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How Small Business Employees Can Travel Cheaper

by [Brette Sember](#) April 2, 2016

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If you or your employees travel a lot for business, you've probably heard about government programs that will get you through customs or security faster. This can be a lifesaver if you have a tight connection or you want to reduce the time you wait in airports or at borders. However, the programs have some overlap and some strange gaps, so it's important to understand exactly what they offer and how they can benefit your business, and not waste time or money applying for programs that won't meet your needs.

TSA PreCheck

[PreCheck](#) program members get to zip through the priority security line at the airport. The line is shorter, you don't have to take off your shoes, belt, or coat or take out your liquids, and you go through a metal detector not a body scan. However, be aware that airports don't guarantee that a PreCheck line will be open.

You don't need a passport to join. The program works when flying domestically and from the United States to another country (but not on the way back). If you are going to apply for one of the other programs, don't apply for this one since it's included in the other three. To qualify, you must fill out an application online and then go in person to a TSA-approved location to be fingerprinted and present documents (such as passport, birth certificate, or enhanced driver's license). The program costs \$85 and the Known Traveler Number (KTN) that is issued lasts for five years.

Bottom line: This program is useful if you fly primarily domestically, but not internationally.

Global Entry

[Global Entry](#) allows travelers to skip the customs lines at U.S. airports (and skip that little form they give you on the airline when you land in the United States). Instead, you scan your passport and fingerprints on a computer and buzz through, bypassing the long customs line. Enrollment also allows you to apply for similar programs in countries such as Australia, South Korea, the Netherlands, Panama, and Mexico.

Enrollment includes PreCheck benefits, so you skip the regular security lines at domestic airports as well. Members are issued a Global Entry card, which you can use at NEXUS and SENTRI lanes when entering the United States (but not leaving the United States) at land borders. The program costs \$100 and is valid for five years. You apply online and then visit a TSA enrollment office for fingerprinting, an interview, and a document check.

Bottom line: If you fly internationally often, this is a good bet. There is no need to pay for PreCheck since it's included.

NEXUS

The [NEXUS](#) program offers expedited processing when entering the United States or Canada at land borders or airports. Of particular interest, this program includes both Global Entry and PreCheck benefits (for less than either program costs individually). One hitch in the system: if you renew your passport after you enroll, your new passport information is not shared with Canada so it essentially nullifies your NEXUS membership on the Canadian side until you reapply. A \$50 fee gets you five years of membership.

To apply, fill out an online form and then appear in person for fingerprints, an interview, and a document check. An [important point](#) to keep in mind: applicants must go to a Canadian border site to apply in person, so this can be inconvenient if your business is located elsewhere.

Bottom line: This is your most affordable option. For \$50, you get NEXUS, PreCheck, and Global Entry benefits all in one.

SENTRI

The [SENTRI](#) program includes NEXUS and Global Entry but also allows participants to use dedicated entry lanes when driving to and from Mexico. The cost is \$122.25 for five years. An in-person interview, fingerprints, and background check are required.

Bottom line: This program makes sense for your employees if they often cross the United States-Mexico border. The interview sites are located along the Mexican border, so this could be problematic if your business is not nearby.

Each program has its merits and shortcomings. By understanding which border-crossing program has the right benefits for you and your business, you can save money and time.

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