



ANU RAMAKRISHNAN

allthingsanu.com

Demystifying Extraordinary.

An exhaustive handbook to the EB1A Green Card based on an everyday industry professional's own learnings and experiences.

Disclaimer: This document is strictly informational-only and does not substitute legal advice or opinion.



Epilogue

Welcome, your future is bright!

Congratulations, you've taken your first step towards immigration freedom. You've likely come from a place of frustration with the long wait times to a green card, endless visa transfers and renewals, and are keen to find a path out. I totally hear you - I was right there in your shoes just a few years ago feeling exhausted and stifled, but still very determined. And I'm here to tell you that with the right mindset, some serious perseverance, and this guide to help you along the way, you can conquer this quest too!

Why I wrote this handbook

I was determined to give back to the immigration community and share my learnings, experiences and lessons to hopefully inspire other deserving candidates to follow this path. I began this journey by writing an article on Medium, and by offering "ask me anything" style calls for a small fee and the response was overwhelming! Through the process of speaking with over 300 individuals like me and demystifying the EB1A process, I have put together key topics and strategies from the most commonly asked questions in this handbook with the goal of helping individuals determine what this path entails.

How you should use this handbook

Treat this handbook like your starting point. If you have limited knowledge or experience about the EB1A path, this handbook will break it down for you step-by-step and walk through everything that this path entails (from my perspective). If you've already done your homework and think you have a solid profile already, you can use this handbook to further refine your strategies based on my learnings and experiences to make a strong case.

Disclaimer

The information provided in this article does not, and is not intended to, constitute legal advice; instead, all information, content, and materials in this article are for general informational purposes only. This handbook does not and is not intended to provide any legal or immigration benefit.

Why consider this path?

The dreaded *priority dates*

It's fair to assume that many of you who are reading this are born in India or China, which means that your average wait time to a green card (assuming usual paths like the EB2 and EB3) is ridiculously high and may never happen in this lifetime. While EB1 priority dates have also been retrogressing as of when this handbook was written, there's still a much higher likelihood of your priority date already being or becoming current in the immediate future.

Other employment-based avenues

I often get asked about how the EB1B and EB1C green cards compare to the EB1A. While the bar is definitely lower in comparison, they do have some "minimum requirement" to apply, which in my opinion are harder to pursue from scratch. For example, the EB1B path is reserved for researchers (with a PhD and active pursuit of research). It's rather difficult for an established industry professional to pursue a PhD/research track just for the sake of immigration. The EB1C green card requires you to serve in the capacity of a people manager outside of the U.S. for a minimum of two years to be eligible. A lot of stars need to align for this to happen - like working in a company where the opportunity to do this presents itself, uprooting your home and family to a different country, waiting the course of time to be eligible, etc. With some hardwork, strategy and with some of the resources in this handbook, you could likely work on a strong EB1A profile in a much shorter time than it would take to be eligible for the EB1B and C.

Success stories

Examples speak for themselves. While not every industry professional is not guaranteed to make a great EB1A case, there are many noteworthy examples of people who have been able to achieve this simply by excelling at work and building professional assets outside of work. So if they can do it, so can you.

About the author

Allow me to introduce myself and briefly talk about my EB1A journey. I'm a product management professional in the health technology & digital therapeutics industry with experience leading tech-enabled healthcare products at startups and Fortune 100 enterprises alike. I've worked across various healthcare product verticals including medical devices, wearables, consumer apps and big Pharma. I have an undergraduate degree in Bioengineering from the University of Washington, and a Master's in Engineering Management from Dartmouth College.



I've written more about my EB1A journey online (links below), but I was motivated to pursue the EB1A path after experiencing an impending layoff right after I returned from my brief maternity leave. I had lived in the U.S. for a decade at that point with no permanent residency in sight. I was determined to remove the dependency my career had on my visa status, and began seriously exploring the EB1A path. At the time of applying, I had 6 years of full-time experience, a majority of which was in Product Management and I applied for the EB1A claiming national expertise in **Digital Healthcare Product Management** and was awarded U.S. permanent residency in 2021.

Over the past 6 months (as of when this handbook was written), I have provided informational consultations for 100+ EB1A aspirants through my coaching journey in the past year and was motivated to create this handbook to help answer many of the frequently asked questions and themes that emerged during my conversations. While this handbook is by no means exhaustive, I help breakdown the EB1A petition section by section, as well as have included many resources on getting started on building a case.

