



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

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

In Re: 21441044

Date: SEP. 27, 2022

Appeal of Nebraska Service Center Decision

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

The Petitioner, a [REDACTED] coach, seeks classification as an individual 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 that although the Petitioner established that he satisfies the initial evidentiary requirements for this classification, he did not establish, as required, that he has sustained national or international acclaim and is among the small percentage at the very top of his field. The matter is now before us on appeal.

In these proceedings, it is the Petitioner's burden to establish eligibility for the requested benefit by a preponderance of the evidence. *See* section 291 of the Act; *Matter of Chawathe*, 25 I&N Dec. 369, 375 (AAO 2010). Upon *de novo* review, we will withdraw the Director's decision and remand the matter for the entry of a new decision consistent with the following analysis.

**I. LAW**

Section 203(b)(1) of the Act makes visas available to immigrants with extraordinary ability if:

- (i) the alien has 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,
- (ii) the alien seeks to enter the United States to continue work in the area of extraordinary ability, and
- (iii) 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 international recognition of their achievements in the field through a one-time achievement (that is, a major, internationally recognized award). If the petitioner does not submit this evidence, then they must provide sufficient qualifying documentation that they meet at least three of the ten criteria 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 establishes that they meet 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).

## II. ANALYSIS

The record reflects that the Petitioner is a [redacted] coach. He states that he intends to continue his work as a [redacted] coach in the United States.

As the Petitioner has not indicated or established that he has received a major, internationally recognized award, he must demonstrate that he meets the initial evidence requirements by satisfying at least three of the ten criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(i)-(x). The Petitioner claimed that he could meet seven of these ten criteria, and the Director determined that he met three of them. Specifically, the Director concluded that the Petitioner satisfied the criteria related to lesser nationally or internationally recognized prizes or awards for excellence, published materials in professional publications or major media, and judging the work of others in the same or an allied field of specialization. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(i), (iii), and (iv).

The Director determined that the Petitioner claimed, but did not establish, that he meets the criteria related to membership in associations that require outstanding achievements of their members, original contributions of major significance in his field, display of his work in the field at artistic exhibitions and showcases, and leading or critical roles with organizations that have a distinguished reputation. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(ii), (v), (vii), and (viii).

Because the Petitioner demonstrated that he met the initial evidence requirements, the Director proceeded to a final merits determination. In a final merits determination, the Director must analyze all of a petitioner’s accomplishments and weigh the totality of the evidence to determine if their successes are sufficient to demonstrate that they have extraordinary ability in the field of endeavor. *See* section 203(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Act; 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(2) and (3); *see also Kazarian*, 596 F.3d at 1119-20.

On appeal, the Petitioner asserts that the Director overlooked or discounted the extensive evidence submitted pertaining to his sustained acclaim, and we agree with that assertion. Here, the Director's final merits analysis did not consider the record in its entirety and is lacking a detailed discussion of the evidence provided in support of the petition. Although the Petitioner submitted evidence relating to seven of the criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(i)-(x), the final merits discussion only briefly addresses evidence relating to the three criteria that the Director determined the Petitioner had satisfied, rather than considering the evidence in its totality. The final merits analysis narrowly focuses on the criteria relating to lesser awards, published material, and judging, and does not assess whether the submitted evidence in support of those criteria shows sustained national or international acclaim. For instance, the Petitioner on appeal highlights each individual award he has received, and argues that his receipt of such "prestigious medals at high-level events before the filing of the petition" is indicative of his sustained international acclaim. However, the Director's final merits analysis simply states that the Petitioner won "won six awards between the years of 2011 and 2020" without any further analysis or discussion of those awards.

In addition to narrowly focusing on the above-referenced criteria, the Director's final merits analysis failed to consider the totality of the material provided in support of the petition. The record includes multiple expert opinion letters from U.S. professionals, past employers, and industry experts that address the Petitioner's standing in the field, evidence related to his professional memberships, and evidence of his roles and contributions as a [redacted] coach. Because the Director did not consider any of this evidence in the final merits analysis, the decision did not sufficiently address why the Petitioner has not demonstrated his eligibility for the requested classification.

An officer must fully explain the reasons for denying a visa petition in order to allow a petitioner a fair opportunity to contest the decision and to allow us an opportunity for meaningful appellate review. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 103.3(a)(1)(i); *see also Matter of M-P-*, 20 I&N Dec. 786 (BIA 1994) (finding that a decision must fully explain the reasons for denying a motion to allow the respondent a meaningful opportunity to challenge the determination on appeal). Here, as explained above, the Director did not adequately explain the reasons for denial of the petition.

Accordingly, we will withdraw the Director's decision and remand the matter for further review and entry of a new decision. As the Director already determined that the Petitioner satisfied at least three criteria, the Director should evaluate whether the Petitioner has demonstrated, by a preponderance of the evidence, his sustained national or international acclaim and whether the record demonstrates that he is one of the small percentage at the very top of the field of endeavor, and that his achievements have been recognized in the field through extensive documentation. *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. The new decision should include an analysis of the totality of the record, including additional evidence the Petitioner has provided on appeal and the evidence submitted in support of all claimed initial evidentiary criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(i)-(x).

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