree involving at least four year of study in your field of specialization.
3. You cannot be self-employed or an independent contractor.
4. The period of employment in the U.S. must be temporary, so you must demonstrate non-immigrant intent. Note: this requirement makes the USSFTA Professional visa different from the traditional H-1B Temporary Worker visa, as applicants for traditional H-1b visas do not have to demonstrate that they intend to return to Singapore when the temporary job is finished. Singaporeans are still eligible to apply for traditional H-1b visas.
5. Unlike a traditional H-1B visa, the employer does not have to submit Form I-129, Petition for Nonimmigrant Worker, to the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (Department of Homeland Security) and you do not need to obtain a Notice of Action, Form I-797.

H1B1 visas are multiple-entry and valid for a maximum of 18 months. Extensions and renewals are allowed.

Supporting Documents

In addition to the items listed below, all H visa applicants must submit the [Standard Non-Immigrant Visa Application Documents](#).

1. Job letter from your U.S. employer specifying the details of the temporary position (including job responsibilities, salary and benefits, duration, description of the employing company, qualifications of the applicant, etc.) and confirming the employment offer.
2. Certified form ETA 9035 or 9035E from the U.S. Department of Labor provided by the employer; information on how to file for this can be found at the [Department of Labor website](#). The form must be annotated "SINGAPORE H1B1."

As with many other types of non-immigrant visas, to qualify for the H1B1 you must demonstrate that you do not intend to immigrate to the United States. Every applicant's situation is different, so how individual applicants demonstrate this—including which documents are submitted—will vary greatly from person to person.

Dependents

Only spouses and children of H1B1 work visa holders are eligible for derivative (H4) visas. Parents and other family members are NOT eligible for H4 visas. They may visit a worker for a temporary period of time if they apply for and receive a tourist visa, or on the Visa Waiver Program if they are eligible.

Spouses and children, whether accompanying or following to join a worker, should submit a visa application and recent passport-size photograph for each person. Spouses and children must present a copy of their marriage certificate or birth certificate, respectively.

PLEASE NOTE: Spouses and children of H visa applicants who are not Singaporean are strongly encouraged to apply for their visas at the same time as the principal applicant, regardless of whether they have firm plans to travel to the United States. If the H visa holder is not present for the application of their non-Singaporean spouse and children, the applicants may be asked to apply in their home country, where their marriage and birth documents can be properly verified.

More Information

For information about non-immigrant visas, please see the non-immigrant visa section of the U.S. Department of State's [Consular affairs website](#). If you have a specific question about your case, please [e-mail](#) the Singapore consular section.

For additional information about how to file a Form I-130 with the USCIS Chicago lockbox, please see the USCIS website or contact USCIS by phone at 1-800-375-5283.