

Event Visas and Passports

Passports are considered a personal expense (you can continue to use the passport after the specific event has ended) and cannot be bought using event funds.

Visas for entering the country of the event are considered an event expense and can be reimbursed through the event fund.

- Each participant will need a valid passport to apply for their own visa
- When applying for your visa it is preferred to not use a church or religious organization email account; ones like gmail or yahoo are better to use
- Usually tourism is the best answer to explain why you are traveling (especially for secure locations)
- We have been advised that it is not a good idea to have one person buy all of the visas (especially for more secure locations as it draws attention to the visas)



FYI-If the participant is not a U.S. citizen, they can not get insurance coverage if they are traveling to the country of their citizenship. See [Insurance for International Events](#)

For non US citizens with visas attending programs that have a fundraising requirement and have international travel during the event the participant is responsible to make sure they can get back into the country if they leave.

For events that have an event fee (stateside programs with no fundraising requirement) that are not support raising through donor giving to Reliant the fact that the event participant is not a US citizen will not affect their acceptance to the event/program. For Collegiate Leadership training programs it may affect the ability to be hired by the YMCA which is a having a job with the YMCA is a requirement to attend the program.

For programs that have a fundraising requirement (example mission trips or volunteer internship programs with a fundraising requirement) Reliant is under no obligation to solicit the citizenship or visa status information for the participants so we do not need to ask that citizen question on the program application. However, if a participant offers this information (for example under the question of is there anything else that we need to know) or asks for our help with their visa, then we need to deal with each specific visa immigration issue as it comes up. If they have the appropriate VISA then they can apply to be volunteers (unpaid) program attendees and attend a fundraising program where the support that is raised is donated directly to the program (not the individual).



For programs that have a fundraising requirement that have international travel during the program the participant is responsible to make sure they can get back into the country if they leave. In most cases it means the participant can not participate in the program during the dates that the other participants are out of the U.S.

(*If the participant is not a U.S. citizen, they can not get insurance coverage if they are traveling to the country of their citizenship.) See [Insurance for International Events](#)



Only the US government can issue work visas. Organizations like Reliant can't issue that so they would need to obtain the appropriate US work visas on their own and then present a copy to Reliant.

Here are a few examples of past scenarios of types of visas to help for the future

J1 Visa

i The J1 visa is the preferred visa for events that have a fundraising requirement and for those wanting to be a volunteer intern for a program. However, we have been told that they can be very expensive as you have to find a U.S. sponsor. If you are a Summer Work Travel participant (J-1 visa) you may only work in jobs approved by your designated U.S. sponsor.

There is an "intern" visa under J-1 which requires an intern to have been either currently enrolled in a post-secondary college/university pursuing a foreign degree/certificate outside the US or recently graduated from such an institute within 1 year.

We also had a participant who was an exchange student that wanted to attend a Reliant program during the summer months while school was out. They had a J1 Visa and it was confirmed with our lawyer that they would be allowed to support raise for an internship program as an unpaid volunteer intern within the program.

There was also a participant whose J1 Visa was going to expire while she was attending the program so she had to apply for a different visa along the way. But, our immigration lawyers told us that she was allowed to raise support for the program without any problems up until 30 days after the date the J1 VISA expires. At that point we would need to close the ability for donors to give to her as a solicitor of the event that she was raising support for.

B1/B2 Business visa

i An internship would be denied a B1/B2 visa. A B1/B2 Visa is a business visa. Internships are viewed as "work" even if unpaid. People who intend to work in the U.S. (paid or unpaid) will need a visa and cannot do the waiver. If the participant was trying to attend an unpaid internship program, the participant would be subject to denial of entry attempt at the port of entry. The business visa says that you are coming from as selling company sponsored by the sending country to work and do business in the U.S. In other words, the foreign government is saying that this person is being supported by a company from the sending country to do business for the sending company in the U.S.

However with a B1 visa, a participant could still participate in a missionary training program or program that does missionary work.. With those visa parameters it means participants are not allowed to raise support for their event through Reliant, but the program could have an event fee paid by the participant. To clarify, they could participant in an event that they paid a fee for, but they could not raise any support with a fundraising event because they are supposed to be supported by the sending country company.

Note that the B-1 visa is for a visitor for business and a B-2 visa is a visitor for pleasure. You would need to state that your purpose is "business."

Our immigration lawyer found this clause amongst the approved purposes for the B-1, Business Visa is the following Foreign Affairs Manual provision:

9 FAM 402.2-5(C)(1) Ministers of Religion and Missionaries

Previous Location, 9 FAM 41.31 N9.1-3 Missionary Work

"Members of religious denominations, whether ordained or not, entering the United States temporarily for the sole purpose of performing missionary work on behalf of a denomination, so long as the work does not involve the selling of articles or the solicitation or acceptance of donations and provided the minister will receive no salary or remuneration from U.S. sources other than allowance or other reimbursement for expenses incidental to the temporary stay. "Missionary work" for this purpose may include religious instruction, aid to the elderly or needy, proselytizing, etc. It does not include ordinary administrative work, nor should it be used as a substitute for ordinary labor for hire."

