

PUBLICATION

U.S. Takes Actions to Attract STEM Talent

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On January 21, 2022, the Biden Administration announced that it would take actions to attract STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) talent to the U.S. in furtherance of its efforts to remove barriers to legal immigration as provided in the Executive Order issued February 1, 2021.

U.S. agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), BridgeUSA and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) will work together to further attract those in the STEM fields STEM.

These initiatives include, but are not limited to:

- The [Early Career STEM Research Initiative](#) seeks to connect BridgeUSA exchange sponsors with interested U.S.-based STEM host organizations.
- The [Academic Training Extensions](#) for J-1 College and University Students allows students who are pursuing (or have recently completed) STEM-related studies the opportunity to extend their academic training to a maximum of 36 months instead of the previous cap of 18 months.
- DHS has added 22 new fields of study to the STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) program. Examples include bioenergy, general forestry, earth systems science, economics and computer science, mathematical economics, and business analytics. A full list of the new fields of study will be communicated through a [Federal Registry](#) notice.
- DHS is issuing a USCIS policy manual update to clarify how the national interest waiver can be used for persons with advanced degrees in STEM in order to promote efficient and effective processing by USCIS.

With the announcement of these actions, DHS aims to provide predictability and clarity for STEM scholars, students, researchers and experts.

If you have any questions on this matter, please contact one of the authors or any member of Baker Donelson's [Immigration Team](#).