
BELIZEAN DIASPORA RETURNEE INCENTIVE PROGRAM



MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND DIASPORA RELATIONS

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RETURNEE GUIDLINES

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Diaspora Returnee Incentive Program has been established to attract Belizeans in the Diaspora who are considering repatriation. This program targets those Belizeans who are possibly considering a return home and have funds to invest in their communities here in Belize, either in housing or business. It also targets those Belizeans who have a reoccurring monthly pension or income from a guaranteed source, which they would be depositing and spending in the local economy. It also foresees economic and social benefits expected, thru the implementation of this program.

BACKGROUND

Cabinet approved the establishment of the Diaspora program at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on September 3rd, 2009 (Cabinet paper 201 of 2009 – Engaging the Belizean Diaspora). This program was designed to send a robust message of welcome from the homeland to the Diaspora and to mobilize good will for their engagement and cooperate for Belize’s development. In keeping with the continued spirit from the Diaspora Office at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; The Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations has taken full responsibility for the Diaspora Returnee Incentive Program proposal that was accepted and approved on May 11th, 2010. The proposal reaffirms the Government’s policy of embracing high value diaspora skills and facilitating access to the Belizean Diaspora, for repatriation and development of our country.

WHO CAN QUALIFY FOR THIS PROGRAM?

Any Diaspora Returnee may be designated as ‘Qualified’ if he/she:

- Is a citizen of the country of Belize
- Has resided for at least 10 consecutive years outside the country of Belize – proven through the presentation of official documentation. (See Appendix A for Official Documentation)

APPLICATION PROCESS

This Program shall be administered by the Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance with the assistance of the Diaspora Relations Unit (DRU).

Each application for the Diaspora Returnee Incentive Program will be processed by the Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance.

The DRIP Applicant will:

- 1.1 Submit a Request for Exemption: Persons interested in the program must submit an 'Application Form for Diaspora Returnee Incentive Program' (attached), to the Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations with the following supporting documentation:
- 1.2 **Supporting Documents:** Applicant must provide all required Supporting Documents:
 - 1.2.1 **Birth Certificate** – a copy of the birth certificate for the applicant
 - 1.2.2 **Marriage Certificate** – A copy of the marriage certificate if married and the spouse is dependent
 - 1.2.3 **Passport** – Clear copy of page with passport picture of applicant and all dependents that have been certified by a Notary Public.
 - 1.2.4 **Proof of Residency** – Outside of Belize for the ten (10) years prior to returning to Belize (See Appendix A for Official Documentation)
- 1.3 **Timeframe:** Applicant must Submit his/her application within one (1) year of arrival into the country of Belize, or
- 1.4 **Submittals before arrival:** Applicant must submit his/her application before coming to the country of Belize, by emailing all required certified documents.
- 1.5 **Terms and Conditions:** Submit a signed copy of the Terms & Conditions provided.
- 1.6 **Legal Responsibilities:** Each applicant is ultimately responsible for the certification of authenticity of every document he/she submits to the Government of Belize in reference to this program.

INCENTIVES

PRIVILEGES AND EXEMPTIONS OF QUALIFIED DIASPORA RETURNEES:

A person who has been designated a Qualified Diaspora Returnee shall be entitled:

- To enter and remain in Belize with his/her dependents in accordance with current immigration laws at the time of entry
- Upon entering Belize, the Diaspora Returnee shall be permitted to import into Belize the following:

- 2.1 Personal Effects: his/her personal effects free of all import duties and taxes (up to \$20,000 USD in value)
- 2.2 Tools of Trade: his/her personal tools of trade (proof of trade such as license of employment in area of expertise) with a maximum value to be determined by the Ministry of Finance.
- 2.3 Personal Transportation: approved means of transportation for his/her personal use free of all import duties and taxes excluding the environment tax.
 - 2.3.1 Upon importing of his/her approved means of transportation, pay only the required 'Environmental Tax' for said vehicle as stipulated by law
 - 2.3.2 Exemption is granted only ONCE to any individual (the returnee's name and information will be kept in a database to track program usage and avert program violations)
 - 2.3.3 No second vehicle will qualify for this exemption (only one vehicle per household allowed)

DISPOSAL AND TRANSFER OF EXEMPTED PROPERTY

In constructing the Policy for the Diaspora Returnee Incentive Program, it is necessary to identify the need for proper disposal of exempted property brought into the country under this program.