If you'd like to talk further and get personalized coaching on your EB1A, please schedule a discovery session here: bit.ly/anu-eb1a

Best Regards,

Anu Ramakrishnan

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Components of the EB1A application

The key attributes that make your case.

An EB1A petition typically comprises of the following key components. These are the particular elements you will need to build upon and showcase to make a complete case. When you work with a legal team, they will typically collect evidences from you for each of these to build a petition (i.e. application) for you. Bear in mind that an average EB1A petition runs anywhere from **200-500 pages!**



01 | Introduction & Acclaim

You will need to clearly state what you're claiming expertise in, with clear definition of your ***function, industry or domain*** and your ***"acclaim"*** or in other words, your claim to fame.



02 | At least 3 criteria of demonstrated expertise

In order to demonstrate you "meet the bar" for the expertise you claim, you will need to prove, through elaborate evidence, that you meet at least 3 out of 10 criteria determined by the USCIS for evidence of the "extraordinary abilities" they're looking for.



03 | Final Merits Determination

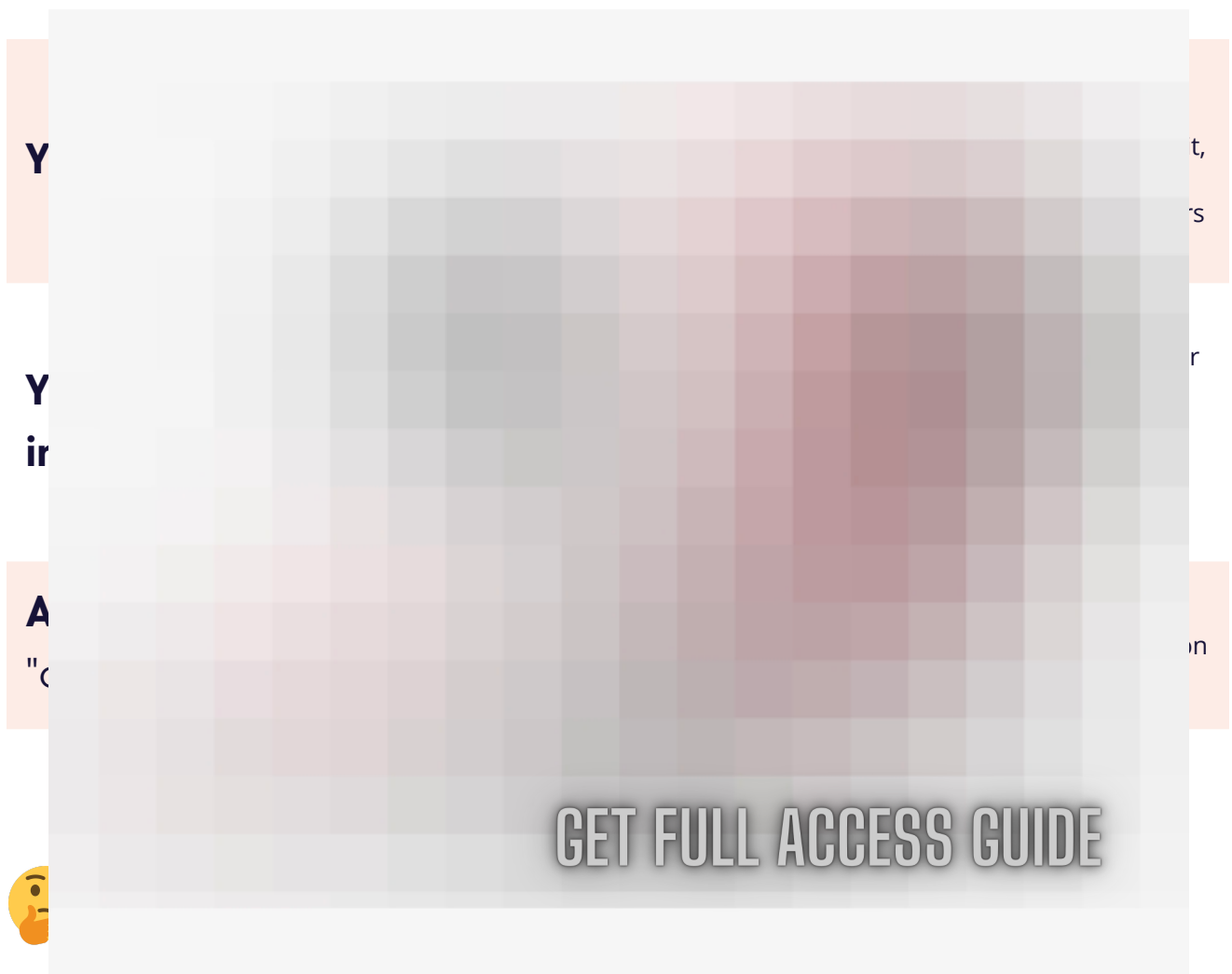
In addition to proving that you meet at least 3 out of the 10 criteria, you also have to prove that you are indeed worthy of your claims *in totality*. Within this section, you will need to provide ***an intent letter, justify why your work benefits the US economy*** and ***show letters of recommendations from other experts in the field***, in addition to any of your other merits not covered in the section above.

