MARRIAGE-BASED GREEN CARD PREPARATION TOOLKIT

PREMIUM ENGLISH EDITION

A practical organization and interview-preparation system



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More than three decades of experience

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How to Use This Toolkit

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This toolkit provides general educational information only. It is not legal advice, does not determine eligibility, does not replace individualized representation, and its purchase does not create an attorney-client relationship. Do not file or travel based only on this publication.

Work through the sections in order. Mark every uncertain fact for legal review. Keep this toolkit separate from the filing copy because it contains private notes.

Included Parts

- Part 1 - Choosing the correct process
- Part 2 - Screening for legal issues
- Part 3 - Building the document file
- Part 4 - Financial sponsorship
- Part 5 - Forms and filing package
- Part 6 - After filing
- Part 7 - Interview preparation
- Part 8 - Templates and trackers

Current-information rule
Always verify current form editions, filing addresses, fees, and instructions at uscis.gov immediately before filing.

Professional-Responsibility Safeguards

Read these boundaries before using the toolkit.

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1. Start With the Correct Process

A marriage to a U.S. citizen or permanent resident does not, by itself, determine where or how the foreign national may apply. The correct procedure depends on immigration history, location, admissibility, visa availability, and prior proceedings.

- Adjustment of status generally means applying for permanent residence from inside the United States.
- Consular processing generally means completing immigrant-visa processing abroad after petition approval and National Visa Center processing.
- A person should not assume that marriage cures unlawful entry, status violations, fraud, prior removal, or criminal issues.
- Do not leave the United States to pursue consular processing without first assessing unlawful-presence and removal risks. You could be barred from returning for 10 years!



Marriage and family-based immigration

2. Preliminary Process Worksheet

Record the facts before discussing strategy.

- Petitioner: U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident?
- Beneficiary: inside or outside the United States?
- If inside: last entry date, place, status, and inspection/parole information.
- Any prior entries without inspection, removals, voluntary departures, or border returns?
- Any pending or completed immigration-court case?
- Any prior petition, application, denial, fraud finding, or false claim to U.S. citizenship?

Question / item	Your information

3. Red-Flag Screening

A “yes” answer does not always mean the case is impossible. It means the issue should be reviewed before filing. You should consult with an Immigration Attorney if you answer yes.

- Entry without inspection or use of another person’s documents.
- Unlawful presence, unauthorized employment, or status violations.
- Prior removal order, expedited removal, voluntary departure, or missed hearing.
- Arrest, citation, conviction, probation, expungement, or controlled-substance issue.
- Prior marriage petition, suspected marriage fraud, or inconsistent relationship history.
- Misrepresentation to immigration, a consular officer, or another government agency.
- False claim to U.S. citizenship, unlawful voting, or use of U.S. citizen documents.
- Prior smuggling allegation, gang allegation, or immigration-related civil penalty.
- Public Charge - benefit, sponsorship, domicile, tax, or household-size complications.

4. Complete Immigration Timeline

Create one master chronology. Use approximate dates only when necessary and label them as approximate.

- Every entry and departure, including brief trips.
- Every visa, I-94, parole document, EAD, TPS, DACA, and green card.
- Every USCIS, DOS, CBP, ICE, EOIR, and BIA filing or decision.
- Every address, school, and job requested by the applicable forms.
- Every arrest or citation and its final disposition.

Question / item	Your information

5. Identity and Civil Documents

Obtain legible copies and protect the originals.

