**CASE MANAGER GUIDE: ADVISING CLIENTS ON RECOMMENDER SELECTION**

**Introduction** As a GreenPath Immigration Case Manager, one of your responsibilities is to guide clients in selecting the best recommenders for their I-140 (**NIW, EB1A, EB1B**) petitions. While USCIS does not impose strict rules on recommenders, our experience indicates that selecting the right recommenders strategically can strengthen a petition. This guide outlines key factors to consider when advising clients on recommender selection.

1. **Recommended Number of Letters**
2. We advise clients to submit no more than **4 recommendation letters**, as excessive letters can weaken the case by diverting focus from objective evidence such as citations and publications.
3. In most cases, we suggest **1 dependent** and **3 independent recommenders**.
4. In specific cases, **2 dependent** and **2 independent recommenders** may be acceptable, but avoid exceeding these numbers.
5. **Purpose of Recommendation Letters**
6. Provide an **authoritative perspective** on the significance and impact of the client’s work. The content of the letter and the ability of the recommender to directly attest to the utility of the client’s work are more important than the recommender’s overall reputation.
7. Reinforce and support other documentary evidence included in the petition.
8. Cannot be used as primary evidence (e.g., citation counts must be proven with a Google Scholar printout, not letters).
9. Letters should be detailed and substantive rather than generic endorsements.

1. **Types of Recommenders** There are two categories of recommenders:
2. **Dependent Recommenders:**

* Individuals who have worked directly with the client, such as mentors, coauthors, supervisors, or colleagues from the same institution.
* Considered less persuasive by USCIS, so we recommend limiting dependent recommenders to **1-2 per case**.

1. **Independent Recommenders:**

* Individuals who have never worked directly with the client but are familiar with their work.
* Ideally, they should have cited or used the client’s research.
* Strengthen the case by demonstrating that the client’s work is recognized beyond their immediate network.
* We encourage at least **2 independent recommenders** per case.

1. **Special Considerations for Selecting Recommenders**
2. **Federal Employees:** Federal employees may sign letters but may face restrictions on using official titles or agency letterhead. It is their responsibility to verify their ability to sign.
3. **Geographical Diversity:** Letters from recommenders across different U.S. states or international locations can highlight the broad impact of the client’s work.
4. **Clients Without Published Research:** Industry professionals should seek recommenders who have directly used or implemented their work, such as project managers, clients, or contractors.
5. **Non-Scientists (Artists, Journalists, Musicians, etc.):** The best recommenders are those who can attest to the client’s influence in their field, including critics, industry experts, or event judges.
6. **Process for Submitting Recommender Information**
7. Clients should use the **Recommendation Letter** tab to submit up to **3 dependent** and **6 independent recommenders** for evaluation.
8. Avoid submitting formatted documents like Word or PDF; using the tab allows for easier modifications and tracking.
9. Ensure clients provide detailed information about each recommender so we can determine their suitability.
10. If a proposed recommender declines, we can quickly consult the submitted list for a replacement.
11. **Best Practices for Ensuring Strong Letters**
12. **Quality over Prestige:** A recommender who can provide a detailed and enthusiastic endorsement is more valuable than a well-known figure offering a generic letter.
13. **Real-World Impact:** Encourage clients to select recommenders who can discuss how their work has influenced the field or led to practical applications.
14. **Avoid Weak Recommenders:** Generally, avoid selecting students or postdocs unless they are well-established professionals.
15. **NIW Cases:** At least half of the recommenders should be based in the U.S. to demonstrate the national importance of the client’s work.
16. **EB1A/EB1B Cases:** At least half of the recommenders should be international to demonstrate global recognition.
17. **Example Recommenders**
18. **Ph.D. or master’s advisor** – Dependent; they have worked directly with the client.
19. **A coauthor of several papers** – Dependent; they are considered a collaborator.
20. **A researcher from another country who has never collaborated** – Independent.
21. **A researcher at the same institution but different department** – Dependent.
22. **A conference acquaintance who has never worked or studied with the client** – Independent.
23. **A professor from a different university who cited the client’s work** – Independent.
24. **For Clients Who Work in Industry or Do Not Have Published Research**
25. Clients in industry may rely more on dependent recommenders if their work is confidential.
26. Strong independent recommenders include clients, project managers, or industry peers who have implemented the client’s research.

***Example Recommenders:***

* *A project manager who supervised a research project.*
* *A client who used the research for product development.*
* *A former employee of the client’s company who can discuss the significance of their work.*

1. **For Non-Scientist Clients (Economists, Artists, Musicians, Journalists, etc.)**
2. Recommenders should include individuals who can speak on the impact of the client’s work, such as critics, judges, and industry professionals.

***Example Recommenders:***

* *A journalist who wrote about the client’s work.*
* *A competition judge who reviewed the client’s contributions.*
* *An industry professional who has implemented the client’s work.*