The purpose of this fact sheet is to inform individuals who may be considering attending the International AIDS Conference in Washington 22-27 July 2012 about the process to travel to the United States of America.

The following information is intended to help guide potential attendees through the process, but please note that it is the responsibility of each individual to visit the website of the U.S. embassy or consulate in country, to determine application requirements and to ultimately obtain his or her visa.

The U.S. government is a conference partner and is already preparing as best as possible for an influx of visa applications from conference delegates. Despite that, both the U.S. government and conference organizers expect delays in processing visa applications. **We strongly recommend that all delegates act as soon as possible.**

Remember:
- Review the information on the website of the U.S. embassy or consulate as soon as possible!
- Become informed on the process, costs and timing!
- Apply early!
- Be prepared with appropriate documentation since if your visa is denied there is no appeal process or refund of the visa application fee!

The visa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application process</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeframe</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where to apply for your visa</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The interview</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa denials</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrival in the U.S.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Temporary visitors to the U.S. from most countries need a nonimmigrant visa (hereafter referred to simply as a ‘visa’) to enter the country. Many delegates will need to apply online for a visa (completing form DS-160, Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application) before scheduling an interview with a consular officer at a U.S. embassy or consulate.

Delegates should apply for a temporary non-immigrant visa, “B-1/B-2”.


When you complete the forms on the plane and speak to the officer at border make sure that you are consistent with which visa you have been issued:

- a B-1 visa – Business/Conference Visitor - when the conference relates to their employment abroad, or
- a B-2 visa – Tourist - when the conference does not directly relate to their employment abroad.

More information and the DS-160 application form can be found at: [http://travel.state.gov/visa/forms/forms_4230.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/forms/forms_4230.html).

⇒ If you are entering the U.S. on a machine-readable or electronic passport from one of the following countries may be able to participate in the Visa Waiver Program:

- Andorra
- Australia
- Austria
- Belgium
- Brunei
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Italy
- Japan
- Latvia
- Liechtenstein
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Monaco
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Portugal
- San Marino
- Singapore
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- South Korea
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- United Kingdom

For more information click [here](http://www.aids2012.org/WebContent/File/AIDS2012_Visa_VWP.pdf).

⇒ Citizens of Canada and Bermuda do not require a visa under most circumstances.


### Application process

Delegates applying for a Non-Immigrant Visa need to follow the following process:

a) Complete the relevant application form (DS-160 for a B1/B2 visa).

b) Apply for an interview. See information about the timeframe and pay the visa application fee.
c) Attend the interview, with the confirmation page, passport, supporting documents and answer all the consular officer’s questions.

d) Decision to grant or deny the visa is communicated to the applicant.

e) In certain cases additional administrative processing may be necessary.

The decision on the eligibility of an applicant to receive a visa lies with the U.S. consular officer who reviews the visa application. Neither the Washington based offices of the U.S. Department of State nor the conference secretariat can influence this decision.

The conference secretariat will share the conference registration database with the Department of State on a monthly basis from January 2012 onwards to help facilitate visa review and processing. Consular officers will therefore have access to the registration information through their internal system, but are not obligated to refer to it.

All conference delegates should produce the official conference letter of invitation as part of their visa application. The letter can be obtained from the conference registration department once an individual has registered and paid in full (or been approved in the case of a media or scholarship registration). Further information is available at: http://www.aids2012.org/Default.aspx?pageId=459.

Timeframe

All visa applications should be made no later than 90 days (mid-April 2012) before travelling to the U.S.

Most embassies and consulates will be able to schedule the visa interview about 20 working days after the request has been made, however, some embassies and consulates have much longer waiting times (40-100 working days).

All delegates are strongly encouraged to review the time it takes to get an appointment at the U.S. embassy as soon as possible: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html.

Delegates from Afghanistan, Argentina, Brazil, China, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Nigeria, Turkey, Uganda and Venezuela should note that waiting times for interviews in these countries can be very long. See: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html.

Delegates who know that they are likely to have problems obtaining a visa (for example, delegates who have not travelled out of their country previously or are not able to provide evidence of stable, legal employment) should wait until they have all the applicable documentation (scholarship award letter, invitation to speak at the conference, flight and accommodation confirmations, etc.) before applying.

Individuals who are awaiting notification regarding their abstract, workshop, programme activities and/or scholarship submission before making arrangements to attend the conference should note that the timeframe following notification
(beginning of April) and applying for the visa (mid-April) is very short so the gathering of documentation and reviewing the U.S. embassy website in advance are crucial.

Where to apply for your visa

Delegates should review the website of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate to check on the exact requirements and timing of applying for a visa. Many embassies will be at capacity in processing these applications. It cannot be overstated that potential applicants should apply as early as possible.

A list of the embassies with links to contact details is available here: http://www.usembassy.gov/.