01 | Introduction & Acclaim

Finding your niche + positioning it cleverly.

This is perhaps the most strategic yet most important part of your EB1A application, which also shapes the remaining components of your case. This chapter will walk you through what, in my opinion, USCIS is looking for and how you can position your profile to meet the bar.

At the very start of your petition, your legal team will typically call out the following to explicitly state what your expertise is in. These will typically manifest in a cover letter to your petition. In my opinion, you should consider this as equivalent to a "first impression". If you can make this really interesting and unique to the reviewer, you are already on a great start.



Crafting your "Acclaim" for the EB1A

In my opinion, the most challenging yet critical task is to craft your acclaim. You can think of this as your elevator pitch - as if you're pitching your profile & expertise as a startup and the immigration officer is the "investor".



How might you craft an acclaim that adequately summarizes your expertise but is (ideally) something USCIS hasn't seen a lot of?

Primary considerations for your acclaim

To help you arrive at your "acclaim", think through the following 3 attributes and ensure that your acclaim adequately encompasses them all. If you don't believe

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Before, you could review client testimonials on popular EB1A legal websites and also search through LinkedIn for EB1A recipients to get a sense of applicant backgrounds.

Case Scenario

Let's review an example of a (fictitious) candidate profile below and determine how we can converge on an "acclaim" that may adequately position her for the EB1A based on her prior experiences and the considerations on tenure, benefit and novelty above.

Anita Sharma

Group Product Manager @ Lexington Labs, Inc

*Previously at consumer-tech startups & Fortune 500 companies
with a focus on hardware/software & payment platforms*

Past Project Highlights

- **Key PM** on the team that launched **the first contact-less payment system** on a **leading consumer wearable** which garnered her company attention from top media outlets in consumer tech



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Conclusion : Introduction & Acclaim

In my opinion, crafting your acclaim and positioning your profile adequately is 50% of the heavy-lifting for a good EB1A application, so if you can be really tactful about this, you'd be making the rest of your evidence development much more focused and relevant.

In addition to explicitly defining your function, industry and acclaim, your legal team will also typically write a short introductory paragraph on your expertise to highlight important achievements and milestones from your resume. When your petition is prepared, make sure to thoroughly review the introduction section and ensure you're aligned on what's written there about you.

Some other notes and things to consider when defining your acclaim



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02 | Overview of the 10 EB1A criteria

Requirements and strategies for getting to at least 3/10 criteria to showcase your expertise for the EB1A.

Per the USCIS, "In order to demonstrate you have sustained national or international acclaim and that your achievements have been recognized in your field of expertise, you must either include evidence of a one-time achievement (major internationally-recognized award) or 3 of the 10 listed criteria below (or comparable evidence if any of the criteria do not readily apply)"...

...In other words, if you don't already have a Nobel Prize or an Oscar Award, you will need to show that you have demonstrated evidence to *prove* your "acclaim". And USCIS has made that job seemingly easy for you by defining very specific guardrails (aka "criteria") that they believe makes you worthy of your acclaim.

Per USCIS, **here are the 10 criteria you can consider to prove your acclaim for the EB1A** and a set of questions to quickly assess which ones would be applicable to you. I talk in detail about many of these categories in future chapters.



