

Musk's Team Is Building a System to Sell 'Gold Card' Immigrant Visas

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By Ryan Mac and Hamed Aleaziz
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Members of Elon Musk's government-slashing task force are building a system for the United States to sell special immigration visas, which President Trump has labeled "gold cards," for \$5 million apiece.

Engineers associated with Mr. Musk's team have been working with employees from the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security and United States Citizenship and Immigration Services to create a website and application process for the visas, according to three people familiar with the discussions and documents seen by The New York Times.

The project represents something of a shift in mission for Mr. Musk's team, the Department of Government Efficiency, from its initial task of cutting government costs toward a new goal of generating revenue.

In late February, Mr. Trump announced his idea for [a gold card](#) to give "very high-level people" a "route to citizenship."

The president and his commerce secretary, Howard Lutnick, provided few details at the time about who would qualify for the program but noted that it would replace the EB-5 visa, which grants permanent residence to foreign nationals willing to invest in U.S. businesses. That program provided green cards to individuals who invested either \$800,000 or \$1.05 million, creating at least 10 jobs for American workers. It [raised about \\$4 billion](#) for the federal government last year.

The gold card project is being led from the DOGE side by Marko Elez and Edward Coristine, who have been working on it since at least last month. Mr. Elez and Mr. Coristine have met with officials at various agencies that oversee facets of the visa and immigrant vetting process to understand which existing processes can be incorporated into their new system.

The State Department referred requests for comment to the White House. The White House and Department of Homeland Security did not respond to requests for comment.

Mr. Lutnick said on [a podcast](#) last month that he had sold 1,000 of the visas “yesterday.” But a person close to the project said no money had been exchanged yet.

“So if you have a gold card — which used to be a green card — you’re a permanent resident of America,” the commerce secretary said, suggesting that most holders would not go on to become U.S. citizens. He added, “They pay \$5 million, and they have the right to be an American and the right to be in America as long as they’re good people and they’re vetted and they can’t break the law.”

Mr. Musk is building the software “right now” and the program will be unveiled in two weeks, Mr. Lutnick added.

Earlier this month, Mr. Trump showed a laminated card, featuring his face, the Statue of Liberty and a bald eagle, to reporters aboard Air Force One and said it would be out in “less than two weeks.”

On Thursday, Mr. Lutnick updated the timeline, saying the gold card would be ready “within a week and a half.”

The engineers are still assessing how to create a gold card system that would bypass the normal visa application process, which varies but can take years. They have focused on how to expedite the typical immigrant vetting process, which involves interviews and background checks, and obtain residency approval for high-net-worth applicants within two weeks of applying.

Mr. Elez faced a storm of controversy earlier this year after [The Wall Street Journal](#) linked him to a pseudonymous account on X with racist posts and calls for immigration policy based on eugenics.

Mr. Elez resigned in February after the report, prompting Mr. Trump and Vice President JD Vance to [call for his rehiring](#). Since then, Mr. Elez has worked for five government agencies, including the Labor Department and Department of Health and Human Services, according to court filings, as well as [the Social Security Administration](#).

Before joining Mr. Musk’s team, Mr. Coristine, a 19-year-old who publicly goes by “Big Balls,” was [fired in June 2022](#) from an internship at Path, an Arizona-based data security company, after “an internal investigation into the leaking of proprietary company information that coincided with his tenure,” the company said in a statement.

Joe Gebbia, a billionaire co-founder of Airbnb, has also been involved with the project, according to people close to the conversations. He [joined Mr. Musk’s team in February](#), initially to help digitize the federal worker retirement process.

Mr. Elez, Mr. Coristine and Mr. Gebbia did not respond to requests for comment.

Edward Wong contributed reporting.