- **Transportation Vehicle:** A qualified Diaspora Returnee properly disposes of an approved means of transportation within the meaning of this Program if he/she:

- 3.1 exports the approved means of transportation from Belize; or
- 3.2 sells, gives, leases or otherwise disposes of the approved means of transportation to another person within Belize and proves that all the import duties and taxes have been duly paid thereon; or
- 3.3 proves that the approved means of transportation has been lost or otherwise rendered unserviceable through theft, fire or accident.

- **Property Transfer:** Any approved means of transportation or other property imported into Belize under the provisions of this program free of import duties and taxes (except for household goods and personal effects), which is transferred at any time to another person in Belize (other than to a Qualified Diaspora Returnee) whether by sale, gift, lease or otherwise shall, immediately upon such transfer, be chargeable with all import duties and taxes, and both the transferor and the transferee shall be jointly and severally liable for the payment thereof.

OFFENCE AND PENALTY

Any person who knowingly makes any false declaration or entry to qualify for or retain any exemption or privilege granted under this program, commits an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding five thousand dollars.

APPENDIX A – OFFICIAL DOCUMENTATION

The following documents may be accepted for this program, as proof of residence outside the country of Belize:

- (a) Tax returns
- (b) Social Security reports/summary
- (c) Official school record
- (d) Leasing agreement
- (e) Official records from employer to include either a letter or a check stub
- (f) Certified copy of passport
- (g) DD214 – Military discharge form
- (h) Other official records supporting residency abroad (note these records must be approved by a Director or the CEO of the Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations on a case-by-case basis)

MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND DIASPORA RELATIONS



APPLICATION FORM FOR DIASPORA RETURNEE INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Please mail application to the below address:

Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations
1234 Corner Regent St. and Cockburn Lane
Belize City
Belize, CA

or scan and send to email address: vivienne.acosta@tourism.gov.bz
sandra.mahler@tourism.gov.bz

Contact Information: Tel: 501- 227-9581

Important:

- a) Please read all the instructions carefully before completing this form.
- b) All particulars must be fully stated in block letters.
- c) Incorrect or incomplete statements may result in delay or refusal of the application. If any error is discovered after status has been granted the applicant's status may be revoked.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Full Name

2. Name at Birth: **(If Different from Above)**

3. Date of Birth: Month: Day: Year:

4. Place and Country of Birth: 5. Nationality:

6. Permanent Address:(**in full**)

7. Intended Address in Belize: (**in full**)

8. Passport Number: 9. Place of Issue:

10. Date Issued: 11. Expiration Date:

12. Telephone: 13. Fax:

14. Email:

15. Marital Status:

Single Divorced
 Married Widowed

16. Sex:

Male Female

17. Contact Information if applicant is processed by an agent:

ADDRESSES FOR THE PAST 10YEARS- (Must provide supporting documents)

18. Details of Addresses for the past ten (10) years (prior to return to Belize). Attached copy of Proof of Address for EACH address.

Address	City/State	From	To

OTHER PERSONAL INFORMATION

19. Will you import any personal effects into Belize?

Yes NO

20. If YES, state the estimated value:

1. Will you import a means of transportation into Belize? YES NO

2. If YES, State: **Type:** _____ **Year:** _____
Make: _____ **Model:** _____

3. Education of Applicant (Number of Years Completed) PRIMARY _____ YEARS _____

Secondary _____ YEARS _____ TERTIARY _____ YEARS _____

4. Will you be importing Tools of Trade into Belize? YES NO

Type of Trade: _____ (Attach copy of Proof of trade)

SIGNATURES

I certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief, the particulars given in this application are correct.

Signature of Applicant: _____

Name in Block Letters: _____

Date: _____

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. All qualified Diaspora Returnees must adhere to the general procedures cited by the Customers Department for the clearing of all personal and household effects including "Mode of Transportation".
2. Qualified Diaspora Returnees within this program must inform the Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations regarding any changes stated on the application form. Failure to do so may result in the revocation of applicant's status.
3. All benefits provided by this program will be exclusively used by the Qualified Diaspora Returnees.
4. The Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations has the authority to carry out any investigation with respect to the validity of any document provided by the applicant under the program.
5. All documents presented to the Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations become the property of the Ministry.

SIGNATURES

I hereby accept the above terms and conditions as they pertain to the Diaspora Returnee Incentive Program.

Signature of Applicant:

Date:

Name in block Letters:

Signature of Witness:

Date:

Name in Block Letters:

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Diaspora Focal Point: _____

Date Received: _____

Approved **Disapproved**

Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations: _____

Date Received: _____ **Date Approved:** _____

Comments: _____

Approved **Disapproved**

Ministry of Finance: _____

Date Received: _____ **Date Approved:** _____

Date Certificate (Letter) of Approved issued: _____