2.1 | Leading or Critical Role

USCIS' definition: "Evidence of your performance of a leading or critical role in distinguished organizations"

Quick qualification check: Have you been a critical resource for at least 2 different projects in your career? Have those projects made significant impact for the company (in terms of revenue, customer growth or being first to market)? Can you get letters of evidence of being a critical resource from your supervisors for these projects? If you've answered yes to these, you likely meet the requirements for this category.



2.2 | Judging the work of others

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2.3 | Scholarly Articles

USCIS' definition: "Evidence of your authorship of scholarly articles in professional or major trade publications or other major media"

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2.4 | High Salary

USCIS' definition: "Evidence that you command a high salary or other significantly high remuneration in relation to others in the field"

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2.5 | Original Contributions

USCIS' definition: "Evidence of your original scientific, scholarly, artistic, athletic, or business-related contributions of major significance to the field"

Quick qualification check: Have you worked on a project / product /

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2.6 | Published material about you

USCIS' definition: "Evidence of published material about you in professional or major trade publications or other major media"

Quick qualification check: Have you ever been written about, by name,

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2.7 | Awards*

USCIS' definition: "Evidence of receipt of lesser nationally or internationally recognized prizes or awards for excellence"

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2.8 | Memberships*

USCIS' definition: "Evidence of your membership in associations in the field which demand outstanding achievement of their members"

Quick qualification check: Are you a member of any honorary or

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The remaining 2 criteria are generally a bit out of reach for industry professionals, and hence have been deprioritized in my list and are *out of scope* for this handbook. Nevertheless, for the sake of being exhaustive, here they are for your reference:



Artistic exhibitions and showcases

USCIS' definition: "Evidence that your work has been displayed at artistic exhibitions or showcases"



Commercial success in arts

USCIS' definition: "Evidence of your commercial successes in the performing arts"

***Author's Note:** The information presented on these categories within this handbook are limited in comparison to other categories due to the extremely high bar posed by USCIS for fulfilling evidence as well as the high degree of challenge in building new evidence for these categories.

2.1 | Leading or Critical Role

Based on my experience, this category often forms the crux of your EB1A application particularly if you're an industry professional who's considering this path exclusively based on your current and prior work experience. It's likely that you're thinking of this path probably because you already believe you play an important role in your organization and team, and that you think that should be worth something.

In this chapter, I'll walk you through the following to help you understand how you can position your work experiences to meet the requirements for this role.



1

Defining the "leading" and "critical" role
+ busting some myths

2

Choosing the right projects

3

Selecting your authors

4

Letter Format & Suggested Content

How do I know if my role is leading or critical?



The key attributes of a leading role

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Popular Myths



Tenure vs. impact

Many business owners believe that "tenure" is the key to "criticality."

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Defining Function & Criticality



How might you determine if your current or prior roles meet the definition of functionality and criticality from an EB1A perspective?

There are a few important considerations to make while picking project that would work well for your EB1A leading and critical roles, but before we get to that, let's first quickly understand the minimum requirements to suffice this category. What USCIS is looking for is evidence of *at least*:



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The projects can be from the same role you've held within a company, or from multiple roles you've held across multiple jobs. For example, either of these would be considered "acceptable" project types for an EB1A leading and critical role determination. Of course, the more "diversity" you can show in your projects across companies, the better it looks from an overall candidacy perspective, but that's not a hard requirement.

Matt Chang

Data Scientist



Alok Mishra

Head of Marketing



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Choosing the right projects

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External & Internal Validation

From the examples we reviewed above, let's take a look at evidences of external and internal validation from a leading & critical role perspective.

Matt Chang

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While choosing your projects, it's ideal to have a mix of both internal and

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Selecting your authors

The role of the author

Since the majority of evidence generation

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My recommended strategy with letters is to do the following:



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- ✓ **Draft your letter:** Once you have the author's agreement, proceed to drafting the letter (suggested content covered in the next section). It's highly recommended that you have a professional editor review your draft or get a second opinion from a trusted friend. You may also want to suggest changes to the author's original draft.



- ✓ **Review** the letter for alignment with your goals. If you're off by even a small amount, like Do you want to request a **proprietary** **quantitative** dollar amount of revenue?

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Letter Format & Suggested Content

Typical letter template components include:

Some common letter components include:

- The letter should be addressed to the author.
- When writing the letter, be clear and concise. Avoid using too many words or phrases that are not necessary.
- You should also include a clear statement of your goals and objectives. This will help the author understand what you are asking for and why it is important.

