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# **BELIZEAN DIASPORA RETURNEE INCENTIVE PROGRAM – 2010**



## **MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

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## **RETURNEE GUIDELINES**

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## **ABOUT THE PROGRAM**

The Diaspora Returnee Incentive Program has been established to attract Belizeans in the Diasporic who are considering repatriation. This program targets those Belizeans who are possibly considering a return home, and have funds to invest in their communities here in Belize, either in housing or business. It also targets those Belizeans who have a reoccurring monthly pension or income from a guaranteed source, which they would be depositing and spending in the local economy. It also foresees economic and social benefits expected, thru the implementation of this program.

## **BACKGROUND**

Cabinet approved the establishment of the Diaspora program at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009 (Cabinet paper 201 of 2009- Engaging the Belizean Diaspora). This program was designed to send a *robust message of welcome from the homeland to the Diaspora and to mobilize good will for their engagement and cooperation for Belize's development*. In keeping with this spirit, the Diaspora Office at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted a proposal for the “Diaspora Returnee Incentive Program” to the Cabinet of Belize on 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2010. This proposal was accepted and approved, thus reaffirming the Government’s policy of embracing high value diaspora skills and facilitating access to the Belizean Diaspora, for repatriation and development of our country.

## **WHO CAN QUALIFY FOR THIS PROGRAM?**

Any Diaspora Returnee may be designated as ‘Qualified’ if he/she:

- is a citizen of the country of Belize
  - has resided for at least 10 consecutive years outside the country of Belize – proven through the presentation of official documentation. (See Appendix A).
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## APPLICATION PROCESS

This Program shall be administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance, with the Diaspora Desk Officer having the responsibility of its day-to-day administration.

Each application for the Diaspora Returnee Incentive Program will be processed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance.

### **The DRIP Applicant will:**

- 1..1** Submit a Request for Exemption: Persons interested in the program must submit an ‘*Application Form For Diaspora Returnee Incentive Program*’ (attached), to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the following supporting documentation:
  - 1..2** Supporting Documents: *Provide all Required Supporting Documents:*
    - 1..2.1 Birth Certificate-** A copy of the birth certificate for the applicant
    - 1..2.2 Marriage Certificate** (if married and the spouse is a dependent)
    - 1..2.3 Passport** - Clear copies of complete passport (including all blank pages) of applicant and all dependants that have been certified by a Notary Public. The copies must have the passport number, name of principal, number of pages and the seal or stamp of the Notary Public.
    - 1..2.4 Proof of Residency-** Outside of Belize for the ten (10) years prior to returning to Belize (see “Appendix A” acceptable documentation)
  - 1..3 Time-frame:** *Submit his/her ‘application’ within one (1) year of arrival* into the country of Belize, or
  - 1..4 Submittals before arrival:** *Submit his/her ‘Application Form for Diaspora Returnee Incentive Program’ before coming to the country of Belize, by mailing all required documents Original or certified copies (as stated in 1..2.3 above in relation to Passports). PLEASE DO NOT SEND YOUR PASSPORT.*
  - 1..5 Terms and Conditions:** Submit a signed copy of the Terms & Conditions provided.
  - 1..6 Legal Responsibilities:** Each individual is ultimately responsible for the certification of authenticity of every document he/she submits to the Government of Belize in reference to this program.
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## INCENTIVES

### PRIVILEGES AND EXEMPTIONS OF QUALIFIED DIASPORA RETURNEES:

A Person who has been designated a Qualified Diaspora Returnee shall be entitled:

- To enter **and remain in Belize with his/her dependents** in accordance with current immigration laws at the time of entry
- Upon entering Belize, the Diaspora Returnee shall be permitted to import into Belize;
  - 2..1 Personal Effects:** his/her personal effects free of all import duties and taxes (up to \$20,000 USD in value);
  - 2..2 Tools of Trade:** his/her personal tools of trade (proof of trade such as license or employment in area of expertise) with a maximum value to be determined by the Ministry of Finance.
  - 2..3 Personal Transportation:** approved means of transportation for his/her personal use free of all import duties and taxes **excluding the environmental tax;**
    - 2..3.1** Upon importing of his/her approved means of transportation, *pay only the required 'Environmental Tax'* for said vehicle as stipulated by law
    - 2..3.2** *exemption granted only ONCE* to any individual (individual's name and information will be kept in a database to track program usage and avert program violations)
    - 2..3.3** *No second vehicle will qualify* for this exemption (only one vehicle per household allowed)

### **3.0 DISPOSAL AND TRANSFER OF EXEMPTED PROPERTY**

In constructing the Policy for the Diaspora Returnee Incentive Program, it is necessary to identify the need for proper disposal of exempted property brought into the country under this program.

- **Transportation/Vehicle:** A qualified Diaspora Returnee properly disposes of an approved means of transportation within the meaning of this Program if he/she:
  - 3..1 exports the approved means of transportation from Belize; or
  - 3..2 sells, gives, leases or otherwise disposes of the approved means of transportation to another person within Belize and proves that all the import duties and taxes have been duly paid thereon; or
  - 3..3 proves that the approved means of transportation has been lost or otherwise rendered unserviceable through theft, fire or accident.
  
- **Property Transfer:** Any approved means of transportation or other property imported into Belize under the provisions of this program free of import duties and taxes (except for household goods and personal effects), which is transferred at any time to another person in Belize (other than to a Qualified Diaspora Returnee) whether by sale, gift, lease or otherwise shall, immediately upon such transfer, be chargeable with all import duties and taxes, and both the transferor and the transferee shall be jointly and severally liable for the payment thereof.

### **4.0 OFFENCE AND PENALTY:**

Any person who knowingly makes any false declaration or entry in order to qualify for or retain any exemption or privilege granted under this Program commits an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding five thousand dollars.

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## Appendix A- Official Documentation

The following documents may be accepted for this program, as proof of residence outside the country of Belize:

- (a) Tax returns
- (b) Social Security reports/summary
- (c) Official school record
- (d) Leasing agreement
- (e) Official records from employer to include either a letter or check stub
- (f) Certified copy of passport
- (g) DD214 – Military discharge form
- (h) Other official records supporting residency abroad (note these records must be approved by a Director or the CEO at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on a case by case basis)

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. All qualified Diaspora Returnees must adhere to the general procedures cited by the Customs Department for the clearing of all personal and household effects including 'Mode of Transportation'.
2. Qualified Diaspora Returnees within this program must inform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding any changes stated on the application form. Failure to do so may result in the revocation of applicant's status.
3. All benefits provided by this program will be exclusively used by the Qualified Diaspora Returnees.
4. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has the authority to carry out any investigation with respect to the validity of any document provided by the applicant under the program.
5. All documents presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs become the property of the Ministry.

### SIGNATURES

I hereby accept the above terms and conditions as they pertain to the Belize Retirement Incentive Program.	
Signature of applicant:	Date:
Name in block Letters:	
Signature of witness:	Date:
Name in Block Letters:	

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