



# VISA AND SPONSORSHIP INFORMATION PACK

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Actors ★ Athletes ★ Musicians ★ Artists ★ Performers

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*Certainly coming to America has  
been extraordinary.*

-Tim Roth

## Introduction

For many actors, artist and performers who take their craft seriously, making an effort to work in the U.S. is a logical career move. However, the process is not as simple as scheduling an audition, knocking their socks off, and moving to L.A.

In order to be eligible to work in the U.S., you must obtain a three-year non-immigrant working visa and a sponsor that is either a U.S. company or an individual that meets specific criteria. The application process is both complicated and strict. Failure to accurately meet all of the requirements can result in rejection. This can be costly and time consuming and can also limit your career options - a consequence that not all artists and performers can afford.

As you start this process, you will no doubt have many questions, including:

- ★ What are the requirements for obtaining a three-year non-immigrant visa?
- ★ What type of documentation is required?
- ★ How much does it cost?
- ★ How long does the application process take?
- ★ What if you work with a coach or other essential individuals?
- ★ What if you want to bring your family with you?

This guide will attempt to answer these questions and provide you with valuable resources for starting your journey toward working in the U.S.

*I'm just this kid from Toronto who got his start.*

-Hayden Christensen

## Disclaimer

This document has been prepared for educational and informational purposes only. This guide is not intended or offered as legal advice and should not be construed as legal advice to be applied to any specific factual situation. Industry Hollywood is not a visa coordinator or immigration lawyer. No person should act, or fail to act, on any legal matter based on some or all of the contents of this guide.

We assist with the visa application process by providing guidance and advice based on years of helping actors with obtaining O-1 visas.

## What is an O Visa?

All non-U.S. citizens who intend to work in America must have the appropriate visa. In the case of artists, performers, and athletes. The O visa classification applies to actors, artists, performers, and athletes.

The O non-immigrant classification has four different categories:

- ★ **O-1A:** Individuals with an extraordinary ability in the sciences, education, business, or athletics (not including the arts, motion pictures or television industry).
- ★ **O-1B:** Individuals with an extraordinary ability in the arts or extraordinary achievement in the motion picture or television industry.
- ★ **O-2:** Individuals who will accompany an O-1 artist or athlete to assist in a specific event or performance.
  - For an O-1A individual, the O-2's assistance must be an "integral part" of the O-1A's activity.
  - For an O-1B individual, the O-2's assistance must be "essential" to the completion of the O-1B's production.

The O-2 worker must have critical skills and experience with the O-1 that cannot be readily performed by a U.S. worker, and they must be essential to the successful performance of the O-1 individual.

- ★ **O-3:** Individuals who are the spouse or children (under 21) of O-1 and O-2 individuals. O-3 visa holders may not work, but they may attend school.

This guide primarily addresses the O-1 status – non-immigrant visas for individuals with special abilities in the sciences, arts, education, business, or sports, or those who have a demonstrated record of extraordinary achievement in the motion picture or television industry and have been recognized nationally or internationally for those achievements.

As an O non-immigrant, you may be admitted to the United States for the validity period of the petition (up to 3 years), plus a period of up to 10 days before the validity period begins and 10 days after the validity period ends.

The O-1 visa requires you to be sponsored by either a U.S. company or a U.S. agent. A U.S. agent may be:

- ★ Your actual employer
- ★ A representative of both yourself and your employer (for example, a talent agent)
- ★ A person or entity authorized by your employer to act for, or in place of, the employer as its agent. Some individuals that may fall into this category include but are not limited to: actors, entertainers, musicians, singers, dancers, painters, and authors.

## Who Needs an O-1 Visa?

Any non-American citizen who wants to work in the U.S. as an artist or athlete must obtain an O-1 visa. This includes:

- |                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| ★ Actors          | ★ Painters      |
| ★ Singers         | ★ Photographers |
| ★ Dancers         | ★ Authors       |
| ★ Comedians       | ★ Playwrights   |
| ★ Musicians       | ★ Poets         |
| ★ Production crew | ★ Athletes      |
| ★ Entertainers    | ★ Directors     |

*I came here in 1974 to do a play, and then I went to L.A. I really like living in America. I feel more at home here than anywhere else.*

-Anthony Hopkins

### Feeling Overwhelmed?

**Industry Hollywood Can Help.**

Attend one of our **Visa Seminars** or schedule an **Individual Consultation** to learn the three easy steps that have helped hundreds of actors and performers get visas and sponsorship.

## How Do You Get an O-1 Visa?

The steps required to obtain an O-1 visa are fairly straightforward, but it is critical to submit every form and document both completely and accurately. In addition to the petition, you will need a written advisory opinion, a contract, an itinerary, an agent, and evidence that you qualify for the O visa designation. Processing fees and any related attorney fees are also required.