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A thorough letter of recommendation typically covers the following attributes to best position the author, you as the candidate, and your contributions.



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Sample: Leading & Critical Role Letter

This is a redacted (and greatly improvised) sample letter authored by an expert in the consumer technology & payments industry for an EB1A applicant to validate that they indeed played a leading a critical role in a distinguished organization. Note that [placeholders] have been created as recommendations on where you could expect to put information specific to your profile and case.

[Date]

TO: United States Citizenship & Immigration Services

RE: Leading & Critical Role Letter

For: [Applicant Name]

Position: [Title/Function]

Dear Sir or Madam,

I have been asked to write this letter to describe in detail [Applicant's Name] 's leading and critical role and how this role has impacted our company as a whole.

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technology product development in the consumer & enterprise technology industry qualify me as an expert in this field, and can attest to the leading & critical role performed

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One of her first major contributions to [Company Name] was her efforts in developing and launching our company's first wearable-based payments platform

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challenging task given that this was an entirely new way of developing digital products within our organization, and [Applicant's Name] exceeded the team's expectations and delivered a high-quality product that our customers and engineering team loved. [Applicant's Name] was instrumental in the redesign of our product from the ground up, and their leadership and collaboration skills were

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How and Why Person's Work Impacts the Company as a Whole

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2.2 | Judging the work of others

In my experience, this was the category I was most intimidated by, but one that turned out to be reasonably easy to achieve.

In this chapter, I'll walk you through the following to help you understand what this category entails and how you, as an industry professional, can go about developing evidence for. Bear in mind that my recommendations are more biased towards a non-tech role, but nonetheless a great guide for anyone in tech or business looking to pursue this path.



1

Judging: The basics

Overview of what is expected for this category

2

Building evidence for this category

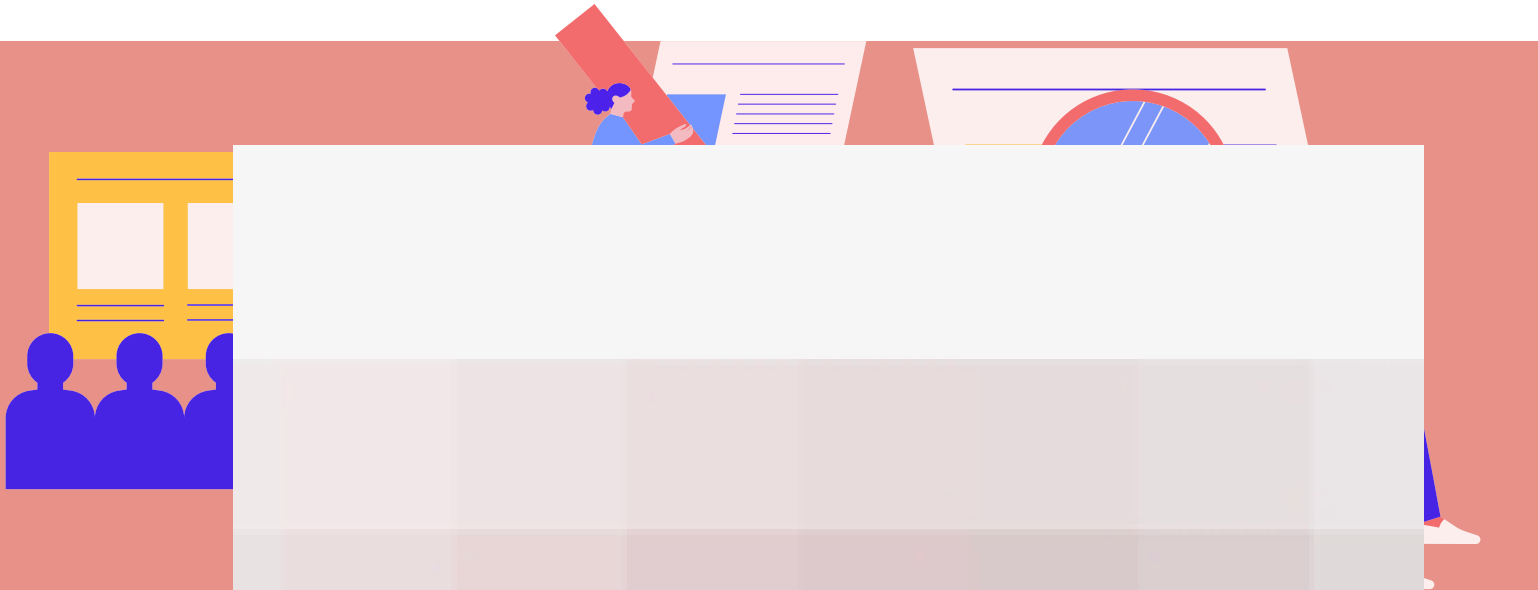
Opportunities for tech vs non-tech roles

