

Visa Options for Employment with ISI

R-1 or Non-immigrant Visa for Religious Workers

Current legislation (AO 8/00) permits religious workers to obtain non-immigrant visas as religious workers in certain circumstances. The applicant for an R-1 visa must be a member or a minister in a religious denomination that meets a number of specific requirements. The religious denomination must have non-profit standing in the U.S. ISI, of course, does have such standing.

Additionally, the applicant must have been pursuing a religious vocation or professional work meeting certain educational and timing requirements. Further the applicant must have been offered a specific type of position by the U.S. affiliate of the religious denomination (ISI) and have had at least two years membership in the particular religious order or denomination. *The R-1 visa is valid for only five years and is non-renewable.*

*The petition for an R-1 visa must be filed by the applicant together with a letter from an authorized official of the U. S. employer or religious organization (in this case, ISI) confirming that the proposed services and applicant meet certain requirements. Because of the very specific requirements to obtain this visa, **applicants should obtain their own counsel** to advise them on application requirements and how to meet them.*

Those meeting the application requirements to obtain an R-1 visa are welcome to contact *Warren Friesen*, the ISI Director of Recruitment, at ISI's main phone number: 719-576-2700 or by email at: recruitment@isiwebnet.net to discuss employment possibilities with ISI. Once an applicant has decided--with the agreement of ISI--to pursue an R-1 visa application for employment with ISI, your legal counsel would handle the process of obtaining the R-1 visa. Your legal Counsel would then contact ISI regarding your letter of employment.

The applicant is responsible for providing our People Services department with the necessary documentation (including an I-129 form from the U.S. Department of Citizenship and Immigration Service completed to the extent possible), along with a copy of their social security card, driver's license and passport. Applicants will not be permitted to work until our People Services department receives confirmation of approval for them to work in the U.S. as an R-1 visa recipient, including a copy of their approved work permit.

Information can be obtained by calling 719-576-2700 x 120 or by email at PeopleServices@isiwebnet.net regarding general requirements for ISI processing of the application. *Denny Yoder*, ISI's General Counsel, can be contacted regarding **general** requirements for pursuing an R-1 Visa at team@isiwebnet.net and can assist applicants in finding qualified counsel.

F-1 Student Visa and OPT

Another option would be for an applicant with an F-1 student visa to obtain permission for a one-year work experience allowance, called an **Optional Practical Training**

(OPT), on their F-1 visa. This F-1 visa holder one-year work experience (OPT) request must be made at the student's initiative and approval is not automatic.

We strongly recommend you seek legal advice before pursuing either of these options. Once an applicant has decided with the concurrence of the ISI Ministry Department to pursue work with ISI using these visa options, the actual processing of the visa paperwork would be handled by the legal counsel of your choice.