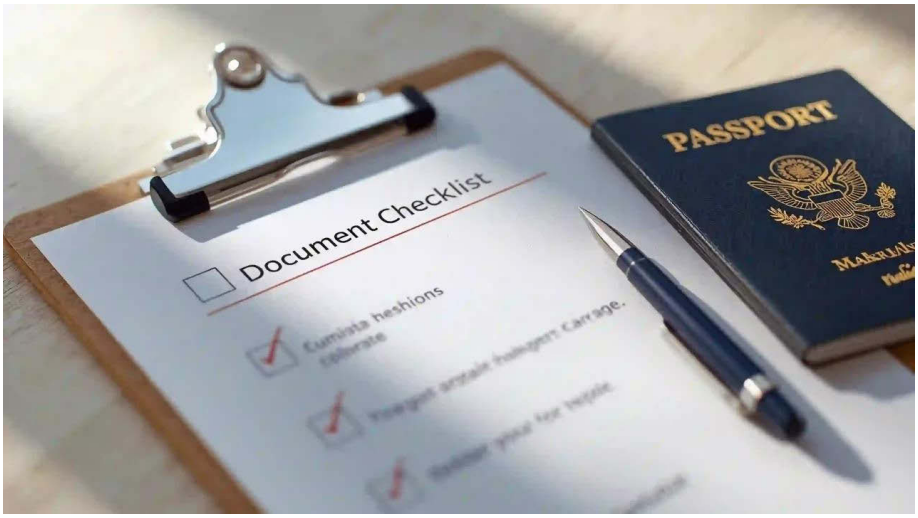
- Passports, passport biographic pages, visas, entry stamps, and I-94 records.
- Birth certificates and certified English translations.
- Marriage certificate and proof that every prior marriage legally ended.
- Court-ordered name changes, adoption documents, and relevant custody records.
- Two compliant passport photographs when required by current form instructions.



6. Petitioner’s Core File

The petitioner’s evidence should establish identity, status, relationship, and sponsorship readiness.

- Proof of U.S. citizenship or permanent residence.
- Government-issued identification.
- Marriage certificate and prior-divorce records.
- Tax transcripts and financial records for the sponsorship analysis.
- Proof of U.S. domicile when relevant.
- Evidence of the relationship from courtship through the present.



7. Beneficiary’s Core File

The beneficiary’s file must be internally consistent across all forms.

- Passport, birth certificate, translations, visa, I-94, and entry evidence.
- Prior immigration filings and all government notices.
- Certified criminal records for every incident, including dismissed cases.
- Employment, address, travel, family, and organization histories.
- Medical-examination planning and vaccination records. (From an authorized civil surgeon and only when ready to file)



8. Building Strong Marriage Evidence

USCIS evaluates whether the marriage was entered in good faith, not merely whether a marriage certificate exists. Organize evidence by time period and category.

- Shared residence: leases, deeds, mail, utilities, and identification showing the same address.
- Shared finances: joint accounts, credit, insurance, taxes, and household expenses.
- Shared responsibility: children, medical decisions, beneficiaries, vehicles, pets, and emergency contacts.
- Social recognition: photographs over time, travel, invitations, messages, and affidavits with personal detail.
- Continuity: evidence from courtship, wedding, early marriage, and current life.



9. Evidence Quality Test

More pages do not always mean stronger evidence. Select records that are authentic, dated, understandable, and spread across the relationship.

- Strong evidence usually reflects genuine shared obligations or long-term conduct.
- Moderate evidence may corroborate the relationship but should not carry the case alone.
- Weak evidence includes newly created documents, repetitive photographs, and statements with no detail.
- Explain legitimate gaps, such as work separation, military service, schooling, caregiving, or financial limitations.



10. Relationship Timeline

Prepare a shared narrative without memorizing a script.

- When and how you met.
- First in-person meeting and development of the relationship.
- Important trips, holidays, family introductions, and decisions.
- Engagement, marriage planning, ceremony, and reception.
- Moves, jobs, children, major purchases, difficulties, and future plans.

Question / item	Your information

11. Affidavit of Support Overview

Form I-864 is a legally enforceable sponsorship contract in most family-based cases. The correct household size, income, domicile, and supporting evidence matter.

- Identify the petitioning sponsor even when a joint sponsor will be used.
- Calculate household size under the current instructions, not merely the number of people living at the address.
- Use the current poverty guidelines and USCIS Fee Calculator/resources at the time of filing.
- Analyze current income, tax history, assets, household-member income, and joint sponsorship separately. If you do not earn enough you will need a cosponsor.
- Do not assume an extension, amended return, or bank balance automatically solves a deficiency.

