EB-3 Processing Time 2026: EB3.Work Releases New Data on Wait Times as Applicants Plan for the Year Ahead

EB3.Work's latest EB-3 Processing Time report explains 48-month timelines, key delays, and practical steps for employers and green-card applicants.

NY, UNITED STATES, December 10, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- EB3.Work, a specialized EB-3 employment and immigration platform, has released a new 2025 EB-3 Processing Time report that explains why many applicants now face total timelines of three to four years – and what they can do to plan their green-card journey more strategically.

Drawing on official data from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the monthly Visa Bulletin, and hundreds of active EB-3 cases, the

EB-3 Processing Time 2026

report breaks down each stage of the process: PERM labor certification, the I-140 immigrant petition, visa-number availability, and final green-card issuance.
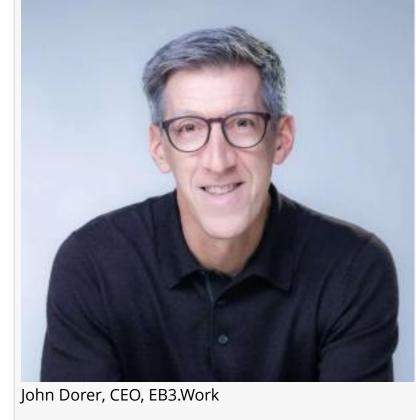
The full analysis, including video explainers and monthly Visa Bulletin updates, is available at EB3.Work: https://eb3.work

Why EB-3 Processing Time Matters Heading Into 2026

The EB-3 employment-based immigrant visa remains one of the most important paths to U.S. permanent residence for skilled, professional, and "Other Workers" applicants whose green cards are sponsored by American employers.

However, as backlogs and processing times have increased, one of the most common questions from candidates worldwide is simply: "How long does EB-3 take?"

Recent independent estimates place the overall EB-3 timeline at roughly 1–3 years for many applicants, with 10+ years of waiting for some heavily backlogged countries such as India and China. EB3.Work's own active case data now shows that for many EB-3 "Other Workers" applicants, the real-world journey from first paperwork to green card often approaches ~48 months, depending on country of birth and Visa Bulletin movement.

John Dorer, CEO, EB3.Work

"Processing time is no longer a footnote – it's the central planning question for every EB-3 family," said John Dorer, CEO of EB3.Work. "Our goal with this report is to replace guesswork with real numbers, explain why the process takes this long, and give people a clear roadmap so they can decide whether EB-3 fits their timeline and long-term goals."

Step 1: PERM Labor Certification – Where the Clock Starts

PERM (Program Electronic Review Management) is the first major step in most EB-3 cases. The employer must prove to the U.S. Department of Labor that there are no qualified U.S. workers ready, willing, and available for the offered job, and that hiring a foreign worker will not negatively affect wages or working conditions.

PERM Timing Data as Employers Plan for 2026

• The DOL's own processing-time report for late 2025 shows average PERM determinations taking around 496 calendar days, or roughly 16 months.

• EB3.Work's August and December 2025 processing updates confirm that applications filed in spring 2024 are being decided in mid- to late-2025, again pointing to a ~16-month PERM wait for many employers.

• If a PERM case is audited, the timeline can extend slightly, depending on how long the petitioner or law firm takes to respond.

For employers facing chronic labor shortages in warehousing, logistics, hospitality, food processing, and assisted living, that long lead time is forcing a shift from short-term hiring to multi-year workforce planning.

"If you know PERM alone can take 16 months, you stop thinking in months and start thinking in hiring classes," Dorer explained. "Our clients treat EB-3 like a long-term infrastructure project: you design it once and benefit from stable staffing for years."

Step 2: I-140 Immigrant Petition – Regular vs. Premium Processing

Once PERM is approved, the employer files Form I-140 (Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker) with USCIS. This step confirms that the job offer is genuine and that the worker meets the requirements.

Publicly available data and independent analyses show that:

• Average I-140 regular-processing times for EB-3 hover between 8–14 months, varying by USCIS service center.

• EB-3 petitions are eligible for premium processing, which promises a USCIS decision in 15 calendar days for an additional fee.

EB3.Work's internal case reviews show that many employers now choose premium processing once PERM is approved, not to "skip the line" on visa numbers, but to lock in I-140 approval quickly and gain more predictability around future steps.

Step 3: Visa Bulletin, Priority Dates & Retrogression

Even after I-140 is approved, an EB-3 applicant cannot receive a green card until a visa number is available for their priority date - the date when the PERM application was filed (or, in some cases, when the I-140 was received).

The monthly Visa Bulletin, published by the U.S. Department of State, lists two charts for each category:

• Final Action Dates (Chart A): when visas may be issued.

• Dates for Filing (Chart B): when applicants may submit documentation or, in some months, file adjustment-of-status applications from inside the U.S.

EB3.Work's December 2025 bulletin analysis highlights several important trends:

- Worldwide EB-3 Skilled/Professional remains retrogressed by roughly two years.

- EB-3 Other Workers shows similar or deeper backlogs due to strong demand and a statutory cap of roughly 10,000 visas per year (including dependents).

- India and China continue to experience the longest waits, with priority dates many years in the past.

This "visa-number" phase is why total EB-3 processing time can stretch beyond the sum of PERM and I-140 alone. Some applicants move quickly once their dates are current; others must wait years for the Visa Bulletin to advance.

Step 4: Adjustment of Status or Consular Processing

When the priority date becomes current, applicants either:

- File Form I-485 for adjustment of status (if they are already in the U.S. in a qualifying status), or

- Complete consular processing at a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad.

