



**U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services**

**Non-Precedent Decision of the  
Administrative Appeals Office**

In Re: 36222104

Date: FEB. 05, 2025

Appeal of Nebraska Service Center Decision

Form I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Workers (Extraordinary Ability)

The Petitioner, an architect and urban designer, seeks classification as an alien of extraordinary ability. *See* Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act) section 203(b)(1)(A), 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(1)(A). This first preference classification makes immigrant visas available to those who can demonstrate their extraordinary ability through sustained national or international acclaim and whose achievements have been recognized in their field through extensive documentation.

The Director of the Nebraska Service Center denied the petition, concluding the Petitioner did not establish she satisfied at least three of the initial evidentiary criteria. The matter is now before us on appeal.

The Petitioner bears the burden of proof to demonstrate eligibility by a preponderance of the evidence. *Matter of Chawathe*, 25 I&N Dec. 369, 375-76 (AAO 2010). We review the questions in this matter de novo. *Matter of Christo's, Inc.*, 26 I&N Dec. 537, 537 n.2 (AAO 2015). Upon de novo review, we will withdraw the Director's decision and remand the matter for entry of a new decision consistent with the following analysis.

Section 203(b)(1)(A) of the Act makes immigrant visas available to aliens with extraordinary ability in the sciences, arts, education, business, or athletics which has been demonstrated by sustained national or international acclaim and whose achievements have been recognized in the field through extensive documentation, provided that the alien seeks to enter the United States to continue work in the area of extraordinary ability, and the alien's entry into the United States will substantially benefit prospectively the United States.

The term "extraordinary ability" refers only to those individuals in "that small percentage who have risen to the very top of the field of endeavor." 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(2). The implementing regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3) sets forth a multi-part analysis. First, a petitioner can demonstrate sustained acclaim and the recognition of achievements in the field through a one-time achievement (that is, a major, internationally recognized award) or qualifying documentation that meets at least three of the ten categories listed at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(i) – (x) (including items such as awards, published material in certain media, and scholarly articles).

Where a petitioner meets these initial evidence requirements, we then consider the totality of the material provided in a final merits determination and assess whether the record shows sustained national or international acclaim and demonstrates that the individual is among the small percentage at the very top of the field of endeavor. *See Kazarian v. USCIS*, 596 F.3d 1115 (9th Cir. 2010) (discussing a two-part review where the documentation is first counted and then, if fulfilling the required number of criteria, considered in the context of a final merits determination); *see also Visinscaia v. Beers*, 4 F. Supp. 3d 126, 131-32 (D.D.C. 2013); *Rijal v. USCIS*, 772 F. Supp. 2d 1339 (W.D. Wash. 2011).

Because the Petitioner has not indicated or established receipt of a major, internationally recognized award, she must satisfy at least three of the alternate regulatory criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(i)-(x). The Petitioner initially claimed to have satisfied seven of these criteria, but the Director determined the Petitioner fulfilled only two: judging the work of others at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(iv) and authorship of scholarly articles at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(vi). On appeal, the Petitioner maintains that she meets five additional criteria, relating to membership, display, critical role, high salary, and commercial success.<sup>1</sup>

Upon review of the record, we agree with the Petitioner that she satisfies the high salary criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(ix).<sup>2</sup> The Petitioner has therefore overcome the basis for denial of the petition through fulfillment of three regulatory criteria. Nevertheless, granting the third initial criterion does not suffice to establish eligibility for classification as an individual of extraordinary ability. The Director must undertake a final merits determination to analyze the Petitioner's accomplishments and weigh the totality of the evidence to determine if they establish that she has sustained national or international acclaim in the field and that she is one of the small percentage who has risen to the very top of the field of endeavor. *See* section 203(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Act; 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(2), (3); *see also Kazarian*, 596 F.3d at 1119-20.

Because the Petitioner has overcome the stated reason for denial, we remand this proceeding so that the Director can render a final merits determination.

**ORDER:** The Director's decision is withdrawn. The matter is remanded for the entry of a new decision consistent with the foregoing analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> The Petitioner asserted that she meets the commercial success criterion through the submission of comparable evidence. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(4).

<sup>2</sup> The record includes the Petitioner's 2021 income tax form and compensation data for architects and urban planners indicating she has received significantly high remuneration relative to others in the field.