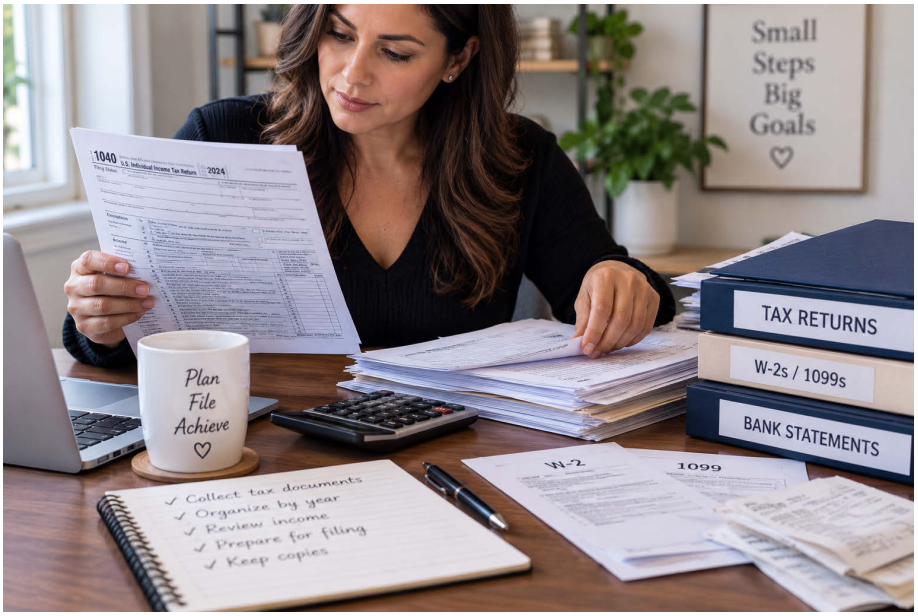


Financial sponsorship can involve the whole household

12. Sponsor Document Checklist

Organize financial proof by person and year.

- Most recent IRS tax transcript and any additional years strategically needed.
- W-2s, 1099s, schedules, or returns when relevant.
- Recent pay statements and a detailed employment-verification letter.
- Proof of citizenship or permanent residence and proof of domicile.
- Evidence supporting assets, ownership, valuation, and liabilities when assets are used.
- Separate complete packet for each joint sponsor or qualifying household member.



13. Household-Size Worksheet

Write each person only after checking the applicable I-864 instructions.

- Sponsor.
- Principal intending immigrant.
- Other sponsored immigrants immigrating at the same time when applicable.
- Sponsor’s spouse and qualifying dependent children.
- Tax dependents.
- Certain previously sponsored immigrants whose support obligation has not ended.
- Household members whose income is being included.

Question / item	Your information

14. Medical Examination Planning

Use only a USCIS-authorized civil surgeon for adjustment cases and follow current USCIS instructions regarding when and how to submit Form I-693.

- Locate an authorized civil surgeon through USCIS.
- Bring identification, vaccination records, and requested medical history.
- Do not open a sealed envelope if the civil surgeon provides one.
- Confirm that names and biographical information are correct.
- Keep proof of the examination and follow counsel’s filing instructions.



15. Form Consistency Audit

Before signing, compare every form line by line.

- Names, aliases, dates of birth, and A-Numbers match.
- All addresses and employment dates are complete and consistent.
- Entries, exits, visas, and I-94 information agree.
- Marriages, divorces, children, and parents are listed consistently.
- Arrests, citations, memberships, prior filings, and immigration violations are disclosed accurately.
- Blank answers, “none,” “N/A,” and continuation pages follow current instructions.



16. Filing Package Assembly

A clean package helps the reviewer understand what was filed. Always follow the current edition and filing instructions for each form.

- Cover letter or index identifying forms and supporting exhibits.
- Correct signatures, edition dates, page counts, and filing address.
- Correct fee method and amount verified immediately before filing.
- Separate labeled sections for each form and its evidence.
- Legible copies, complete translations, and translator certifications.
- Complete duplicate retained by the applicant.



17. After Filing

Create a control system on the day the package is delivered.

- Save courier delivery proof and the complete filing copy.
- Check receipt notices for spelling, address, category, and receipt-number errors.
- Track biometrics, online-account notices, RFEs, interview notices, and deadlines.
- Report address changes through the correct USCIS procedure; USPS forwarding alone is not enough.
- Consult counsel before international travel, criminal dispositions, or major changes to the case.



18. Requests for Evidence

An RFE is a formal request, not a casual invitation. Answer the exact request by the stated deadline and in the required manner. If you receive on you should consult with an Immigration Attorney.

- Read the entire notice, including the deadline and mailing address.
- Create a numbered response matching each requested item.
- Explain unavailable evidence and provide credible alternatives when appropriate.
- Do not send an incomplete response merely to meet the deadline without legal analysis.
- Keep a complete copy and delivery confirmation.
- You should consult with an Immigration Attorney.



19. Interview Preparation Principles

Preparation means knowing your own history and the filed record, not memorizing identical answers.

