



# New arrangements for Australians applying for an APEC Business Travel Card

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (the department) has administered the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Business Travel Card scheme in Australia since 1998. The APEC Business Travel Card scheme was specifically established to support frequent business travellers.

In June 2010, the department amended the eligibility criteria for Australia's APEC Business Travel Card 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 APEC Business Travel Card 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 Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Chief Financial Officer (CFO), 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 lives 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:** [www.immi.gov.au/skilled/business/apec/eligibility.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/business/apec/eligibility.htm)

### **How were the new criteria implemented?**

The new criteria were 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 enabled applications to be lodged by applicants whose business did 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).

Stage Two commenced on 1 November 2012 and enables applications to be lodged by applicants whose business requires certification by an 'approved body'.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Can I apply for an APEC Business Travel Card under the new arrangements?**

Any Australian passport holder who is an employee of a business that is one of the following can apply for an APEC Business Travel Card:

- 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
- certified by an 'approved body'.

There are other requirements, including the need to travel frequently in the region, that must be met. Please read the website for more detailed information on the criteria.

**See:** [www.immi.gov.au/skilled/business/apec/eligibility.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/business/apec/eligibility.htm)

Unless you are the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), 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.

### **What is an ‘approved body’?**

For the purposes of the APEC Business Travel Card (APEC Business Travel Card) scheme, an ‘approved body’ is an Australian national peak business body who the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship has approved to certify that a business is genuinely engaged in trade and investment within the APEC region.

A list of the current ‘approved bodies’ and their contact details is available.

**See:** [www.immi.gov.au/skilled/business/apec/eligibility.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/business/apec/eligibility.htm)

### **What does the approved body certify and why?**

The business certification process undertaken by an approved body seeks to confirm that the business entity is appropriately registered in an APEC economy and is genuinely engaged in trade and investment within the APEC region.

This is to ensure that only genuine business entities have access to the APEC Business Travel Card for its owners and employees. This recognises that Australia’s approval of an applicant is dependent upon certainty that the business they represent is genuine.

This is a key integrity feature of the APEC Business Travel Card scheme and is heavily relied upon by all participating APEC economies. Any perceived lack of integrity in Australia’s arrangements by other APEC economies would be harmful to our international standing in APEC.

### **How does the approved body process differ from the old eligibility criteria for small and medium businesses?**

A review of the previous eligibility arrangements concluded that there was scope for the eligibility criteria to better recognise the broad range of employees that businesses rely on to conduct trade and investment activities on their behalf, and to ensure that small to medium sized businesses enjoyed the same level of access to the APEC Business Travel Card as large global companies.

Small and medium businesses are eligible to apply for certification from an ‘approved body’ under the new arrangements. For established businesses there is no requirement that the business show a specified turnover figure.

## **How do I apply for certification from an approved body?**

If you are an employee, your CEO/CFO is responsible to provide the information about your business's certification. You should contact your CEO/CFO in the first instance to obtain the necessary information (for example, certification number) to include in your APEC Business Travel Card application form.

If you are a CEO/CFO and your business requires certification by an 'approved body', you will need to contact an approved body and make an application for your business. The approved body will provide more information including the form to be completed, payment methods and other details.

A list of the current 'approved bodies' and their contact details is available.

**See:** [www.immi.gov.au/skilled/business/apec/eligibility.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/business/apec/eligibility.htm)

## **Does my business have to be certified?**

Only if your business is not listed with Forbes Global 2000 or has not received an EMDG or has not been a national finalist in the Australia Export Awards.

## **Does this mean there are two separate fees for the card?**

If your business requires certification from an approved body, then you will need to pay an application fee for that service to the approved body.

The individual (employee) then applies for the APEC Business Travel Card which incurs an application fee.

Your business will only need certification from an approved body one time during a three year period as the certification will be valid for three years. During this time, multiple eligible employees will be able to apply for an APEC Business Travel Card citing this certification.

## **Will an application fee for the certification by the approved body be tax deductible?**

The Australian Taxation Office has confirmed that businesses completing the application form will be able to claim the fee as a tax deduction as it is a business expense.

For more information on the new arrangements, please read information on the departmental website.

**See:** [www.immi.gov.au/skilled/business/apec/eligibility.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/business/apec/eligibility.htm)