

R1 Visa Partner Responsibilities



Be sure to read through the [R-1 Visa Petition Process](#) to understand whether it's a viable option for your candidate. To confirm the viability of an R1 Visa for a potential Reliant worker, a consultation with our lawyer is necessary.

If the lawyer affirms we have a path forward with the USCIS and the candidate agrees to proceed, we can...

1. The Partner can continue the application and onboarding process through Breezy.
2. Reliant and our immigration lawyer will work with the candidate to collect the necessary information.
3. Reliant will ask the Partner how initial legal fees should be paid (by the church or the applicant). *Norm: By the candidate (legal fees can be included in an MTD support goal for a later ministry expense recovery).*
4. The Partner is sent an **R-1 Sponsorship Guarantor Agreement** for signing.
 - a. This establishes that the partner organization will act as the financial guarantor for the employee's *ministry-related* costs (assuming we proceed with hiring). *SEE SHORTCHECKING IMPLICATIONS BELOW.*
 - b. This outlines expectations around ensuring compliance with U.S. immigration requirements, promptly reporting any role changes, and providing necessary assistance throughout the visa duration. *SEE HOURS AND SALARY MINIMUMS BELOW.*

Why an R-1 Sponsorship Guarantor Agreement?

Visa holders can't be shortchecked. For those who don't reach 100% of their support goal and run into insufficient funds to cover their total payroll expenses, Reliant cannot issue a shortcheck and will pay them their full accepted gross pay.

- This may cause the MTD account the worker is responsible for to go negative, at which point, Reliant asks the Partner to recoup any negative ending balance.
 - This may lead the church to terminate the employee to avoid a negative MTD balance.
- *For this reason, we have a minimum requirement of 75% of MTD completed before hiring.*

Visa holders must maintain a certain number of hours to maintain their visa eligibility:

- OPT Visas = 20 hours/week minimum
- R1 Visa = 35 hours/week minimum

Salary minimums are also required and depend on their household (marital status, dependents).

- 125% of the Health & Human Services (HHS) poverty guidelines, which are subject to change every year and updated in mid-January.
- It's uncommon that standard parameters don't meet this minimum

FAQs

Are there other considerable visas outside of an R-1 (religious worker)?

Sometimes, individuals are currently on a visa, such as a student (F-1) visa.

In these cases, we can typically ride those visas out through expiration while starting the R-1 visa process to coincide with needed stay renewal. F-1 or OPT cannot be extended (unless for STEM). Going back to school and seeking part-time CPT (allowing up to 20 hours per week) is optional if the school permits CPT. This is something the candidate will need to consult with the school's international student advisor.

H-3 trainee visa is optional for pastoral residency if the program involves primarily classroom sessions and some incidental hands-on experience (observation and shadowing); it cannot involve any productive employment. H-3 is not optional for nationals whose country of origin offers a similar type of training, as the requirement is to demonstrate that the proposed training is NOT available in the prospective trainee's home country. It also requires that the training will benefit the trainee's career pursuit outside the U.S., thus switching to a work visa within the U.S. is not feasible in the future.

Who is the visa sponsor?

Reliant is the sponsoring employer for R-1, not the Partner.

Because Reliant "sends out" missionaries to serve within the assigned ministry area(s) at the Partner, after the R-1 worker's assignment is over, the R-1 beneficiary may find another local church (Reliant partner) to serve, with an R-1 amendment filed by Reliant. This structure offers flexibility for R-1 prospective workers and the Reliant partnering churches.

**The R-1 Sponsorship Guarantor Agreement signed by the Partner is for Reliant's records only and relates to the support-raising aspect of the employee's role, not the immigration aspects.*

Let us know what questions you have!

If you have a candidate interested in support-based ministry who needs a visa, email apply@reliant.org with questions.