- Review every filed form and supporting document.
- Identify errors or changes that must be disclosed and corrected.
- Bring originals and updated relationship and financial evidence.
- Answer truthfully, directly, and only to the question asked.
- Do not guess; say when you do not know or remember.
- Ask for clarification if a question is unclear.



20. Day-of-Interview Checklist

Follow the appointment notice and local instructions.

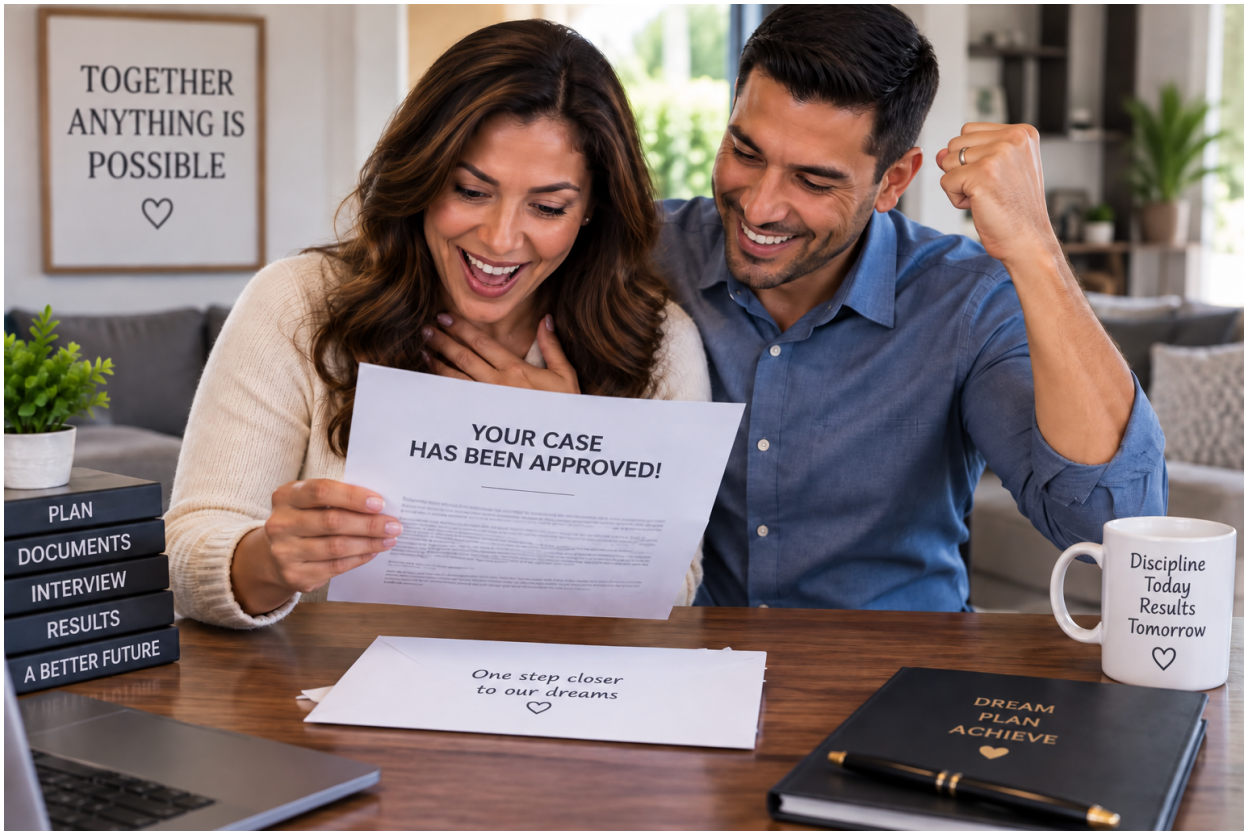
- Government-issued identification and appointment notice.
- Original civil documents and certified translations.
- Updated evidence organized by category and date.
- Updated sponsor evidence when appropriate.
- Interpreter when permitted and needed.
- Attorney attendance arrangements confirmed in advance.
- Travel time, parking, security restrictions, and childcare planned.



21. After Approval

Approval may create immediate and future obligations.

