

Title: I-140 Processing Time Explained: What You Should Expect

Meta Description: Learn about I-140 processing time and current USCIS timelines. Discover what factors may affect your employment-based green card application.

I-140 Processing Time: USCIS Updates and What They Mean

If you are working toward a green card through employment, the I-140 is one of the most critical steps you will face. Form I-140, also called the Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker, is filed with USCIS by an employer. In some cases, it can be self-petitioned.

The I-140 processing time is not fixed. It varies by service center, visa category (such as EB-1, EB-2, or EB-3), and whether you choose premium processing. USCIS also updates processing data regularly. Even small changes can signal longer delays or faster decisions, depending on workload and policy shifts.

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What is Form I-140?

The Form I-140, officially called the Immigrant Petition for Alien Workers, is the formal request filed with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. It establishes your eligibility for an employment-based immigrant visa.

Once your petition is filed, USCIS assigns a priority date. That date marks your place in line. It determines when your green card application can move forward. So yes, how fast your case gets processed has a direct impact on your entire immigration timeline.

Who Files Form I-140?

Not everyone files the same way. Here is a quick breakdown of who typically submits this petition:

- Employers sponsoring workers who already have an approved PERM labor certification
- Workers with an exceptional ability or an advanced degree in their professional field

- Individuals with extraordinary abilities in the business, sciences, arts, education, or athletics
- Those pursuing a national interest waiver who can self-petition the USCIS without an employer sponsor

Each category requires a different set of supporting documents. Some categories need published work, expert letters, or salary comparisons. Others require a certified labor application first. Make sure you know which bucket you fall into before filing.

Advanced Degree or Exceptional Ability: Which One Fits You?

This is where many people get confused. An advanced degree means holding a master's or higher, or a bachelor's degree paired with at least five years of progressive work experience. Exceptional ability means your expertise significantly exceeds that of the average professional in your field.

Those filing under exceptional ability requesting a national interest waiver face a higher bar. You need to prove your contributions benefit the United States in a meaningful way. It is more complex, but it also cuts out the need for an employer sponsor. If you are unsure which category applies to you, talking to an immigration attorney early on is a smart move.

Current Processing Times Overview

Processing times vary widely based on which USCIS service center is handling your case. Some centers take as few as **six months**. Others are running well over **two years**. The workload at each center plays a huge role in how fast cases move.

Staying on top of the latest [I-140 processing time updates](#) is important because USCIS refreshes its data monthly. What was accurate three months ago might not reflect what is happening today.

One option that can significantly speed things up is premium processing. For an added government fee, you can request expedited adjudication. Currently, premium processing for the I-140 comes with a **15-business-day** turnaround. It does not guarantee approval, but it does guarantee a faster decision.

Keep these key points in mind:

- Processing times shown on the USCIS website are estimates, not hard deadlines
- A Request for Evidence (RFE) can add significant time to your case
- Different service centers have different backlogs and processing speeds
- Your priority date must be up to date on the visa bulletin before you can move to the next step
- An approval notice is a major milestone, but it is not the final step
- A denial notice does not always mean the end; you may have options to appeal or refile

If you receive an RFE, respond thoroughly. Delays in your response will only push your timeline back further.

At Hacking Immigration Law, LLC, the team focuses on guiding clients through every phase of the employment-based immigration process, from filing the initial petition to navigating consular processing or adjustment of status. Having legal support can make a real difference, especially when the stakes are high.

Tips to Speed Up Your Green Card Journey

Nobody wants their case to drag on longer than necessary. Here are practical steps to keep processing times as short as possible:

Before filing:

- Organize all supporting documents well in advance
- Confirm your approved PERM labor certification is accurate and complete
- Make sure all employer information is consistent across every form

After filing:

- Monitor USCIS processing times regularly for updates
- Track your priority date each month using the visa bulletin
- Respond to any government requests quickly and completely
- Consider premium processing if time is a major concern for you

Working with professionals:

- Hire an experienced immigration attorney who knows employment-based cases
- Avoid DIY filing if your situation involves exceptional ability or a self-petition
- Keep copies of everything you submit

Final Thoughts

The I-140 is one of the most important milestones in the employment-based green card process. Understanding how processing times work, what category fits your situation, and how to avoid common delays puts you in a much stronger position.

Stay organized, stay informed, and do not hesitate to get help when you need it. The path to a green card is long, but with the right strategy in place, it is absolutely within reach.