

DIVERSITY VISA LOTTERY PROGRAM OVERVIEW



MELTZER HELLRUNG
IMMIGRATION SOLUTIONS

DIVERSITY VISA LOTTERY

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Diversity Immigrant Visa (DV) Program — commonly known as the Green Card Lottery — is a U.S. government initiative administered by the Department of State. Each year, up to **55,000 immigrant visas** are made available to nationals of countries with historically low rates of immigration to the United States, offering a direct route to lawful permanent residency.

While lottery entry is free, the process demands precision. A single error — an incorrect photograph, an incomplete form, or a missed deadline — can result in permanent disqualification. Meltzer Hellrung ensures your entry is prepared to the highest standard and that, if selected, every stage of your path to a Green Card is navigated with expert legal counsel.

55,000

VISAS AVAILABLE ANNUALLY

180+

ELIGIBLE COUNTRIES

1 year

FROM SELECTION TO VISA

WHO MAY APPLY?

Applicants must meet two core requirements set by U.S. law. Our attorneys will assess your eligibility before any submission is made on your behalf.

COUNTRY OF BIRTH

- Must be a native of an eligible country
- The following countries are ineligible for DV-2026 due to high immigration rates: Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, China (mainland-born), Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, India, Jamaica, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, South Korea, United Kingdom (except Northern Ireland) & its dependent territories, Venezuela, and Vietnam

EDUCATION OR WORK

- High school diploma or its equivalent, *OR*
- Two years of qualifying work experience within the past five years in an occupation requiring at least two years of training or experience
- A spouse's or parent's country of birth may be used as an alternative in certain circumstances

ⓘ This list is updated annually. Verify at travel.state.gov.

HOW MELTZER HELLRUNG CAN HELP YOU

We offer two levels of service designed to support clients from initial entry through to Green Card issuance.

FULL-SERVICE COMPREHENSIVE REPRESENTATION

- Eligibility assessment & intake consultation
- Lottery entry (E-DV) preparation & submission
- Result monitoring & KCC follow-up
- DS-260 Immigrant Visa Application or I-485 Adjustment of Status preparation & filing
- Supporting document collection & review
- Consular / USCIS interview preparation
- Post-approval Green Card guidance

APPLICATION PROCESS

- 1 Eligibility & intake consultation**

Our attorneys review your background, confirm country of birth eligibility, verify educational or work qualifications, and explain all program requirements in full. No submission is made without your informed consent.
- 2 Lottery entry preparation**

We prepare your electronic entry form (E-DV) in strict accordance with State Department requirements, ensuring photographs meet technical specifications and all personal information is accurate and complete.

IN ORDER TO GET STARTED, WE NEED THE FOLLOWING:

- Full legal name and date of birth

Country of birth and country of eligibility (if different)

Current mailing address

Passport information

Qualifying education or work history

Recent passport-style photograph meeting State Department specifications

Spouse and child information (if applicable)

3

Submission & confirmation

Your entry is submitted during the official registration period (typically October–November). A confirmation number is secured and retained. We monitor the submission on your behalf throughout the entry window.

4

Results check & selection notification

Results are published annually in May at dvlottery.state.gov. Our team checks your status and notifies you promptly. If selected, we immediately begin preparing your immigrant visa application.

5

Application for physical green card

When an individual's priority date — the date the PERM was filed — becomes current, that person can file an application to obtain the physical green card. There are two ways to file: by adjusting status inside the United States, or by filing for an immigrant visa at a consulate outside the United States. The first option is more common, but some individuals choose the second as it can be faster. For individuals sponsored in the EB-2/3 categories and born in countries other than China, India, Mexico, and the Philippines, the I-485 to adjust status can typically be filed concurrently with the I-140. Individuals who were previously sponsored for an I-140 and have a priority date that can be recaptured may also be current at the time of the I-140 filing. There may be an additional wait time for EB-2/3 applicants depending on the dates listed on the visa bulletin in any given month.

OPTION 1: ADJUSTMENT OF STATUS

- Step 1:** Collect updated documents and questionnaire information for the sponsored individual and his/her dependents (spouse and children under age 21).

- Step 2:** Prepare Form I-485. At this time, the individual can also file an I-131 for travel authorization and an I-765 for work authorization. These filings are particularly valuable for individuals in visa statuses other than H-1B and L-1.

- Step 3:** File Form I-485 with the USCIS. Processing time is unpredictable and can range between 3 and 5 months. The I-765 and I-131, if filed, will be approved in 3–5 months. If the priority date retrogresses after filing, USCIS will not review the petition again until the priority date becomes current.

- Step 4:** Scheduled interview at a local USCIS office. USCIS will send a notification approximately one month before the scheduled interview. The interview may not be at the office closest to where the applicant lives. Once scheduled, the applicant should complete the required medical exam. We will schedule a call to prepare the applicant for the interview. While the applicant may bring an attorney, we do not typically recommend paying for this service.

- Step 5:** USCIS issues a green card to the applicant. The permanent resident is eligible to apply to become a U.S. citizen after five years of permanent residency.

OPTION 2: CONSULAR PROCESSING

- Step 1:** The National Visa Center will email us and the applicant to confirm that the application process can begin.

- Step 2:** We will register as the agent for the process and reach out to the applicant to begin collecting documents and information.

- Step 3:** Submission of Form DS-260 and supporting documents to the NVC.

- Step 4:** An interview at the consulate is scheduled. At this time a medical exam must be completed by a panel physician outside the U.S. We will prepare the applicant for the consular interview with a scheduled phone call.

- Step 5:** An immigrant visa is granted. The employee returns to the United States. After entering, a physical green card is produced and shipped to the individual.

ANNUAL DV LOTTERY TIMELINE

The DV Lottery operates on a strict annual cycle set by the U.S. Department of State. Missing any deadline is irreversible.

October – November	Official registration period. Electronic entries (E-DV) must be submitted via the State Department website.
May (following year)	Selectee results published at dvlottery.state.gov . Only the official site should be used to check results.
May – September	Selected applicants submit DS-260 and supporting documents to the Kentucky Consular Center (KCC).
October 1 – September 30	Visa interview appointments scheduled. All visas must be issued before September 30. Unused visas cannot be carried over to the next fiscal year.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Selection in the DV Lottery is determined entirely by random draw. No attorney, firm, or service can increase your statistical odds of selection. What legal representation does is ensure your entry is compliant, your post-selection process is handled correctly, and your legal rights are protected throughout. Meltzer Hellrung does not guarantee visa issuance — no law firm can. We guarantee diligent, expert legal representation at every step.

Beware of third-party websites and unauthorized services that charge fees for lottery entry, claim to improve your odds of selection, or contact you claiming you have been selected. The official lottery is administered solely by the U.S. Department of State and entry is free. Meltzer Hellrung provides legal services and always identifies itself clearly to clients.



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Meltzer Hellrung challenges conventions to deliver better outcomes. Founded with the belief that immigration can be a strategic advantage, we understand the complexities of immigration and respond with innovative solutions to meet the needs of individuals and families. Our proprietary immigration management platform, Voyager®, delivers a best-in-class experience at every stage of the process.

This document is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. The attorney-client relationship is established only upon execution of a formal engagement agreement. Immigration law is subject to change; consult a qualified attorney for advice specific to your situation.