

## Information on the B-1 Visa Interview

### 1. Ties to Your Home Country

When appearing before the US Consul during a visa stamp interview the assumption is that visitors want to enter the US and never leave. It is your responsibility to overcome that assumption. You must be able to demonstrate that you have reasons for returning to your home country that are stronger than those for remaining in the United States. This can be done by showing documents proving ties to your home country, financial and personal.

"Ties" to your home country are the things that bind you to your hometown, homeland, or current place of residence (i.e., job, family, financial prospects that you own or will inherit, investments, etc.). Each person's situation is different, of course, and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate, or letter, that demonstrates your home country ties and guarantee visa issuance.

### 2. Practice English

Expect that the interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language. Our suggestion is to practice English conversation with a native speaker before the interview if possible.

### 3. Speak for Yourself

Do not bring parents or family members with you to your interview. The consular officer wants to interview you, not your family. A negative impression may be created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf.

### 4. Know the Visit Purpose and How It Fits Your Career Plans

You must also be able to answer questions about your visit and show that your activities will be allowable under the B-1 category. Allowable activities in the B-1 category include consulting with associates, travelling for a scientific, educational, professional or business convention or conference, negotiating a contract, or participating in short-term training. You will also be asked to explain how you will use your experience in the US for your further studies/career in your home country – how will this brief visit help you and your country?

Please remember to include a letter from your own institution further clarifying the short-term nature of your visit and the fact that you will remain their employee/student during that visit. In addition, be prepared to once again show proof of your ties to your country of residence, such as copies of property deed, active residential lease, current pay stubs, family relationships, etc.

### 5. Be Concise

Because of the volume of applications that are received, consular officers are under considerable time pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision, for the most part, on the impressions they form during the first minute or two of the interview. Consequently, what you say first and the initial impression you create are critical to your success. Keep your answers to the officer's questions short and to the point.

## 6. Supplemental Documentation

Check with the Consulate ahead of time to find out what documents are needed and do not volunteer any additional information or documents unless asked to do so. The consular officer must be able to understand at a glance what the written documentation signifies. Lengthy written explanations cannot be quickly read or evaluated. You will only get about 2-3 minutes of interview time, be succinct and concise.

## 7. Not All Countries Are Equal

Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many students have remained in the United States as immigrants may have more difficulty getting visas. Applicants must be prepared with an appropriate response indicating their intent to return to their home country.

## 8. Employment Not Permitted

“Employment” is not permitted in B-1 status. The invitation letter issued by Fermilab should clearly state that you will remain either an employee or a student of the foreign institution you are coming from. Take the time to verify that the letter is worded correctly and request a revised letter if needed.

The documentation you present during the interview should verify that you are only visiting Fermilab to use our facilities and will remain an employee or a student of the foreign institution. If questioned, do your best to explain that your visit will benefit you and your institution and not Fermilab. If you cannot in good faith make that statement, then you must come under a different visa type. Please reach out to your Fermilab contact and request a J-1 Visa invitation letter.

## 9. Dependents Remaining at Home

If your spouse and children are remaining behind in your country, be prepared to address how they will support themselves in your absence. If your family does decide to join you at a later time, it is helpful to have them apply at the same Consulate where your interview took place.

## 10. Maintain a Positive Attitude

If you are denied a visa, do not argue with the consular officer, ask them for a list of documents they would suggest you bring in order to overcome the refusal, and try to get the reason you were denied the visa in writing.

## Common Interview Questions

“What is the purpose of your trip?” Again, there is no need for any special language other than, for example, one of the above mentioned B-1 activities.

“How long do you plan on staying in the United States?” If you indicate to the officers that you will need to stay in the US for more than a few weeks, it may result in additional scrutiny, as the B-1 visa entry is not meant for prolonged stays in the US, but rather for short visits. As such, even though a B-1 Visa Stamp entry may last for up to six months (90 days for Visa Waiver), you must be prepared to explain the length of your visit and the reasoning for it.