3

How to present your evidence

Fulfilling requirements for this category

Judging: The basics



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Here are the rules for this contest



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Under the second round, you have to write a story on

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Building evidence for judging

Based on your job function and industry, here are some great places to start building evidence for this criteria. The key here is to pursue opportunities that have **tenure**, **significance** and a relatively **well documented process** for how they choose judges, who the other panelists are, as well as how serving as a judge and panelist can benefit the company.



For tenure

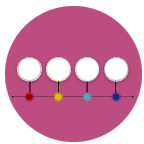
- Reach out to the company on the website or LinkedIn.
- **Bonus** If you are a member of the company, get you to the company.
- Use **ml** to reach out to the judge.
- Evidence of company.
- Evidence of seniority.

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(Disclaimer: None of the above-mentioned avenues come with a "guarantee" of approval. These are mere starting points for evidence development. Your legal team will review and advise on which evidences are best suited for your specific case)

How to present your evidence

As you work on executing upon the judging opportunities, make sure to review the requirements below, putting together the pieces of evidence through this with your legal team as you need as it would be



Name

This will be the name you participate under.



Information field

You'll be asked to provide information about you're involved in (e.g., that you're a student, a professional, a press contact, etc.). If you're promoting a product or service, showcase its impact and why you're recommending it for this competition.



Invitation

For this response, you'll be asked to provide a judge a letter of invitation from the competition, talking about the significance of the cover event.

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Acceptance Criteria

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2.3 | Scholarly articles

One of the best ways to share your expertise, thought leadership and leadership in your field is through your writing. This is not just true from an EB1A perspective, but from a general career growth standpoint as well.

In this chapter, I'll walk you through what the expectations for this category are and some resources on how you can get started on developing evidence for this category.



1

Scholarly articles: The basics

Overview of what is expected for this category

2

Building evidence for this category

Opportunities for tech vs non-tech roles

3

How to present your evidence

Scholarly articles: The basics



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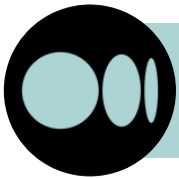
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Building evidence for scholarly articles

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Getting your articles published

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You may also search within Medium to find other publications in your field and determine which ones accept submissions from external contributors.



TechCrunch

Forbes



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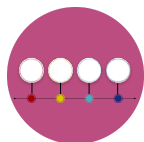
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How to present your evidence

Once you've done the hard work of writing, proofreading and publishing your articles, you want to make sure that the presentation of evidence in your arguments for the immigration office is as objective as possible.



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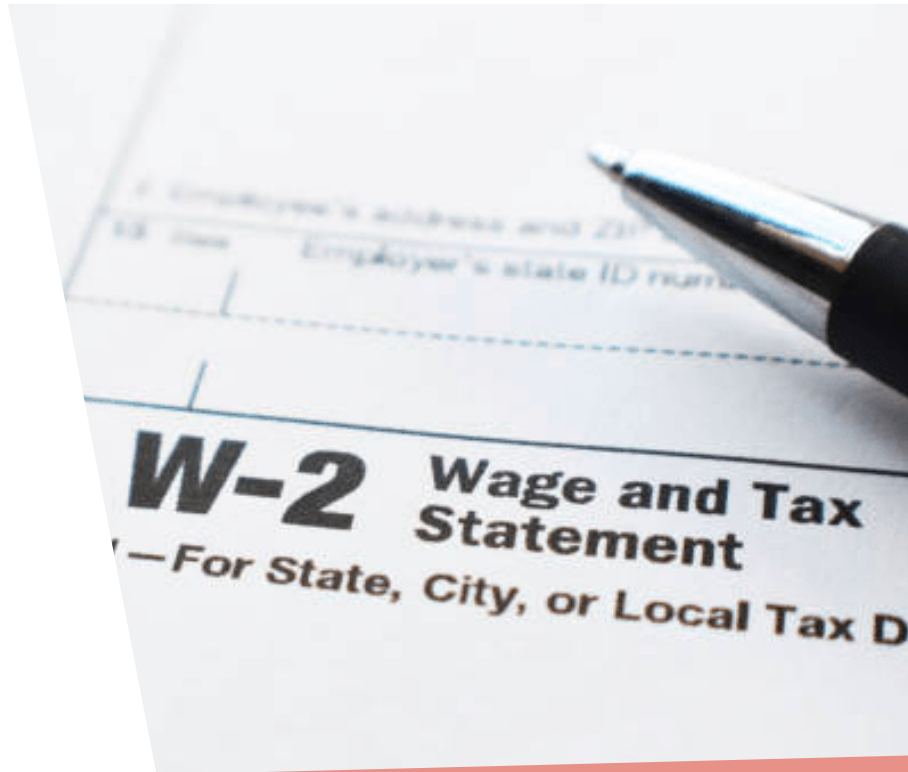
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2.4 | High Salary

