

CONVENTION INFORMATION FAQ FOR INTERNATIONALS

1. How do I obtain a Letter of invitation?

You will need to contact the International Liaison on the ICES Board of Directors. For 2007-2008, the International Liaison is JoAnne Beauvais. Her e-mail address is jbeauvaiscakes@yahoo.com and is also available in the "Contact" section of this web site (go to the ICES home page and then click on the "Contacts" tab on the left side) or on the Board Contact page in your ICES Newsletter. You will need to send her a letter or e-mail with your name and complete mailing address, as it appears on your passport, requesting a letter. An e-mail address is also helpful in case any questions or problems arise.

2. Is there a deadline to send requests for a Letter of Invitation?

Yes. The deadline to send a request for a Letter of Invitation for the 2008 Annual ICES Convention and Show is April 15, 2008. Because of the large number of late request last year, a request deadline has been established for all conventions: **the deadline to send a request is 12 weeks (three months) prior to the published start date (first day) of an ICES Convention and Show.** Present and future Convention dates can be found on this web site or in your ICES Newsletter.

3. How far in advance of a Convention should I request a Letter of Invitation and how soon after I request it, will I receive it?

You should request the letter as soon as you are even thinking about possibly attending a Convention or **before** you schedule an appointment with a U. S. Consular office in your area. For some countries, it can take 2-3 months for the letter to reach its destination, so plan accordingly and allow time for your letter to arrive. Requests are usually processed within 3-5 days of receipt of request. When you receive your letter depends on how quickly the postal service in your country operates. ICES **cannot** guarantee how long it will take for a letter to reach you. ICES cannot control delays or problems experienced after a letter has left the U.S. Postal Service system. Again, allow plenty of time for a letter to reach you.

4. How is the Letter of invitation sent to me?

The primary method of sending your letter is air mail post. If you want an expedited mail service (e.g. Federal Express, DHL, etc.), you must provide an account number to which the cost of this expedited service can be charged. ICES does not provide this type of service, as it is very expensive. A copy of your letter can also be e-mailed to you for you to print, however, you will not have an original signature on the letter should it be required by the U.S. Consulate. Letters of Invitation **will not** be faxed to an Embassy or Consulate; it has been requested by these offices that documents not be faxed to them, as they do not hold documents until the date of one's interview appointment.

5. Does the Letter of Invitation state that ICES will sponsor me for the Convention?

No, the letter does not express or imply that ICES will be sponsoring you. It simply states the dates and place the Convention will be held and the purpose of the Convention. To “sponsor” someone would imply that ICES will be bearing the financial responsibility for an international visitor during his or her stay in the U.S.; ICES cannot and does not sponsor anyone for any purpose. International Convention attendees should expect to bear all financial costs associated with their Convention trip to the U.S. (travel, lodging, food, etc.). International visitors to the U.S. could potentially be required to present proof of personal funds for the trip during the visa appointment with the Embassy/Consulate.

6. What are the steps and documents required to receive the visa and how long does it take to get a visa?

It is suggested that you visit the following two U.S. Government web sites for detailed information regarding visas and the visa process such as visa policies, how to obtain a visa, locating a Consulate office in your area, visa wait times, and other tips for international visitors:

- A. <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov>
- B. <http://www.travel.state.gov>

- 1. The time it takes to move through the visa process can vary. One thing is for certain: **Expect delays.** In some countries, it may take as few as 30 business days; other countries could possibly take three months. It is the responsibility of international visitors to plan accordingly and allow enough time for these potential delays in order to receive a visa in time to attend Convention. **Do not wait until 30 business days before the start of a Convention to begin the visa application process.**

7. I will have someone traveling with me. Will ICES send a Letter of Invitation for any traveling companion(s)?

Yes, a Letter of Invitation can be sent for a friend or family member who will be traveling to Convention with you: however, in order for your traveling companion(s) to be able to attend any Convention events with you (Breakfast, Banquet, Demonstrations, Vendor Showcase, Sugar Art Display Room, etc.), he or she must also be a registered Convention attendee. **Everyone** who wishes to attend any Convention event **must** be registered; this includes children. Any child, like an adult, must be registered Convention attendee and must wear a Convention badge if they are attending any of the meal functions, demonstrations, or entering the sugar art display room or the vendor area.

8. What does ICES do to help me get a visa?

The only thing ICES does is provide the Letter of Invitation to be used as a piece of supporting documentation for the nature and purpose of your trip. Beyond that, there is nothing else ICES can do to assist with this process. ICES will not contact the Embassy or Consulate directly on your behalf.

9. My visa application was denied. Can you contact the Embassy or Consulate and ask them to reconsider my application?

Unfortunately, once your application is denied, there is nothing else that ICES can do. Only the U.S. Government can decide who is allowed to enter the country; ICES has no control over or influence on this decision. We can only suggest that you try again for the next year's Convention.

10. What is the refund policy if I have already registered and cannot attend or if my visa is denied?

You can get your Convention registration fee refunded, but you must provide documentation of the denial to the Convention and Show Treasurer. **Without written proof of visa denial, your money will not be refunded.**

Please note the following refund terms and conditions: Request for refunds postmarked before June 15, 2008 will receive 75% of the registration amount. Any request after June 15, 2008 and before July 13, 2008 will be 50% of the registration amount and must be accompanied by a doctor's statement or U.S. visa denial. No refunds thereafter.

Any request for Convention related refunds and reimbursements must be submitted to the Show Treasurer no later than 45 days after the close of the Convention. Refunds and reimbursements requested after this time will not be paid.

11. My visa was approved, and I will be coming to Convention. Will ICES help me make my travel arrangements?

No, ICES does not offer any assistance with travel arrangements. It is suggested that you contact an international travel agent or consolidator in your area/country/province.