- Review the card for errors and preserve the approval notice.
- Update Social Security and employment records when appropriate.
- Understand travel, residence, tax, and address-change responsibilities.
- If residence is conditional, calendar the I-751 filing window immediately!!!
- Preserve continuing marriage evidence even after approval.
- Seek advice before lengthy travel, naturalization, or conduct that may affect status and you could lose your legal status.



22. Seek IndividualAdvice -LEGAL CONSULTATION ADVISED PRIOR TO FILING

Some facts are too consequential for a self-help product.

- Any arrest, conviction, controlled-substance issue, or unresolved criminal charge.
- Prior removal, deportation, missed hearing, voluntary departure, or border order.
- Entry without inspection or uncertain inspection/parole history.
- Fraud, misrepresentation, false citizenship claim, or use of false documents.
- Prior marriage-based filing, fraud concern, or inconsistent statements.
- Abuse, coercion, trafficking, or safety concerns.
- Possible waiver, consular-processing risk, or inadmissibility issue.

Individual legal review recommended
Do not use this toolkit to resolve these issues without qualified legal advice.



Marriage Interview Practice Questions - 1

These questions are for preparation, not for memorizing a script. Couples may remember details differently. The goal is truthful, natural, and complete testimony.

#	Practice question	Notes
1	When and how did you first communicate?	
2	When and where did you first meet in person?	
3	What attracted you to your spouse?	
4	When did the relationship become serious?	
5	How did you communicate while dating?	
6	When did you meet each other’s families?	
7	Who proposed and how?	
8	How did you choose the wedding date?	
9	Where was the ceremony?	
10	Who attended?	
11	Was there a reception?	
12	What did you do after the wedding?	
13	Where have you lived together?	
14	Who is listed on the lease or deed?	
15	How do you divide household expenses?	

Marriage Interview Possible Questions -2

These questions are for preparation, not for memorizing a script. Couples may remember details differently. The goal is truthful, natural, and complete testimony.

#	Practice question	Notes
16	Which bank accounts are joint?	
17	Who pays which bills?	
18	How do you file taxes?	
19	What insurance policies do you share?	
20	Who are your beneficiaries?	
21	What vehicles do you use?	
22	How do you divide household chores?	
23	Who usually cooks?	
24	What did you eat last night?	
25	What time does each spouse wake up?	
26	What is each spouse’s work schedule?	
27	How do you spend weekends?	
28	What television programs do you watch?	
29	What hobbies do you share?	
30	How did you celebrate the last birthday?	

Marriage Interview Possible Questions -3

These questions are for preparation, not for memorizing a script. Couples may remember details differently. The goal is truthful, natural, and complete testimony.

#	Practice question	Notes
31	Where did you spend the last holiday?	
32	What gifts have you recently exchanged?	
33	What trips have you taken together?	
34	Who plans travel?	
35	What are your future travel plans?	
36	Do you have children?	
37	Who handles school or childcare matters?	
38	What are the children’s routines?	
39	Have you met your spouse’s close friends?	
40	Who are your spouse’s closest relatives?	
41	How often do you speak with extended family?	
42	Do you have pets?	
43	Where do you keep important documents?	
44	Describe your bedroom.	
45	On which side of the bed does each person sleep?	

Marriage Interview Possible Questions -4

These questions are for preparation, not for memorizing a script. Couples may remember details differently. The goal is truthful, natural, and complete testimony.

#	Practice question	Notes
46	What major purchases have you made together?	
47	Have you experienced periods living apart?	
48	Why were you apart and how did you stay connected?	
49	What disagreements have you faced?	
50	How do you resolve disagreements?	
51	What are your spouse’s health concerns?	
52	Who is the emergency contact?	
53	What medications does your spouse take, if any?	
54	What religious or cultural traditions do you observe?	
55	What language do you speak at home?	
56	What did you do on your most recent anniversary?	
57	Who attended your most recent family gathering?	
58	What is your spouse’s educational background?	
59	What was your spouse’s previous job?	
60	What are your long-term financial plans?	

Marriage Interview Possible Questions -5

These questions are for preparation, not for memorizing a script. Couples may remember details differently. The goal is truthful, natural, and complete testimony.

#	Practice question	Notes
61	Do you plan to buy or rent a home?	
62	Have you discussed children?	
63	What are your spouse’s immigration goals?	
64	Who gathered the evidence for this case?	
65	Did anyone pay or promise a benefit for the marriage?	
66	Have either of you been married before?	
67	How did those marriages end?	
68	How did prior relationships affect this one?	
69	What changed after you married?	
70	How do neighbors or coworkers know you as a couple?	
71	What mail arrives for each spouse?	
72	What subscriptions or memberships do you share?	
73	Where do you store clothing and personal belongings?	
74	What are your plans for the next year?	
75	Why do you want to continue building a life together?	

