

Mobility: Immigration alert

September 2021



China

New, stricter requirements for Official Invitation (PU) letters sponsored by companies based in Shanghai

Executive summary

The Chinese Government recently implemented heightened application requirements for non-Chinese nationals seeking to obtain Official Invitation (“PU”) Letters sponsored by companies based in Shanghai. PU letters are now available to dependent family members of foreign assignees who are sponsored by Shanghai-based companies.

Background

The Chinese authorities started requesting PU letters in support of immigration applications in April 2020 following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, to manage the entry of non-Chinese citizens to China. The new changes are in effect in most districts in Shanghai, except for the Pudong New District (“Pudong”), where the changes will go into effect on 22 September 2021.

Assignees and business visitors

Non-Chinese nationals aged 18 or older who enter China as business visitors or are sponsored/assigned to work in China by Shanghai-based companies, are now required to provide proof of vaccination as part of their application to obtain a PU letter. These applicants must submit a certificate proving that they received all required doses of a vaccine approved in China or by the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO). The certificates must include the name of the vaccine and the date(s) on which it was administered.

Applicants must now also submit their travel history for the 28 days immediately preceding the date of submission of their PU Letter application, as part of their application. Applicants who traveled to high-risk locations in the 28

days preceding the PU Letter application date may be subject to additional scrutiny and longer processing times. PU Letter application requirements vary slightly depending on the district in Shanghai where the sponsoring company is located. Applicants traveling to certain districts (e.g., the Lin Gang Free Trade Zone) must submit signed declarations and agree to remain in their current jurisdiction, and not to travel to other jurisdictions, prior to their travel to China.

Dependent family members of assignees

Dependent family members of assignees who are sponsored by companies in Shanghai are now eligible to obtain PU Letters for the first time in 2021. Dependent family members are defined as married, opposite-sex spouses of primary assignees, and children of primary assignees under the age of 18. Dependent spouses are subject to the same travel history and vaccination requirements as primary applicants. Dependent children must provide their travel history but are not required to be vaccinated. Dependents must still provide proof of their relationship with the primary assignee (e.g., marriage or birth certificate). Dependent family members of business visitors are not eligible to obtain PU letters.

Requests submitted in Pudong before 10 September 2021

Individuals who were sponsored to obtain PU Letters by companies in Pudong and had an application in process as of 10 September 2021 must submit new applications on or after 22 September 2021 and include their travel histories and proof of vaccination. The applications submitted on or before 10 September 2021 are currently on hold and will be canceled without being processed.

The requirement to submit a new PU Letter application does not apply to individuals who are sponsored by companies located in the Lin Gang or Wai Gao Qiao Free Trade Zones. These applicants are not required to submit new PU Letter applications if they submitted their applications on or before 10 September 2021.

Exemption from the PU Letter requirement

Foreign assignees and their dependent family members, as well as business visitors, are not required to obtain PU Letters if they are fully vaccinated with a vaccine produced in China (e.g., Sinopharm, Sinovac), irrespective of the location where the Chinese vaccine was administered.

Key steps

The new changes impact Shanghai-based companies as well as foreign visitors and assignees, who are now subject to heightened application requirements and will need to incur additional time and expenses to comply with the new rules. However, the new change positively impacts foreign assignees, as their qualifying family members may now join them in China for the first time since November 2020. EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, please contact any of our immigration professionals.

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ey.com

Ben Fan

Partner - People Advisory Services, Global Immigration
Tel: + 86 21 2228 2257
Email: ben.fan@cn.ey.com

Sheree Cang

Associate Partner - People Advisory Services, Global Immigration
Tel: + 86 21 2228 3661
Email: sheree.cang@cn.ey.com