U.S. representation is reasonably comprehensive throughout the world, however, some nationals need to travel outside of their country to apply for a visa and some consulates are not able to process visas. For more information see: http://www.usembassy.gov/.

The interview

All delegates requiring a visa to enter the U.S. will need to have an interview with a U.S. consular officer.

Scheduling of interviews must be done directly by the delegate with the embassy/consulate that will process the application. Interviews at most embassies are scheduled through an online system or a call center.

Delegates should complete the online application form (DS-160) before scheduling the interview.

All visa application interviews must be done in person by the individual applying.


At the interview the officer will ask a series of questions designed to find out the reason for travel to the U.S. and to assess the applicant’s ties abroad.

Interview waiting time can be extensive in some embassies (See “Timeframe”).

If the interview appointment date provided is not early enough for the applicant’s intended travel, a delegate should contact the embassy/consulate to request an expedited appointment. The decision by an embassy to expedite an interview appointment is discretionary and depends on several factors. For more information, delegates should check the embassy’s website for the ‘how to’ procedures regarding expedited/urgent/emergency travel.
Documentation

Visa applicants are required to provide the following at the visa interview:
- DS160 visa application form confirmation page
- passport (valid at least six months beyond the applicant's intended period of stay in the U.S.)
- electronic copy of a passport photo (strict requirements are in place)
- previous visa information (if applicable)

See: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1262.html#4

In addition:
- Evidence must be provided regarding the purpose of the trip, intent to depart and arrangements made to cover costs of the trip.
- Delegates who do not have sufficient funds to support themselves while in the U.S. must present convincing evidence that support is provided. Scholarship recipients can use the scholarship award letter to do this.
- The applicant must establish that s/he has a residence abroad to which they intend to return.

Suggested additional documentation for conference delegates include:
- documents relevant to intended travel:
  - letter of invitation to the conference:
  - return travel confirmation (flight or other)
  - accommodation confirmation
  - scholarship award letter (if applicable)
  - speaker/chair/moderator/performer invitation (if applicable)

- documents relevant to the intention to return:
  - employment contract or letter from employer
  - proof of financial connections to the home country (evidence of close family ties or social or cultural associations)
  - proof of housing (e.g., rental contract)

Costs

There is a Machine Readable Visa fee that must be paid prior to the visa interview. For the current fee, visit: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1263.html. The cost for the B visa is usually US$140.

There might also be an appointment fee (US$ 2-20) and occasionally a reciprocity fee (http://travel.state.gov/visa/fees/fees_3272.html) that must be paid at the time of visa issuance. All information is posted on the individual embassy’s or consulate’s website: http://www.usembassy.gov/.
The application fee is non-refundable, even if the visa application is denied. See: http://travel.state.gov/visa/fees/fees_1341.html.

### Visa denials

Most visa denials are made on the grounds of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act Section 214(b), which states that a nonimmigrant visa cannot be issued to an applicant unless that applicant convinces the consular officer s/he will depart the U.S. after a temporary visit rather than stay permanently in the U.S. The consular officer will look for evidence of a strong financial and/or employment situation and ties to the applicant’s home country.

Potential delegates should note that if a visa is denied there is no appeal process. The individual can reapply and pay another Machine-Readable Visa fee (usually US$140 plus extras) if they have proof that there is a significant change in their situation.

The visa application form includes questions about communicable diseases, drug abuse or addiction, arrests, crimes, the use of controlled substances, and prostitution activity, among others. If a delegate answers any of these questions affirmatively, the individual may be found to be inadmissible to the U.S. and therefore the visa application would be denied. Depending on the circumstances the individual may choose to request a waiver of the grounds of inadmissibility be processed by the consular officer. For more information see: http://www.aids2012.org/WebContent/File/AIDS2012_Visa_Waiver.pdf and http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1262.html#12.

The conference’s registration refund policy allows for the registration fee minus a handling fee (USD65) to be refunded after the conference if the visa was applied for in time (90 days before travelling to the U.S.) and proof is shown that a visa could not be granted even though all requested documents were submitted. Full information on this policy is available in the registration terms and conditions on the conference website: http://www.aids2012.org/Default.aspx?pageId=460.

### Arrival in the U.S.

Delegates should be prepared to wait in line at the U.S. port of entry/airport for a considerable period of time.

At the U.S. port of entry a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officer will inspect passport and travel documents. The officer will also ask some questions designed to find out the reason for travelling to the U.S., where the traveler is staying, for how long and previous travel to the U.S, among other questions.

Usually this process is brief (two-three minutes), however, some travelers may also be taken to secondary questioning in a separate office which may take considerably longer.
In addition, travelers are required to provide biometrics (digital fingerprints and photographs). Full information about this process is available at: http://www.dhs.gov/files/programs/editorial_0525.shtm.

Even if a traveler has a valid visa, the DHS officer can deny entry at the border. Media representatives are encouraged to ensure they have all their supporting documents with them at the port of entry.