



New arrangements for Australians applying for an APEC Business Travel Card

Background

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) has administered the APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) scheme in Australia since 1998. The ABTC scheme was specifically established to support frequent business travellers.

In June 2010, the department amended the eligibility criteria for Australia's ABTC to bring the eligibility requirements into closer alignment with other APEC economies.

In March 2011, in collaboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Austrade, the department invited a range of relevant business organisations and peak bodies to discuss the impact of the changes to Australia's eligibility criteria. These discussions also identified possible modifications to the criteria that may further support Australian business people in trade and investment activity in the Asia-Pacific region.

Based on these consultations, and with the broad support of Australia's business community, the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, the Hon Chris Bowen MP, established new eligibility criteria for Australian citizens applying for an ABTC and a two-stage approach to implementing new eligibility arrangements.

What are the new criteria?

To be eligible for an APEC Business Travel Card under the new criteria, an applicant must:

- demonstrate frequent travel for business purposes
- be either:
 - a CEO, board member, regional/country head or owner/director of a business entity
 - an employee nominated by one of the above people in their business entity (except a board member)
- be employed by a registered business entity, or Australian-based peak business body, engaged in international trade or investment between APEC member economies which:
 - has been certified by an 'approved body' or
 - is identified in the current Forbes Global 2000 business list or

- has received an Export Market Development Grant from Austrade during the previous five years or
- has been a national finalist in the Australian Export Awards (supported by Austrade and ACCI) during the previous five years.

If an applicant resides outside Australia, they must also be authorised for residency and work purposes by the relevant immigration authority in the economy in which they reside.

More detailed information about the new criteria is available on the department's website.

See: <http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/business/apec/eligibility.htm>

How will the new criteria be implemented?

The new criteria will be implemented in two stages to allow some applicants to take advantage of the new arrangements as soon as possible.

Stage One commenced on 16 November 2011 and will enable applications to be lodged by applicants whose business does not require certification by an 'approved body' (for example, businesses listed in the Forbes Global 2000 business list, recipients of a grant under the Austrade Export Market Development Grants program or finalists in the Austrade Export Awards). Applicants applying for an APEC Business Travel Card under the new criteria will complete *Form 1390 Application for an APEC Business Travel Card*.

During this stage, applicants whose businesses would require certification by an 'approved body' may continue to be assessed under the current criteria (see: <http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/business/apec/eligibility.htm>) and will complete the *Form 1171 Application for an APEC Business Travel Card*.

Stage Two will enable applications to be lodged by applicants whose business requires certification by an 'approved body'. DIAC expects this stage to commence in the coming months.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can apply for an APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) under the new arrangements that commenced on 16 November 2011?

Any Australian passport holder who is an employee of a business that is either:

- listed on the current Forbes Global 2000 business list
- a recipient of an Export Market Development Grant (EMDG) from Austrade in the last five years

- a national finalist in the Australian Export Awards (supported by Austrade and ACCI) in the last five years.

Unless you are the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), regional/country head, or owner/director of the business, your application must also include a supporting letter from either the CEO or the regional/country head of the business. The application form for these new arrangements and criteria is Form 1390.

I meet the current criteria you are phasing out and don't appear to qualify under the Stage One arrangements. Can I apply under these criteria?

Yes. Until Stage Two is implemented, DIAC will continue to allow applications from those business people who wish to be assessed against the eligibility criteria that are being phased out. Among other things, you will need to be a top two or three level executive in your business and the business must demonstrate \$5 million in international trade or investment per annum. If you wish to apply against these criteria, please complete and lodge application Form 1171. Please note that the processing fee is non-refundable and an application can only be assessed against the criteria relevant to this form.

I work for a company that is not listed with Forbes Global 2000 and has not received an EMDG nor been a national finalist in the Australian Export Awards. When can I apply?

If you do not meet the criteria that are being phased out (Form 1171) then we recommend you apply when Stage Two commences and your business may be eligible to be certified by an 'approved body'. We expect Stage Two arrangements with an 'approved body' to be in place in the coming months. This will enable applications from all other business organisations that may wish for their employees to have an ABTC. These businesses must first be certified by one of our 'approved bodies' as being appropriately registered and engaged in international trade and investment in the APEC region. Once a business has been certified, any employees that travel on behalf of the business to conduct trade and investment activities may apply for an ABTC.

A new ABTC application form, which reflects eligibility under Stage Two, is expected to be available on the department's website in the coming months.

For more information on Stage Two arrangements, please see <http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/business/apec/eligibility.htm>