## What Documents are Required?

The application document from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is Form I-129, Petition for a Non-immigrant Worker. This comprehensive form has fields for information such as:

- ★ Details about your U.S. employer
- ★ Basis for classification (new job, change of employer, etc.)
- ★ Applicant information
- ★ Information about the job (wages, dates of employments, etc.)
- ★ Details specific to the O classification

The entire form consists of more than thirty pages; however, several of the sections address different types of visa classifications that may not apply to you, so it's not quite as daunting as it seems.

Unfortunately, the I-129 form is not the only document required to obtain an O-1 visa. You must also submit:

- ★ A written advisory opinion from a peer group or labour management organisation
- ★ A copy of the written contract between you and a U.S. company, or a summary of the terms of an oral agreement
- ★ A description of the work-related activities you intend to perform, including beginning and end dates, and a copy of your itinerary
- ★ Evidence of the extraordinary ability that qualifies you for an O-1 visa

Submitting your application and supporting materials with a professionally prepared cover letter that presents an argument for your O-1 visa qualifications can also help to increase your chances of approval.

The written advisory opinion must come from a credible peer group or labour union that is relevant to your industry. If you intend to work in the motion picture or television industries, the consultation must come from an appropriate labour union and a management organisation with expertise in your area of ability.

Actors have yet another hurdle to tackle. You must submit either a letter from a potential employer, a deal memo, a summary of the terms of the oral agreement, or a contract evidencing a solid offer of employment. An offer of representation from an agent or management company is not sufficient. In order for an actor to obtain a consultation letter, there must be some definitive offer of employment pending. In many cases, the labour union or management organisations charge a fee for providing this offer letter.

For actors, the evidence that qualifies you for an O-1 visa can include a nomination for or an award of a significant national or international award or prize such as an Academy Award, an Emmy, a Grammy, or a Director's Guild Award.

Since you are likely one of the vast majority of actors that can't claim this kind of evidence, you will need to submit evidence relating to at least three of the following six categories:

- ★ **Evidence that you have performed, and will perform, services as a lead or starring participant in productions or events that have a distinguished reputation.** Acceptable evidence includes critical reviews, advertisements, publicity releases, publication contracts, or endorsements.

You can prove this category by presenting the following:

- Your IMDB
- Letters from directors and producers indicating your roles were lead and critical
- Copy of your contracts
- Flyers and programs of your theatrical plays with your name mentioned
- Advertisement materials with your name mentioned
- Reviews, published in major newspapers and magazines, discussing your roles

- ★ **Evidence that you have achieved national or international recognition for achievements.** Acceptable evidence includes critical reviews or other published materials by or about yourself in major newspapers, trade journals, magazines, or other publications.

You can prove this category by presenting the following:

- Newspaper Articles/Reviews/Interviews
- Magazine Articles/Reviews/Interviews
- Internet Articles/Reviews/Interviews
- Screen Captures of TV/DVD Interviews
- Evidence of Radio Interviews (web printout, transcript)

- ★ **Evidence that you have performed, and will perform, in a lead, starring, or critical role for organizations and establishments that have distinguished reputation.** Acceptable evidence includes articles in newspapers, trade journals, publications, or testimonials.

You can prove this category by presenting the following:

- Information about the TV Channel that aired your show
- Information about the production company that produced your films
- Information about the theater and venues where your theatrical plays took place



- ★ **Evidence that you have a record of major commercial or critically acclaimed success.** Acceptable evidence includes such indicators as title, rating in the field, box office receipts, motion picture or television ratings, and other occupational achievements reported in trade journals, major newspapers, or other publications.

You can prove this category by presenting the following:

- Box office records for theatrical works
- Box office mojo for feature and short films
- Letter from the production company indicating you contributed significantly to the success of the project
- Reviews published in newspaper and magazine about the success of your projects
- Rating of your TV shows
- Proof that your past projects were exhibited an prestigious festivals
- Proof that your past projects won an award or were nominated for an award

- ★ **Evidence that you have received significant recognition for achievements from organisations, critics, government agencies, or other recognized experts in the field in which you are engaged.** Such testimonials must be in a form that clearly indicates the author’s authority, expertise, and knowledge of your achievements.

You can prove this category by presenting the following:

- 7-10 letters of recommendation

- ★ **Evidence that you have either commanded a high salary or will command a high salary or other substantial remuneration for services in relation to others in the field.** Evidence includes contracts or other reliable documentation.

