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# THE EB-5 REGIONAL CENTER INVESTOR VISA - ANOTHER OPTION

**I**mmigration options for foreign investors wishing to relocate to the United States have historically been somewhat limited. Seeking to stimulate the economy via investment and job creation, the U.S. created the EB-5 Immigrant Investor Visa. After almost two decades of fine-tuning, today's EB-5 Regional Centers represent the most prudent, compelling, and sensible avenue to U.S. permanent residency for many foreign investors.

The EB-5 Regional Center Visa eliminates most of the traditional complexities associated with investment-based immigration. For many, the EB-5 Regional Center program offers a clean, straightforward, and structured option permitting the investor and family members to obtain U.S. permanent residency. No "hands on" business operation is required, nor is the creation of 10 direct jobs in the U.S. Instead, Regional Centers – which are pre-approved by the U.S. government – serve as vehicles through which both the immigration *and* investment objectives of the investor can be realized. EB-5 Regional Centers are gaining both momentum with investors and traction with the U.S. Customs and Immigration Service, which has expanded its adjudication force to meet increasing investor demand.

The excitement is palpable among "traditional" high-net-worth investors and successful foreign professionals who have been adversely affected by visa limitations and restrictions in other categories. Both temporary (nonimmigrant) and permanent residency visa categories face severe availability limitations based upon global demand for U.S. residency. Such

conventional mechanisms invariably mean extensive waits resulting from quotas and backlogs at U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Service (USCIS) facilities.

With employment-based immigration categories, from beginning a PERM permanent residency filing through actual approval of permanent residency is estimated to be about an 8 year process. In India, a professional worker (EB-3) filing today for permanent residency has a predicted wait time of 15.8 years before he or she receives U.S. permanent residency! With these kind of delays, it is no wonder the EB-5 is drawing attention from foreign professionals worldwide.

In contrast, the EB-5 Investor Visa permits qualified investors – defined as investors with a worldwide net worth of \$1 million or income of \$200,000 per year over the past two years if single or \$300,000 per year if married – to apply for admission to the United States as U.S. Permanent Residents. The EB-5 Investor Visa via the Regional Center Program requires a \$500,000 investment into a USCIS designated Regional Center and the creation of ten direct or indirect jobs. The Regional Center investment does not require active daily involvement from the investor and the investor and immediate family gain unrestricted ability to work and live inside the United States. Foreign investors currently participating in this program can receive their conditional "green cards" *as fast as six to twelve months*.

Today, more than 70 Regional Centers have been approved. Various Regional Center models – equity-based, loan based, and mutual fund – allow investors to find

the right combination of security, return, and exit strategy best suited for their particular immigration and investment objectives. ↕

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