The High Salary category is one that is greatly misunderstood with a ton of myths floating around.

But worry not - in this chapter, I'll walk you through exactly what the requirements are and what evidence is required to meet the bar for this category!

Note: Due to the "binary" nature of this category (i.e. you either meet the bar for this or you don't), this chapter exclude any information on building new evidence.



1

High Salary: What's required

Overview of what is expected for this category

2

How to present your evidence

High Salary: The basics



The 'high salary' category is largely *qualitative* category or a million dollars if you do in

Let's walk through this category

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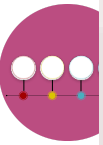


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2.5 | Original Contributions

This is one of the harder categories to establish evidence for in the EB1A petition, as what USCIS is looking for here is whether or not you have contributed something novel (i.e. that didn't previously exist) which has also had significant impact in the field. Traditionally this category renders more favorable to those in entrepreneurship or research, but there may be ways in which you could position your work as original if they meet certain requirements.

Let's take a look at what they are.



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Original Contributions: The basics

Overview of what is expected for this category

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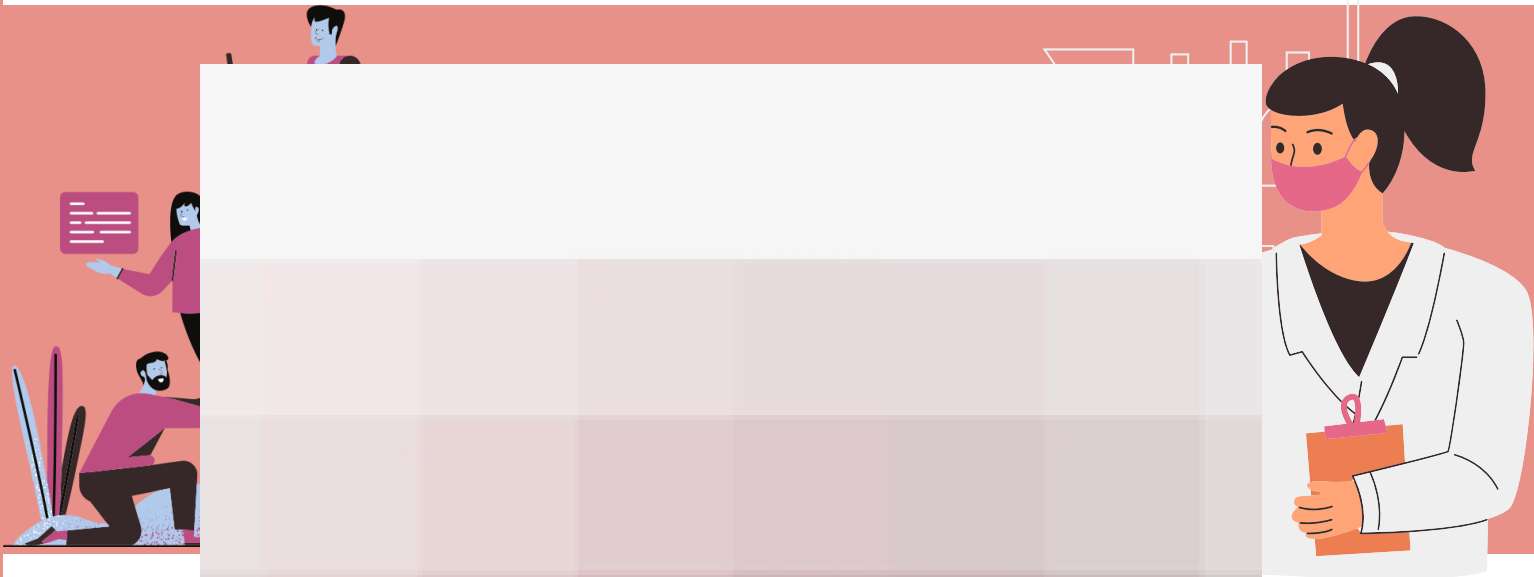
Building evidence for this category

