

Frequently Asked Questions: Conventions in Canada

What identity documents do I need when I cross the border?

Citizens of all countries require proof of their citizenship to travel to Canada. However, requisite travel and identity documents will vary depending on your country of citizenship and residence.

Citizens of the United States must have either a passport or some other documentary proof of their citizenship, such as a birth certificate or certificate of naturalization.

Resident Aliens of the United States, or Green Card holders, must bring their Alien Registration card with them. They should also bring a passport to satisfy the proof of citizenship requirement.

Citizens of all other countries must bring a passport that will be valid for the entire length of their stay in Canada.

Do I need a visa?

Citizens of certain countries require visitor's visas in order to travel to Canada. A list of countries whose citizens currently require visas can be found at the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) Web site: www.cic.gc.ca

At the time of writing, citizens of the United States, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and most Western European countries are visa exempt.

I am an Event Planner. Do I need a work permit?

*Immigration Regulation 19(1)(u)** states that executive organizing committees and administrative support staff who are permanent employees of organizations that are holding **Foreign events** in Canada do not require work permits.

Further, *Immigration Regulation 19(1)(g)** has been interpreted to encompass certain persons who are merely working **under contract** to organizations planning **Foreign events** in Canada and does not require them to have work permits. Included are event planners, exhibit managers, professional conference organizers, destination marketing company personnel, and event accommodation consultants.

A **Foreign event** is one held by an association or corporation which is located in a country other than Canada and conducts business, or carries on its activities, from a location outside Canada.

Foreign professional event planners, exhibit managers, and professional conference organizers employed at **Canadian events** require work permits. Before CIC can issue work permits to these persons, a labour market opinion must be received from Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). This is known as a confirmation and is equivalent to labour certification in the United States. For details see: **What Do You Mean by Confirmation?**

A **Canadian event** is one that is held by an association or corporation which is located in Canada and conducts business, or carries on its activities, from a location in Canada. A Canadian event may be conducted by a branch or subsidiary of a foreign-based organization.

I am a Delegate. Do I need any special documents?

Delegates, attendees, and board members are considered to be visitors. All visitors must comply with requirements for identity and travel documents, and the provisions surrounding the protection of public health, safety, and national security. Citizens of certain countries may require visitor's visas.

The existence of certain medical conditions or a criminal record could mean that entry cannot be granted.

In order to facilitate entry into Canada it is suggested that delegates be in possession of a letter of introduction from the organizing committee which outlines the purpose of entry and intended length of stay.

I am an Exhibitor. Do I need a work permit?

CIC distinguishes between persons who restrict themselves to displaying or demonstrating goods at events and persons who also engage in sales.

*Immigration Regulation 19(1)(h)** allows booth personnel, display stand personnel, and booth owners to display or demonstrate goods at an event without a work permit.

Do I need a work permit if I want to sell my goods?

All exhibitors who want to sell **and** deliver goods to the **general public** require work permits which may be issued pursuant to *Immigration Regulation 20(5)(e)(i)**. Application for work permits for this purpose can be made at any Port of Entry upon arrival in Canada.

*Immigration Regulation 19(1)(h)** allows nationals of all countries to engage in sales as long as they are **not** selling or taking orders from the **general public**.

*Immigration Regulation 19(1)(w)** allows for the facilitated entry of Business Visitors specified in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Specifically, it relieves exhibitors from the necessity of applying for work permits. Therefore, in addition to displaying or demonstrating these goods at an event, exhibitors who are citizens of the United States and Mexico may **take orders** for

foreign made goods from the **general public** as well as from their **corporate clients**. However, if goods are **delivered** during the same visit to Canada then a work permit will be required.

Exhibitors may not take orders for, or sell, Canadian made goods.

Do I need a work permit to set up my own display?

Your organization's employees will require work permits to install and dismantle your booth or display if it is larger than a portable pop-up.

Companies are expected to hire Canadians to do all labour on the convention floor. This includes persons required to set up lighting, lay carpeting, do electrical work, and perform other hands-on duties. CIC is of the opinion that this type of work can be done by Canadians.

Where companies have complicated custom displays and wish to bring in their own employees for hands-on set up, it will be necessary to request a confirmation from HRDC. Normally, HRDC will only approve a request for confirmation in these circumstances when company employees will be merely supervising the installation of the display. If the confirmation is approved, these persons will need to apply for work permits from CIC. It is recommended that all labour requirements be directed to the Official Show Service Contractor.

I am a Contract Service Provider. Do I need a work permit?

Foreign service providers who are **under contract** to exhibitors may be involved in various aspects of a show or convention, such as the installation and dismantling of a show. Foreign personnel working for audio video companies, staging companies, show decorating services, and exhibit builders also fall into in this category.

As in the situation of companies who want to bring in their own employees to be involved with a set up, contracted service providers are expected to hire Canadians to do labour on the convention floor.

Foreign managers and supervisory personnel who will be working on the floor at an event and who are employed by contracted Service Providers will require work permits. Before work permits can be issued to these persons by CIC, the positions must be confirmed by HRDC. To avoid complications, we recommended that all labour requirements be directed to the Official Show Service Contractor.

What do you mean by Confirmation?

Confirmation is an opinion provided by HRDC to CIC which formally states that there are no Canadians who are willing, available, or qualified to fill a position. The employer must make a formal written submission to HRDC. It must be demonstrated that reasonable efforts have been made to hire Canadians, that no suitable Canadians were available, and that the wages and working

conditions offered were sufficient to attract Canadians. You should allow three weeks for processing a confirmation request.

What should I do about Customs clearance?

Detailed information on Customs procedures is contained in the publication *Your Guide to Bringing a Convention, Meeting, Trade Show, or Exhibition Across the Canadian Border*. Topics include types of goods subject to duties and taxes, moving goods to the show, general information for visitors to Canada, and duty and tax free allowances for personal goods. This publication is available from any Revenue Canada Customs Office and is posted on the Revenue Canada Web site: <http://www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca/>.

What do I do about Material Handling Services?

The Official Show Service Contractor has the responsibility to manage all material handling activities, including the scheduling of all vehicles into and out of docks. The show contractor also has the responsibility of receiving and handling all exhibit materials and empty crates. Due to insurance restrictions, the show contractor normally cannot loan dollies, hand trucks, or any other freight handling equipment to exhibitors.

Where Can I Get Further Information?

Citizenship and Immigration
Canada Call Centre:
(416) 973-4444 Metro Toronto
1-888-242-2100 Outside
Toronto
www.cic.gc.ca

Human Resources Development
Canada
(416) 954-3111

www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca

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| *R19(1)(g) | Business visitors buying goods and services. |
| *R19(1)(h) | Business visitors selling goods or services, but not to the general public. |
| *R19(1)(u) | Executive and support staff who are permanent employees of an organization sponsoring an event. |
| *R19(1)(w) | Business visitors under the NAFTA. |
| *R20(5)(e)(i) | Foreign workers who will create or maintain significant benefits, opportunities or employment of Canadians. |

This is not a legal document. For precise legal information, consult the Immigration Act and the Immigration Regulations and Chapter 16 of the North American Free Trade Agreement.