Recent summaries suggest:

- Adjustment of status can take approximately 9–24 months, depending on local field-office caseload and security checks.

- Consular processing often runs a bit faster once the case reaches the National Visa Center, with many EB-3 families seeing interview scheduling and final issuance within a few months after visa numbers become available.

Add those final steps to PERM, I-140, and Visa Bulletin waiting time, and EB3.Work's updated estimate of around 48 months from start to finish for many EB-3 Other Workers cases becomes easier to understand.

Practical Guidance for 2026 EB-3 Applicants and Employers

Based on its most recent processing-time analysis, EB3.Work recommends that applicants and employers:

1. Treat EB-3 as a 48 month project. Avoid assuming a one-year timeline unless priority dates are already current and official processing-time tools confirm faster movement.

2. Monitor official sources monthly. Check the Visa Bulletin on travel.state.gov and the DOL's

PERM processing-time page, and use the USCIS processing-time tool for I-140 and I-485.

3. Consider premium processing for I-140. While it doesn't change Visa Bulletin backlogs, it can secure I-140 approval in 15 days and reduce uncertainty before the next step.

4. Prepare documents early. Missing medical exams, incomplete work history, or inconsistent records can trigger requests for evidence and unnecessary delays.

5. Use experienced immigration counsel. An attorney or specialized platform can help avoid avoidable mistakes in PERM recruitment, prevailing-wage determinations, and I-140 filings.

"You can't control the Visa Bulletin, but you can control how clean your file is," Dorer added. "The families that move fastest through the system are usually the ones whose employers started early, kept every form accurate, and responded quickly to any government requests."

EB-3 Processing Time

1. How long does EB-3 take to process in 2026?
For many applicants, the total EB-3 timeline is now about 48 months, combining PERM (often ~16 months), I-140 (8–14 months with regular processing), waiting for a current priority date, and final green-card issuance. Countries with heavy backlogs, such as India and China, face longer waits.

2. What are the most common EB-3 processing delays?
The biggest delays usually come from: (a) long PERM backlogs, (b) PERM audits, (c) slow I-140 processing at certain USCIS service centers, (d) retrogression in the Visa Bulletin, and (e) missing documents or government requests for evidence.

3. Is an EB-3 visa easy to get?
EB-3 is often considered more accessible than some other employment-based categories because many "Other Workers" jobs do not require degrees or advanced credentials. However, approval is not automatic: the employer must complete PERM correctly, pay prevailing wages, and meet all regulatory requirements, and the worker must pass background checks and admissibility reviews.

4. Will EB-3 move forward in 2026?
No one can guarantee future Visa Bulletin movement. However, EB3.Work's analysis notes that proposals such as counting families as a single visa unit and ongoing backlog-reduction efforts could support gradual improvement in coming years if enacted. Applicants should follow legislative news and monthly bulletins closely.

5. What is the success rate of EB-3?
USCIS does not publish a single "EB-3 success rate" number, and outcomes vary by employer,

attorney, documentation quality, and country of chargeability. Many properly prepared EB-3 cases are approved, but denials can occur at PERM, I-140, or the final interview if requirements are not met.

6. Can EB-3 be rejected?
Yes. PERM can be denied if recruitment steps are incorrect or if the Department of Labor finds qualified U.S. workers. I-140 can be denied if the employer or worker does not meet eligibility rules, and visas can be refused at interview for inadmissibility issues or missing evidence.

7. Is the EB-3 interview difficult?
Most EB-3 interviews focus on verifying the job offer, the relationship between employer and worker, security checks, and the accuracy of past forms. For well-prepared cases with honest documentation, the interview is often straightforward, though every consulate and field office has its own procedures.

8. What is an EB-3 priority date?
The priority date is typically the day the PERM application is filed (or, in limited situations, the I-140 filing date). It determines the applicant's place in line for an immigrant-visa number. When the priority date is earlier than the cut-off date in the Visa Bulletin for a given country and category, the case is considered "current."

9. Can I work while waiting for my EB-3 green card?
Many applicants continue working in another status (for example, H-1B or certain EAD categories) while they wait. The EB-3 process itself does not automatically grant the right to work; work authorization depends on the applicant's current status and, later, on any employment authorization documents associated with adjustment of status. Applicants should review options with qualified counsel.

10. How can I reduce my EB-3 waiting period?
Applicants and employers cannot change annual visa quotas, but they can: (a) avoid avoidable delays by preparing documents early, (b) use premium processing for I-140 where appropriate, (c) respond quickly to government requests, and (d) track their case and priority date regularly. In some situations, pursuing alternative categories (such as EB-2) may be discussed with an attorney.

11. Why is USCIS still experiencing long processing times?
USCIS and DOL report that increased filing volumes, staffing constraints, security checks, and post-pandemic backlogs continue to impact processing times for many forms, including I-140 and I-485. Some forms have sped up compared to prior years, while others remain slow.

13. Which countries have the longest EB-3 wait times?
Historically, India and China have experienced the longest EB-3 backlogs because of high demand and per-country annual limits of around 7% of worldwide employment-based visas.

Most other countries share a combined "Rest of World" quota and typically see shorter waits, though timelines can still extend for several years.

About EB3.Work

EB3.Work is a U.S.-based employment and immigration support platform connecting international applicants with verified American employers participating in the EB-3 visa program. The company publishes monthly Visa Bulletin breakdowns, EB-3 processing-time updates, and educational content via its blog and YouTube channel, while supporting

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