

Invitation Letter for Business
Summary
In this session we will discuss Letters of Invitation for a B-1 Business Visitor Visa. Our goal is to explain what an invitation letter is, the information it needs to provide, and what exactly it can and cannot do in regard to facilitating the visa application process.
Introduction
Welcome to the LA Export Series podcasts brought to you by the El Camino College Center for International Trade Development. Each podcast will focus on a specific export topic presented by an industry expert. Our complete series will walk you through the trade process from getting started to getting paid and delivering the goods. In this session we will discuss Letters of Invitation for a B-1 Business Visitor Visa. Our goal is to explain what an invitation letter is, the information it needs to provide, and what exactly it can and cannot do in regard to facilitating the visa application process.
Presenter: Bronwen Madden
Our Presenter is Bronwen Madden, Deputy Director of the El Camino College Center for International Trade Development. Bronwen is an accredited Certified Global Business Professional with over ten years of experience in international trade and business development. Working with clients in manufacturing, biotech, aerospace and green technology, she has in-depth knowledge of exporting, importing, global customs and cultures with experience in over 30 countries throughout the Americas, Europe and Asia. She has an Executive Master of International Business through the Boeing Institute of International Business, John Cook School of Business at Saint Louis University and a Bachelor's of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies from the University of Missouri, Columbia with an emphasis in political science, economics and peace studies.
The Invitation Letter
Many U.S. companies welcome legitimate international business partners to the United States for various reasons, such as on-site training at their home facility. When applying for a B-1 Business Visitor Visa, a letter of invitation may help facilitate the visa application process. The invitation letter is a tool designed to clearly communicate the motives and planned activities of the business trip and declare the applicant's intentions to return to their country at the end of the visit. An invitation letter will not guarantee visa approval; however, here are tips for writing a good invitation letter.
Letter Details
Invitations letters need to be written in English and be on official company letterhead. They must clearly indicate that their purpose is to request visa issuance and the type of visa sought (B-1 Business Visitor Visa).
Business Information
The name of the individual requesting the visa must be stated in the invitation letter exactly how it appears on their passport. On occasion, a name may be phonetically misspelled on a person's passport. This is more common when their native alphabet does not have English characters. It is important that there be consistency across all documentation and the name in the invitation letter is identical to the spelling in their passport. Some cultures put the surname first while others place it last, which can cause confusion. By writing the surname in all capital letters, the Consular Officer will easily identify the individual's surname.
Personal Information
The invitation letter should state the individual's title, the name of the business or organization they represent, and their relationship to the host (for example, distributor, JV partner, etc.). State the purpose of the visit; in this case the purpose of the visit would be for business. Necessary personal data, including the person's date of birth, city and country of birth, gender, marital status, and passport number is also required. Most countries, except for the United States, put the day before the month when writing dates. The host may prefer to spell out the month when writing dates to avoid confusion.
Host Must Provide
The letter should articulate the planned dates of travel, which are for a specific and limited time period. If the host intends to cover all visitor travel-related expenses, he or she needs to say so in the invitation letter. Evidence of funds to cover the visitor's expenses while in the United States is very important. The host's complete contact details should be included in the letter. On occasion, the Consular Officer may want to contact the host to verify or request additional information. Finally, the letter must be signed in blue ink.
Financial Stability
Although the host may commit to covering all travel expenses while visiting the United States, the Consular Officer will most likely also want to see evidence of the applicant's financial stability and resources. Section 214(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) states: "Every alien shall be presumed to be an immigrant until he establishes to the satisfaction of the consular officer, at the time of application for admission, that he is entitled to a nonimmigrant status." To qualify for a B1 Business Visitor Visa, all applicants must demonstrate they possess a residence abroad they have no intention of abandoning. Applicants prove the existence of such residence by demonstrating that they have financial and social ties abroad that would compel them to leave the United States at the end of the temporary stay. The law places this burden of proof on the applicant.
The Process
The host must mail the invitation letter directly to the visa applicant via courier to ensure timely delivery. Invitation letters should not be mailed to the Consular Section; supporting documents are rarely accepted in advance of the interview. When the visa applicant goes to their interview, he or she should bring the original invitation letter along with their required documentation, copies do not suffice. Applicants should always check the Consular Section's website for a complete list of required documentation and other helpful information covering the application process.

Additional Notes On Letters

It is important to remember that a letter of invitation is not sufficient alone, nor is it a guarantee for visa qualification. An invitation letter is not a required document but it does offer documentary evidence supporting the case for visa issuance and may ease the visa application process. Each individual must qualify on their own merits.

Credits

Thank you for listening and special thanks to Bronwen Madden for sharing her valuable time and international business insights. Check out our full line of LA Export Series podcasts on our website www.Export Assist.org where you will find information on additional export topics with complementary tools and resources.

This podcast is brought to you by the El Camino College Business Training Center, a trusted resource delivering high-quality training and assistance to help meet your need for a more productive and competitive workforce. The Business Training Center is part of the El Camino College Community Advancement Division and is proud to be part of the state's economic development mission to advance California's economic growth and global competitiveness through quality education and services focusing on continuous workforce improvement, technology deployment, and business development. Funding for this podcast was provided by the El Camino College Center for International Trade Development and a Statewide Collaborative for Business Computer Information Systems Education mini-grant from Coastline Community College.

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