5 Pathways for U.S. Immigration

How each could align with an individual based on their goals and objectives.

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Throughout the history of the United States, immigration has always been an integral part of the development of the nation. It has brought with it economic, social, and cultural heightening. Movement of people from different parts of the world in search for a brighter and better future for themselves and their families still continues to be a driving force to the interconnectedness of the world. However, with time and the introduction of systematic approaches, and different political agendas, immigration procedures have become more complex and confusing.

Imagine you wanted to immigrate to the U.S. today, would you know which immigration program would be best for your family or even your career trajectory? Most likely you would not, but the truth is that with so many different visa categories, the ordinary person no longer knows which immigration program will work for them or their family.

Why the move to the United States?

Knowing and understanding the reason for the move will help steer you towards the best visa category that will be aligned with your objectives. If you are solely moving for work

purposes or studies, then you must explore the non-immigrant visas. These are renewable visas with a limited time to stay in the country. They do not provide a pathway to a green card or citizenship, they merely facilitate the short term needs of an individual. However, if your main objective is to relocate your entire family or simply starting afresh, then you must explore the immigrant visa options. These provide foreign nationals with the opportunity to obtain a U.S. green card and eventually become U.S. passport holders.

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5 popular U.S. visa pathways

- EB-5 immigrant investor visa for permanent residency

The EB-5 investor visa requires prospective investors to invest a minimum amount of $900,000 into a U.S.-approved commercial enterprise. This channel is the quickest path to U.S. residency and provides an opportunity for citizenship. On approval of the application they will receive a U.S. green card and residency for themselves, spouse and children under the age of 21. This is the perfect visa pathway for families looking to settle in the U.S. as once they obtain their green card, they get with it all the benefits of U.S. persons. Free public school education, access to federal grants and scholarships, increased work opportunities and much more.

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- E-2 treaty investor visa for temporary stay

To participate in this visa category, your country of citizenship must have a trade treaty agreement with the U.S. Under this visa category investors typically invest between $100,000 – $250,000 in either their own business or an

existing franchise. Investors would obtain a two-year renewable visa for themselves, spouse and children. While this route is cheaper than the EB-5, it does not provide for permanent residency and a green card. But it does also require that the visa be linked to the investor's business, meaning that should the business fail, then the visa would be cancelled. Additionally, the investor would not be allowed to work for another company while on this visa.

Those who possess a degree that qualifies as a special occupation service are eligible for the H1-B visa. Often used by multinational companies in the technology industry, this visa allows for companies to utilize external talents for the progression of their business. The basic requirement under this visa category is for an applicant to hold a degree that is equivalent to a U.S. Bachelor's degree from an accredited university, and it must be for the specialized role they are applying for. On approva,l the applicant will hold the visa for a period of three years with an option of renewability, but no longer than six years per issuance. While under the program, spouses and unmarried children can apply to reside in the U.S. However, they would have to submit a separate application to gain legal entry.

Simplest way to visit and access the United States. This visa category is what tourists mostly use to visit and stay in the United States for up to six months. This temporary stay is intended for tourism or business meetings; there is no work authorization provided with this visa category, thus you cannot apply for employment or seek government benefits as you are a temporary visitor. These visas are usually provided at nearby consulates or online using the U.S. government Electronic System for Travel Authorization website.

The United States, as a matter of public policy, tries to keep families together. If you have an immediate family member that is living in the U.S., you could ask them to petition on your behalf to allow you to reunify and grant U.S. residency by way

of this family connection. Be aware, however, that priority is provided to spouses and unmarried children as those petitions are usually approved in under one year. For parents, siblings, or other relatives, it could take years until the petition is approved.

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