You can prove this category by presenting the following:

- Copy of past and future contracts
- Pay stubs
- Tax return
- Letter from the production company indicating your salary

*“It is fantastic to be found in a foreign country.”*  
 -Ed O'Brien, Radiohead



Additional supporting materials that are helpful but are not required include:

- ★ Still shots of your television and film performances
- ★ Photographs of your theatrical performances
- ★ Leaflets, flyers, advertisements, and other promotional materials regarding the productions in which you've performed
- ★ Copies of contracts and invoices showing your earnings
- ★ Copies of income tax returns for the sponsoring agency
- ★ Copy of registration documents for the sponsoring agency
- ★ Copy of your passport, I-94 card (USA Arrival-Departure Record), and all past U.S. visas, if any

### Confused Yet?

*Let Industry Hollywood help.*

Our **Visa Seminars** and **Individual Consultations** have helped hundreds of actors and performers save time and money. The best part is, it's just three easy steps!

### How Much Does it Cost?

The base-filing fee for form I-129 is \$325. The payment must be made via cheque or money order from a United States bank in U.S. currency. For this reason, the sponsor often submits payment with the application.

Other associated costs may include fees for professional application preparers or attorney fees.

### How Long Does it Take?

The amount of time required to complete the form and provide all supplementary materials will depend on how readily available all of the required materials are. Assuming you have all the documentation adequately collated, a professional preparer can usually complete the application in less than three weeks.

After the petition has been submitted to USCIS the processing time is as follows:

- ★ Regular Processing: 90 to 120 calendar days
- ★ Premium Processing: 15 calendar days (premium processing requires an additional immigration filing fee of \$1,225 USD)

Your form will be checked for completeness and additional supporting documentation or original documents may be requested. If deemed incomplete or insufficient, your application could be rejected. USCIS may also request an interview with you.

## Can You Extend an O-1 Visa?

You can request an extension to continue or complete the same event or activity for which your original visa was granted by filing documentation with USCIS. They will determine the amount of time necessary to accomplish the initial event or activity in increments of up to one year. You may only engage in authorized employment during the validity period of the petition.

## Resources

Not surprisingly, a robust industry for assisting with O-1 visa applications has evolved. Also not surprising is the fact that more than a few of these service providers, some of which charge exorbitant fees, are not reliable or trustworthy. Putting your career in the hands of a professional who has been through this process hundreds of times is an excellent idea, but it is a not a decision to take lightly.

*“It was an amazing adventure, it was my dream to be in an American musical...”*

-Marion Cotillard

## Industry Hollywood Services

Industry Hollywood has helped hundreds of international actors obtain O-1 visas and sponsorship. In fact, we have a 99% success rate with the actors and performers who have followed our recommendations. Although Industry Hollywood is not a visa coordinator, immigration lawyer or application preparer, we have gone through the process many times. We know all the tips and tricks to navigating the complicated, and sometimes confusing application process.

Participating in one of our comprehensive [Visa Seminars](#) is a good first step toward launching your career in the U.S. In three hours you will learn valuable information about:

- ★ Getting a visa sponsor
- ★ Finding acting agents in L.A.
- ★ Identifying the best acting classes in L.A.
- ★ Managing finances and insurance
- ★ Understanding the inner workings of the U.S. acting industry
- ★ Inside information about acting in Hollywood

We also provide Individual Consultations, on Skype, to provide customized advice for your specific situation. A one-on-one consultation doesn't have to be just limited to information about visas and sponsorship. Industry Hollywood also provides coaching and personalized advice on:

- ★ Finding the right types of acting jobs for you
- ★ L.A. acting coaches who might be a good fit
- ★ Living and working in Hollywood

Even if you already have an O-1 visa, we can help answer any questions you have about the realities of acting in America. What kind of insurance do you need? Do you need an agent or a manager? How do you meet key industry players?

We make the process clear and simple so you can start your American acting career as soon as possible.

*Thanks to the Industry Hollywood Visa Seminar I have successfully been granted the papers necessary to take my career to America!*

*If you're ready to make the leap to L.A. then the L.A. Networking Week [LINK] might be for you. Come to L.A. for seven days, meet industry professionals and learn first hand how the Hollywood industry works. You'll gain first hand insight into the entertainment industry and give your career a competitive edge that even most American based actors don't have access to. Learn more about the L.A*

*Taking part in Industry Hollywood's Networking Week was an incredible experience that gave me insight into the hard work required to work in the industry.*

[-Industry Hollywood Testimonials](#)

## U.S. Legal Contacts

Industry Hollywood works with two U.S.-based professional visa application preparers who have been instrumental in maintaining our 99% success rate.

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**Ready to get started? Take a look at the next Visa Seminar dates here [LINK].  
Book your Individual Consultation or inquire about the L.A. Networking Week by  
emailing us at [info@industryhollywood.com](mailto:info@industryhollywood.com)**