So, with a B-1 Visa, a participant can attend a program (and pay a program fee) where they would be doing missionary work or attending missionary training. To re-emphasize, the program can NOT be an internship program under a B1 visa, as that term would be a red flag.

Again, the participant would need to be a part of a program/event (not an internship) with an event fee (not fundraising/taking donations).

If the participant did need to personally fundraise to cover the program fee, the participant can do that before or after the program back in their home country soliciting funds own their own (given directly to them), but they could not do that during the program while in the U.S.

The participant is allowed to write update letters about their experiences or prayer requests during the program with their prayer support team, but could not solicit support in those letters while in the U.S.

If the program is less than 90 days, the applicant could apply for the ESTA waiver which is essentially a short term B1 Visa.

ESTA waiver

i ESTA is sometimes referred to as a “visa waiver”. However, it is not really a waiver. It is an extension of the B-1 visa. All the B-1 rules still apply because of this our immigration lawyer said the ESTA Visa Waiver is also not for internships. The ESTA waiver visa is basically a short term B1 Visa.

When the applicant is approved, a B-1 visa imprint is not required because the intended stay is for 90 days or less. ESTA entry is limited to 90 days for the same purposes as allowable in the B-1 visa for Business purposes. The person seeking ESTA entry should have a return ticket scheduled for 89 days from the entry or shorter period of time. When applying you would provide the purpose again as “**business**”.

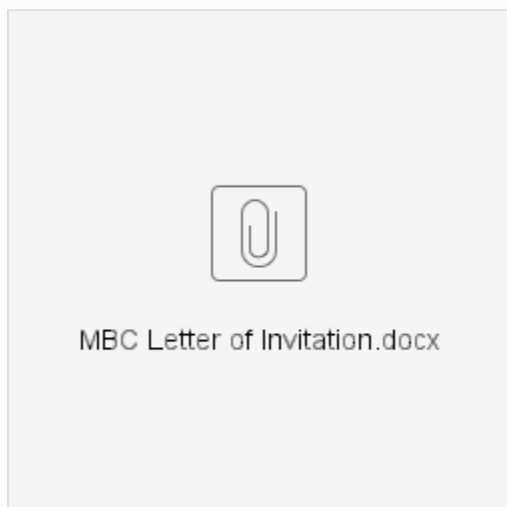
An ESTA Visa must follow the same rules as a B1-visa. Internships (paid or volunteer) are not allowed under this visa. So, if the participant is attending an event that has a fee (the program does not fundraise/receive donations) then they can apply for an ESTA waiver.

It is highly recommended that the church/ministry should provide a formal Letter of Invitation for the participant to present when entering the US. This Letter should **clearly** state that:

- The program is for missionary training purposes
- The letter should summarize the activities of the program to follow as closely as possible the permitted activities of the B-1 missionary.
- the letter should use the term “**missionary**” at least once in it
- The letter should state that the participant will NOT be fundraising and will not be paid.

The letter should focus on the activities the participant will be engaging in such as training, religious study, outreach, mentoring, relationship building, character development, participating in church meetings, participating in worship and church activities, and other such religious oriented activities.

Here is a sample letter



Again, this is a waiver for those visiting the US for under 90 days (which is typically just used for tourists or those applying for a longer B-1 Visa).

The following are relevant postings from other consular posts concerning ESTA not for internship.

-Some people use ESTA for a short unpaid internship, but if truthfully disclosed at a port of entry, there is a risk of denial of entry.

-An internship? Even if you stay less than 90 days, these activities are considered work and require the appropriate visa. Visa Waiver Program travelers entering the United States with ESTA authorization are not allowed to work. Informal arrangements to work in exchange for lodging or meals are also considered unauthorized employment and are not permitted for tourists.



We had one of the McLean interns that had originally applied to go.reliant.org to be employed by Reliant and we had told him that Reliant is a US employer who employs US citizens and those who already have the right to work in the US. It is outside of our current capacities to assist foreign nationals in obtaining the right to work in the US. So therefore he could not be employed as an intern with Reliant.

However he had told us that as a student he was applying for a CPT (an off-campus employment option for F-1 Students when the practical training is an integral part of the established curriculum or academic program). He told us that the CPT employment is defined as alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum that is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school. After talking to our immigration lawyers we were told that he could become an unpaid volunteer intern with Mclean and fundraise for the event.

Our immigration lawyer said that he could participate in the McLean volunteer activate intern program (since he is not hired or paid by us in that program), but we would need a CPT (Curricular Practical Training) authorization from his school to participate in the Reliant/McLean unpaid internship program as distinguishable from purely voluntary activities this summer before we could accept him into the program.