

Domestic H-1B Visa Renewals: Learn How to Apply on Jan. 29

January 25, 2024

The Department of State ("DOS") has published guidance and FAQs advising eligible H-1B visa applicants on how they can participate in its pilot program for domestic H-1B visa renewals, which will begin on January 29, 2024. Along with eligibility requirements and timelines, DOS's online guidance includes an **eligibility navigator** where interested applicants can answer a series of questions to determine if they are eligible to participate in the pilot program.

Only H-1B principal applicants who were previously issued an H-1B visa through either a U.S. Consulate in Canada (Mission Canada) or a U.S. Consulate in India (Mission India) are eligible to participate in this program, as the agency intends to assess how domestic visa renewals impact its overall visa processing performance.

Starting Monday, January 29, 2024, DOS will release approximately 2,000 application slots for those with H-1B visas issued by Mission Canada and approximately 2,000 for those with H-1B visas issued by Mission India. Applications will be released on the following dates:

- January 29, 2024
- February 5, 2024
- February 12, 2024
- February 19, 2024
- February 26, 2024

Once all slots for each mission are filled for the week, the online application portal will be closed until the next release date opens. Applicants who are unable to apply on one application date, may reapply on any of the remaining application dates. The application process will close when all slots are filled, or on April 1, 2024, whichever is sooner.

Applications must be submitted online through **the DOS website**. Eligible applicants will submit the Form DS-160, pay the Machine-Readable Visa (MRV) fee by credit card or debit card, and then receive instructions on how to send their passports and supporting documents by mail to DOS.

Applications will be processed in the order they are received, and no expedited processing is available. DOS estimates processing times of six to eight weeks. While DOS will not respond to status update requests, applicants can check the status of visa **processing online**. Once the visa is issued, it will be returned to the applicant together with the applicant's passport and supporting documents by USPS or a courier service. DOS expects to process all applications no later than May 1, 2024.

If an application is adjudicated but does not satisfy the scope of the pilot for any reason, the visa will be refused and the MRV fee will not be refunded. Given the very specific eligibility requirements and ramifications of a visa refusal, we encourage interested applicants to contact one of the authors of this alert if you wish to discuss this pilot program and determine whether you or your H-1B employees are eligible.

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This alert supplements the information provided in **our December 2023 alert**. *This information is based on the facts and guidance available at the time of publication and may change.*