

Green Card Through the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program

The Diversity Immigrant Visa Program makes 50,000 diversity visas available annually, drawn from random selection among entries of individuals who are from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States.

How To Get a Diversity Visa

The U.S. Department of State (DOS) holds a lottery each year to determine who gets one of the 50,000 diversity visas available. You must apply through DOS during the online entry registration period, which typically runs from October through December of each year. Diversity visa lottery winners are notified by mail and, if they qualify, are granted a visa. You cannot enter the diversity visa lottery through U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

For more information on obtaining a diversity visa, see the “U.S. Department of State: Entering Diversity Lottery” and “U.S. Department of State: How Do I Participate in the Diversity Lottery Program” links to the right.

Note: Citizens of some countries are not eligible to apply for the diversity lottery.

Eligibility Criteria

You may be eligible to obtain a green card (permanent residence) through the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program if you meet all of the following conditions:

- You were selected for the Diversity Visa Lottery Program by the U.S. Department of State
- An immigrant visa is immediately available to you at the time you file Form I-485, Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status which can be determined by reviewing the Visa Bulletin (please see the link to the “Visa Bulletin” on the right)
- You are admissible to the United States

You may be eligible to obtain a green card as a derivative applicant through the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program if you meet all of the following conditions:

- You are the spouse or child of the principal applicant
- An immigrant visa is immediately available to you at the time you file Form I-485
- You are admissible to the United States

Application Process

To obtain a green card through the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program you must file Form I-485. However, you must wait until a visa is immediately available to file Form I-485, otherwise your application will be rejected. To see if a visa is immediately available, check the current DOS Visa Bulletin (see the link to the right).

Supporting Evidence for Form I-485

You should submit the following evidence with your Form I-485:

- Two passport-style photos
- Form G-325A, Biographic Information, if you are between 14 and 79 years of age
- Copy of government-issued photo identification
- Copy of birth certificate
- Copy of passport page with nonimmigrant visa (if applicable)
- Copy of passport page with admission (entry) stamp (if applicable)
- Form I-94, Arrival/ Departure Record (if applicable)
- Form I-693, Report of Medical Examination and Vaccination Record
- Applicable fees
- Copy of the approval notice for Form I-360, Petition for Amerasian, Widow(er), or Special Immigrant Form I-797)
- Certified copies of court records (if you have ever been arrested)
- Copy of the principal applicant’s selection letter for the diversity visa lottery from DOS
- Copy of the receipt for the processing fee of the diversity visa lottery from DOS
- Principal applicants must also submit evidence of a high school diploma or its equivalent, or evidence of 2 years of work experience in an occupation requiring at least 2 years of training or experience in the past 5 years.

Work & Travel Authorization

Generally, when you have a pending Form I-485, it is possible for you to apply for authorization to work in the United States and to seek advance parole (advance permission to travel and be admitted to the United States upon your return). For further information, see the “Work Authorization” and “Travel Documents” links to the left under “Green Card Processes & Procedures.”