What Went Wrong: Cautionary Examples - 1

Fictional composites
These scenarios are fictional educational composites based on recurring issues in immigration practice. They do not describe an identifiable client, disclose client information, report this firm's results, or predict an outcome.

The Unexamined Entry

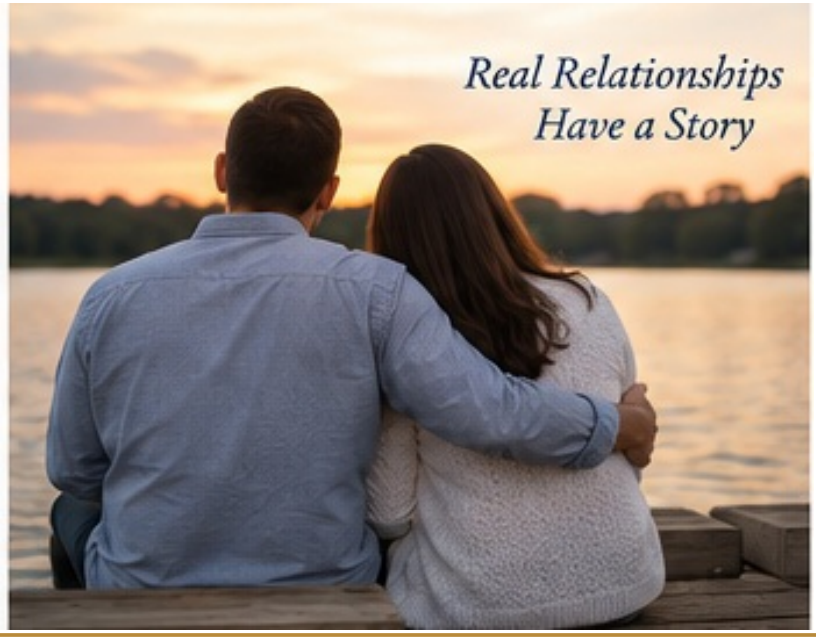
What went wrong: A spouse married a U.S. citizen and prepared an adjustment package. Only after paying fees did the couple reveal that the spouse had entered without inspection. The filing path they selected depended on an admission or parole that the record did not establish. The case was denied and the spouse was placed in removal proceedings!

Lesson: Confirm the exact manner of every entry before choosing adjustment or consular processing.

The Forgotten Court Case

What went wrong: The applicant believed an old court matter had been "closed." A records check showed an in absentia removal order after mail went to an old address. The applicant was detained at the Immigration Interview.

Lesson: Obtain and review the complete immigration-court record; never assume an old proceeding disappeared.



Immigration mistakes can have serious family consequences

What Went Wrong: Cautionary Examples - 2

Fictional composites
These scenarios are fictional educational composites based on recurring issues in immigration practice. They do not describe an identifiable client, disclose client information, report this firm's results, or predict an outcome.

The Dismissed Arrest

What went wrong: An applicant answered "no" to an arrest question because the criminal charge had been dismissed. Biometrics revealed the incident, creating a credibility problem and a request for certified records.

Lesson: Disclose as the form asks and obtain certified dispositions, even for dismissed or expunged matters.

The Wrong Household Size

What went wrong: A sponsor counted only the people currently living in the home. A previously sponsored immigrant and tax dependent were omitted, so the income calculation was unreliable. The officer could sent out a Request for Further Evidence or even deny the case if the sponsor does not qualify.

Lesson: Calculate I-864 household size under current instructions, not ordinary household usage.

What Went Wrong: Cautionary Examples - 3

Fictional composites
These scenarios are fictional educational composites based on recurring issues in immigration practice. They do not describe an identifiable client, disclose client information, report this firm's results, or predict an outcome.

The Last-Minute Joint Account

What went wrong: A couple opened a joint account shortly before filing but had little evidence of actual shared financial life. The new account alone did not explain years of separate records. Here you could be casting doubt on the credibility of your relationship.

Lesson: Build authentic, dated evidence across the relationship and explain legitimate gaps.

