



BLANKET L VISA TRAVEL ADVISORY

This advisory is intended to address the visa application procedures and several critical travel issues related to the I-797 Blanket L Approval Notice issued by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Most importantly you should understand that the I-797 is not a travel document but can be used to obtain a visa from the U.S. consulate abroad for entry to the United States. Please review the information below carefully and contact our office if you have any specific questions about how the rules regarding international travel apply to your case.

The I-797 Blanket L Approval Notice is Not a Travel Document: The Blanket L program was created as a way to expedite the L visa application procedure for established multinational companies. The employer must obtain a Blanket L approval for its U.S. and qualifying foreign entities from the USCIS. When the USCIS approves the Blanket L petition, it issues an I-797 Approval Notice used by all transferees. The list of entities is approved and must be updated from time to time to reflect any corporate changes. The I-797 Blanket L Approval Notice is not considered a travel document and cannot be used to enter the United States. Except for citizens of Canada, who are exempt from the visa requirement, individual Blanket L applicants must obtain an L-1 nonimmigrant visa stamp from a U.S. consulate in order to be admitted to the United States. Prior to entering the United States, you must present copies of the I-797 at a U.S. consulate abroad, along with a package of documents including an I-129S Blanket application in triplicate original, a letter of support confirming the assignment in the U.S. and copies of educational credentials, to obtain a valid visa stamp. Canadians may present the L-1 application package directly at a port of entry, without the need to apply for a visa.

Schedule an Appointment at a U.S. Consulate: Since your employer has obtained a Blanket L approval from USCIS, you will be able to file your L-1 application package directly at a U.S. consulate abroad. Most U.S. consulates will allow you to book the appointment over the phone or on-line. Some will allow special expedite procedures for cases involving business or personal emergencies. In-person interviews are required for applicants who are 14-79 years-old. When scheduling an appointment, you should include all family members applying with you in the process.

Verify Amount and Payment Process for Visa Application Fees: Visa fees charged by the U.S. consulate include a machine readable visa fee, and in some cases a visa reciprocity fee and courier fees. You should check the appropriate U.S. consular website to determine the visa application fees for your case, and to verify the proper method of payment. In most cases the fees can be paid in advance at a local bank or post office. Additional reciprocity fees apply to nationals of certain countries and can normally be paid at the time of the interview. In addition to the visa application fees, at the time of the visa interview, Blanket L visa applicants are required to pay a fraud fee of \$500 USD. This fraud fee does not have to be paid by family members applying for dependant L-2 visas.

Bring All the Necessary Documents With You to the U.S. Consulate: Each U.S. consular website provides instructions for the appointment scheduling procedure and a list of documents that should be presented during the visa interview. The documentation required can change depending on the consulate, but generally includes:

- Proof of date and time of appointment in the form of an e-mail confirmation from the consulate;
- Copies of the I-797 Blanket LZ Approval Notice (in triplicate);
- Original, signed Form I-129S, Nonimmigrant Petition Based on Blanket L Petition, with supporting documents (in triplicate);
- Passport valid for at least 6 months (ideally the passport should be valid for the entire three year period of the L-1 visa);
- DS-160 visa application form for each applicant. The DS-160 must be completed online for each visa applicant and involves uploading an electronic passport-style color photo. The form can be found at <https://ceac.state.gov/genniv>;
- Receipt for payment of all visa application fees paid in advance at a bank, post office or on-line; and
- Additional documents: consulates may request any additional documentation they deem necessary, including recent pay stubs, current employment confirmation letter and original education credentials. Family members applying for L-2 dependent visas must present original or certified copies of birth and marriage certificates at the time of the interview.

Allow Enough Travel Time for the Issuance of the Visa: Your appointment should be booked in advance as there are often backlogs. We suggest checking approximate consular wait times by searching “visa wait times” on the U.S. Department of State website prior to making your travel plans. After the interview it can take up to seven business days for the visa to be issued. In a small number of cases, consular procedures require extra security checks that can further delay the issuance of the visa by weeks or even months. Some consulates will allow you to pick up your passport with the visa stamp in person, while others will return your passport by mail or special courier.


Electronic I-94 Records: The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) no longer issues a paper Form I-94 to travelers to the United States who arrive by air or sea. The CBP will place an annotated stamp with the date of admission, class of admission, and status expiration date in your passport. In addition, the CBP will create an electronic record of arrival, which can be accessed, viewed, and printed online at www.cbp.gov/I94. We recommend reviewing the electronic information recorded by CBP after each entry to ensure that your admission has been recorded correctly and then keeping a copy of the page as evidence of your status in the United States. If the information recorded by CBP is incorrect, then it can be corrected by visiting a local CBP deferred inspection site or at a port of entry. Mistakes in the I-94 record may cause you to violate your status and even subject you to deportation, so any incorrect information should be brought to the attention of CBP immediately.

A print out of the Form I-94 can be used as proof of your lawful admission to the United States when applying for a driver’s license, Social Security number, and immigration or public benefits. The print out of the Form I-94 can also be used by visitors who are authorized to work for completion of the Form I-9, Employment Eligibility

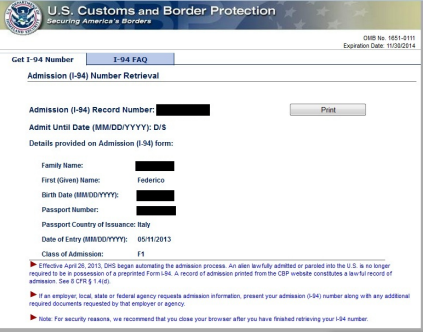
Verification. Departure from the United States will be recorded electronically using information provided by the airline when the visitor leaves. A paper I-94 card will continue to be issued to visitors who are admitted at a land border port of entry.

Sample Documents: For your reference, below are samples of the visa stamp, I-94 record and I-797 Approval Notice. Together these documents determine the validity of your immigration status in the U.S. and your ability to reenter the country after a trip abroad.


Sample Visa Stamp



Sample I-94 Card



Sample I-797 Approval



If you have any questions regarding this fact sheet, please contact the Sidley lawyer with whom you usually work.

The Immigration Practice of Sidley Austin LLP

Our Immigration Practice develops a comprehensive and cost-effective strategy to address the unique immigration needs of each client. The legal services we offer include assistance in obtaining temporary visas, permanent residence and U.S. citizenship. We also provide employees with immigration advice related to mergers and acquisitions, corporate law, international tax, I-9 compliance and other labor issues affecting the employment of foreign nationals. We routinely represent clients before the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Labor, Department of State and U.S. consular posts worldwide.

To receive future copies of this and other Sidley updates via email, please sign up at www.sidley.com/subscribe



BEIJING · BOSTON · BRUSSELS · CHICAGO · DALLAS · GENEVA · HONG KONG · HOUSTON · LONDON · LOS ANGELES · NEW YORK · PALO ALTO · SAN FRANCISCO · SHANGHAI · SINGAPORE · SYDNEY · TOKYO · WASHINGTON, D.C.