The **K-1 visa** offers a pathway for U.S. citizens to bring their foreign fiancé(e)s to the United States for marriage. Often called the **“fiancé visa**,” it is a temporary non-immigrant **visa** that leads to permanent residency after marriage.

If you are considering sponsoring your fiancé(e), it’s essential to understand the requirements, timeline, required documents, and potential challenges.

Quick Facts

- **Purpose**: Allows a U.S. citizen to bring a foreign fiancé(e) to the U.S. for marriage
- **Marriage Requirement**: Must marry within **90 days** of arrival
- **Eligible For**: Only U.S. citizens (not permanent residents) can petition
- **Next Step**: After marriage, apply for **adjustment of status** to permanent residency

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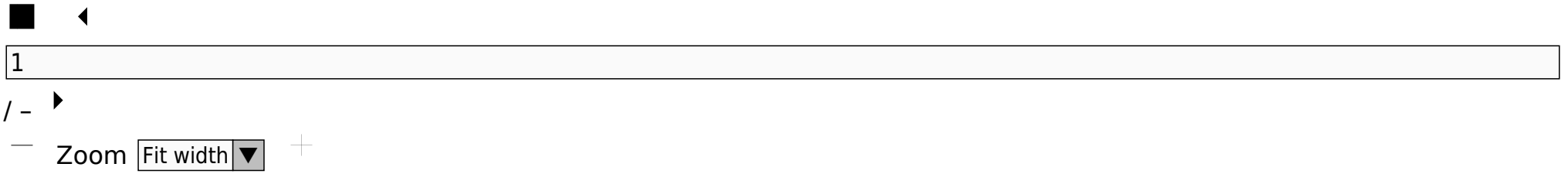
What Are the Key Requirements?

To qualify for a K-1 visa, you must:

- Be a **U.S. citizen** (green card holders cannot file)
- Intend to **marry within 90 days** of your fiancé(e)'s arrival in the U.S.
- Both parties must be **legally free to marry** (all prior marriages terminated)
- Have **physically met in person** within the last two years (exceptions for extreme hardship or cultural traditions)
- File a valid **Form I-129F (Petition for Alien Fiancé(e))**

K-1 Visa Timeline (Step-by-Step)



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1. **File Form I-129F** with USCIS
2. **USCIS Review & Approval** (approx. 6–9 months)
3. **National Visa Center (NVC) Processing**
4. **Consular Interview Abroad** (medical exam + documents required)
5. **Visa Issuance & Entry into the U.S.**
6. **Marriage within 90 Days**

7. **Apply for Adjustment of Status** (Form I-485) to obtain a green card

Total average timeline: 12–18 months (varies by consulate and case load).

Documents Needed

- Completed **Form I-129F**
- Proof of U.S. citizenship (passport, birth certificate, naturalization certificate)
- Passport-style photos (petitioner & beneficiary)
- Evidence of relationship (photos, communication records, flight tickets, etc.)
- Divorce decrees or death certificates (if previously married)
- Intent to marry statements signed by both partners
- Police clearance certificate (for the foreign fiancé(e))
- Medical examination results (panel physician-approved)

K-1 Visa Income Requirements

The U.S. citizen petitioner must meet the **minimum income threshold**:

- 100% of the **Federal Poverty Guidelines** when filing Form I-129F
- 125% of the **Federal Poverty Guidelines** when adjusting status (Form I-864 Affidavit of Support after marriage)

 Reference: USCIS Poverty Guidelines

K-1 Visa Approval Rate by Country

Approval rates vary significantly by country. According to U.S. Department of State data (recent reports):

- Countries with **high approval rates**: Canada, Western Europe, Australia
- Countries with **lower approval rates**: Some parts of Africa, South Asia, and regions with higher fraud indicators

 Reference: U.S. State Department Visa Statistics

K-1 Visa Denial Reasons

Common reasons include:

- Insufficient evidence of a **bona fide relationship**
- Missing documents or incomplete forms
- Failure to meet **income requirements**
- Prior immigration violations by the foreign fiancé(e)
- Security or background check issues
- Consular officer suspicion of **fraudulent marriage**

K-1 Visa Refusal vs. Denial

- **Refusal**: Often temporary, issued under **221(g)** for missing documents or administrative processing. Can be overcome by submitting additional evidence.
- **Denial**: Final decision. Petition may be returned to USCIS for revocation. Typically requires **appeal or re-filing**.

Fiancé Visa vs. Spouse Visa Timeline

Visa Type	Who Qualifies	Average Processing Time	Green Card Path
K-1 Fiancé(e) Visa	Foreign fiancé(e) of U.S. citizen	12–18 months	Must marry & apply for adjustment of status
IR1/CR1 Spouse Visa	Foreign spouse of U.S. citizen	12–15 months	Green card issued upon arrival

 Related Lunel Law blog: IR6 Green Card Explained

FAQs

Can green card holders file for a K-1 visa?

No. Only U.S. citizens can petition for a fiancé(e).

Do we have to get married in the U.S.?

Yes. The marriage must take place within 90 days of entry.

Can the foreign fiancé(e) work on a K-1 visa?

Yes, but they must apply for **work authorization (EAD)** after arrival.

What happens if we don’t marry within 90 days?

The foreign fiancé(e) must leave the U.S. The K-1 cannot be extended.

Is the K-1 easier than a spouse visa?

It depends. A K-1 is often faster initially but requires **two stages** (fiancé visa + green card), while a spouse visa grants a green card upon entry.

References

- USCIS – K-1 Visa Requirements
- USCIS – Form I-129F, Petition for Alien Fiancé(e)
- U.S. Department of State – K-1 Fiancé(e) Visa Process
- USCIS – Poverty Guidelines (Form I-864P)
- U.S. State Department – Visa Statistics

Conclusion

The **K-1 fiancé(e) visa** can be the right choice if you're engaged to a U.S. citizen and planning to marry soon. While it provides a clear pathway to permanent residency, the process requires careful planning, strong documentation, and meeting income requirements.

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