The Inconsistent Address History

What went wrong: Different forms listed different move dates and addresses. At interview, the couple could not explain the discrepancies. This could lead to a request for further evidence or even denial that could result in deportation hearing!

Lesson: Create one master address timeline and audit every form against it before signing.

What Went Wrong: Cautionary Examples - 4

Fictional composites
These scenarios are fictional educational composites based on recurring issues in immigration practice. They do not describe an identifiable client, disclose client information, report this firm's results, or predict an outcome.

The Unanswered RFE

What went wrong: The couple gathered documents but mailed them after the response deadline. The agency made a decision on the record it had. The case was denied and you and deportation proceedings intiated!

Lesson: Contact an Immigration Attorney. Calendar deadlines twice, preserve the envelope, and send a complete, timely response with delivery proof.

The Trip Before Travel Authorization

What went wrong: An adjustment applicant assumed a pending case allowed international travel and departed without confirming the effect on the application and admissibility. This lead to the abandobment of the adjustment and the couple could not return without starting another process.

Lesson: Obtain individualized advice before travel; a pending filing is not automatic permission to leave and return.

What Went Wrong: Cautionary Examples - 5

Fictional composites
These scenarios are fictional educational composites based on recurring issues in immigration practice. They do not describe an identifiable client, disclose client information, report this firm's results, or predict an outcome.

The Prior Petition Was Not Reviewed

What went wrong: A prior marriage petition contained dates and statements inconsistent with the new filing. The applicant had not obtained a copy before submitting again.

Lesson: Review all prior petitions, applications, interview statements, and decisions before a new filing.

The Memorized Interview

What went wrong: A couple rehearsed identical answers instead of reviewing their actual history. When follow-up questions changed wording, their testimony appeared unnatural and inconsistent.

Lesson: Know the filed record and tell the truth naturally; do not memorize a script.

Relationship Timeline

Use additional pages when necessary. Keep supporting records in the same order.

Date or period	Event	Location	Supporting evidence

Address History

Use additional pages when necessary. Keep supporting records in the same order.

From / to	Full address	Who lived there	Proof

Travel and Entry History

Use additional pages when necessary. Keep supporting records in the same order.

Date	Entry or departure	Location / status	Document

Marriage Evidence Index

Use additional pages when necessary. Keep supporting records in the same order.

Exhibit	Category	Date range	Description

Notice and Deadline Log

Use additional pages when necessary. Keep supporting records in the same order.

Date received	Notice	Deadline	Action / proof

Case Expense Planner

Use additional pages when necessary. Keep supporting records in the same order.

Item	Estimated amount	Due date	Paid

Interview Update Sheet

Use additional pages when necessary. Keep supporting records in the same order.

Item changed	Old answer	Correct answer	Supporting proof

Post-Approval Calendar

Use additional pages when necessary. Keep supporting records in the same order.

Required action	Target date	Reminder date	Completed

Relationship Affidavit Framework

Use carefully
An affidavit should reflect the witness’s own knowledge and words. Do not submit identical or exaggerated statements.

Declarant information: Full name, address, date and place of birth, and relationship to the couple.

Basis of knowledge: Explain when and how the declarant met each spouse.

Specific observations: Describe dated events, visits, celebrations, shared residence, or conduct personally observed.

Conclusion: Explain why the declarant believes the marriage is genuine, without making legal conclusions.

Certification and signature: Include the date, signature, and a truthful declaration appropriate to the document and jurisdiction.

Official Resources and Revision Notes

Government requirements change. The purchaser should consult the current official page and form instructions.

Resource	Official address
USCIS forms and instructions	uscis.gov/forms
USCIS Fee Calculator	uscis.gov/feecalculator
Case Status Online	egov.uscis.gov/casestatus
Processing Times	egov.uscis.gov/processing-times
Civil Surgeon Locator	uscis.gov/tools/find-a-civil-surgeon
Change of Address	uscis.gov/addresschange
Immigration Court	justice.gov/eoir

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For the purchaser’s personal use only. No copying, resale, publication, posting, or distribution without written permission. Digital sales are final except where applicable law provides otherwise. Information is current only as of the revision date. Government forms are free from official agencies; the purchase price is for the original educational explanations, organization system, worksheets, and templates in this toolkit.

About the Author
Victoria S. Gonzalez, Esq. is an immigration attorney with more than three decades of experience. Her office provides clear, careful, and direct immigration guidance.

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