Opportunities for non-tech vs tech roles

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Original Contributions: The basics



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Building evidence for original contributions

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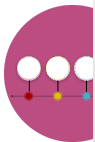


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2.6 | Published Material About You

One of the ways USCIS likes to 'objectively' assess one's expertise in a field is through press coverage on the individual. If you think about it, most of the influential people we know of and follow in our daily lives are ones we've probably first read about online (through news articles or interview features). It's natural for us to immediately be in awe of individuals who have been featured online or in press, especially if those sources are notable.

Similarly, for this category, USCIS is looking to see if your expertise is notable enough for you to be written about in popular news and media sources. Let's see what this category entails.



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Published Material About You: The basics

Overview of what is expected for this category

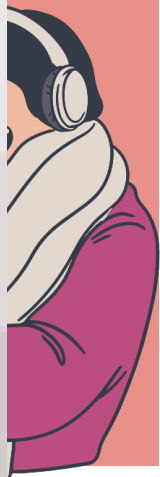
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Building evidence for this category

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How to present your evidence

Published Material: The basics



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Relevance to your field & expertise: This relates closely to the first point but

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Examples: Feature & Interview



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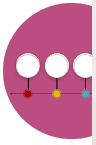
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2.7 | Awards

It's a no-brainer that awards can be a very compelling way to prove one's merits, particularly if the award is national or international in scope and has a relatively high bar. USCIS thinks the same, so let's review what the requirements for this category are.

Keep in mind though that it is very difficult to organically receive an award, even if you apply for it as an industry professional. You're better off considering this category for the EB1A if you already have won awards in the past that meet the EB1A requirements.



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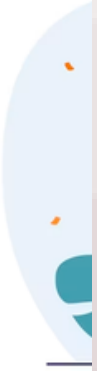
Awards: The basics

Overview of what is expected for this category

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Presenting your evidence

Awards: The basics



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Here's what does NOT qualify as evidence of awards for the EB1A:



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2.8 | Memberships

This is one of the hardest categories to establish evidence for in the EB1A petition. For this category, USCIS cares about how reputed the organization (that you're a member of) is, as well as proof that the membership is invitation-only, based on some minimum requirements for qualification. This is also a category that is heavily industry-dependent and subjective, so proceed with caution!

I will also caveat that since I did not pursue this category for my personal case, the strategies for evidence development here may be limited in comparison to others.



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Memberships: The basics

Overview of what is expected for this category

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Building evidence for this category

Opportunities for non-tech vs tech roles

Memberships: The basics



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Here's what does NOT qualify as evidence of memberships for the EB1A:



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03 | Final Merits Determination

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3.1 | Letter of Intent

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Sample: Letter of Intent

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3.2 | Expert letters of recommendation

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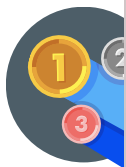


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How the author would describe the applicant's (i.e. *new*) achievements in terms of significance to the field



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Sample: Expert Letter of Recommendation

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3.3 | Benefit to the US Economy

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3.4 | Additional artifacts

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Hiring Legal Firms:

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Attorney Recommendations

Below is a list of some of the popular EB1A attorneys that I have come across in my search. I have personally worked with several of these attorneys and can attest to their expertise and professionalism. I have also received numerous recommendations from other EB1A applicants and attorneys.



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General tips & resources

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Case Study

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Need further help?

Schedule a 1:1 call with me!

I can help walkthrough case strategy, positioning, case strength assessment, and answer any of your questions to the best of my knowledge.



bit.ly/anu-eb1a

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