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Global Diaspora Venture Capital

Global Business Launch
From Anywhere to Everywhere.

THE GLOBAL FOUNDER'S HANDBOOK 2026

The Complete Guide to Startup Visas, Entrepreneur Immigration, Investment & International Business Expansion

Startup Visas
Turn Your Ideas into Global Opportunities.

Entrepreneur Visas
Start and Grow Your Business Abroad

Investor Visas
Expand Your Wealth and Global Presence

Self-Employment & Business Visas
Live, Work and Build Your Future



Published by: **Global Visa & Immigration Services Inc.**
In Collaboration With: **Global Diaspora Venture Capital Ltd & Global Business Launch LTD**

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Dear Entrepreneurs, Startup Founders, Investors, and Business Professionals,

Greetings from Global Visa & Immigration Services Inc., in collaboration with Global Diaspora Venture Capital Ltd. & Global Business Launch LTD
We are pleased to introduce our Startup Founder's Guide to Entrepreneur Visas 2026, designed to help entrepreneurs explore global business and immigration opportunities.

What You'll Discover:

- Entrepreneur, startup, and investor visa opportunities across the USA, UK, Europe, and other destinations.
- Low-investment and startup visa pathways.
- Business plan, funding, and documentation requirements.
- Country selection and application preparation.
- Family, residence, and potential long-term immigration opportunities.

Our Commitment to Entrepreneurs

Global Visa & Immigration Services Inc., in collaboration with Global Diaspora Venture Capital Ltd, provides structured support for founders and entrepreneurs exploring startup, entrepreneur, investor, self-employment, and business immigration pathways.

Our services focus on founder eligibility assessment, country and program selection, business planning, immigration documentation support, and coordination with qualified professional advisers where required.

We believe that successful international entrepreneurship begins with the right information, realistic planning, transparent guidance, and a clear understanding of immigration requirements.

Your Business. Your Vision. Your Global Future.

Whether you are launching your first startup, expanding an existing company, or exploring international business opportunities, this guide is designed to help you make informed decisions about your next steps.

We invite you to explore the opportunities presented in this publication and contact our team for a personalized assessment.

Build Your Business Globally. Explore New Markets. Create Opportunities.

Sincerely,
Md. Liton Ahmed
President & CEO, Global Visa & Immigration Services Inc.
Founder & CEO, Global Diaspora Venture Capital Ltd.

Disclaimer:
This publication is intended for general informational purposes and does not constitute legal, financial, or investment advice. Immigration regulations, investment requirements, processing times, and eligibility criteria vary by country and may change. No visa, residence permit, business approval, or investment outcome is guaranteed. Applicants should obtain country-specific advice from appropriately qualified professionals before making immigration or investment decisions.



About This 2026 Edition

This handbook is an original, independently rewritten publication prepared for Global Visa & Immigration Services Inc. It is designed for founders, entrepreneurs, business owners, investors, and families who want a structured introduction to business immigration options across major markets. The 2026 edition distinguishes true startup programs from broader entrepreneur, self-employment, investor, and exceptional-talent routes. This is important because many countries do not operate a visa formally called a “startup visa,” and several programs have changed materially in recent years.

Information date Program information in this edition was reviewed against official government or government-backed sources available in September 2026. Rules can change quickly, and every applicant should verify current requirements immediately before filing.

Legal and professional disclaimer

This publication provides general information only. It is not legal advice, tax advice, investment advice, or a guarantee of visa approval. Immigration authorities assess each case individually. Where legal representation is required, applicants should work with appropriately licensed immigration counsel or other authorized professionals in the relevant jurisdiction.

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WHO WE ARE

Global Visa & Immigration Services Inc. provides immigration consultancy and case-coordination services for individuals, families, entrepreneurs, investors, students, and employers exploring opportunities in the United States, United Kingdom, Europe, Canada, and other international destinations. With service operations in New York and Dhaka, we focus on clear assessments, organized documentation, transparent case planning, and step-by-step support. Our objective is to help each client understand the available immigration pathways, the evidence required, and the practical decisions that should be made before an application is filed.

Our approach

Profile-first assessment: we begin with the applicant, not with a sales package. Country and route matching: we compare immigration eligibility with the commercial reality of the proposed business. Document strategy: we organize business, financial, professional, and family evidence around the requirements of the selected route. Business-plan support: where a business plan or founder narrative is required, we help structure the project around the immigration criteria. Professional coordination: where legal, accounting, company-formation, tax, or other regulated services are needed, we coordinate with appropriate professionals. Pre-departure and post-landing guidance: where included in the engagement, we help clients prepare for practical next steps after approval. Our mission To work closely with clients, build trust, and identify practical immigration solutions while maintaining professional standards, confidentiality, and attention to detail.

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Entrepreneurship Has Become Global

A founder can incorporate a company in one country, raise capital in another, hire a distributed team across several time zones, and sell to customers worldwide. Immigration policy has increasingly adapted to this reality, but it has not done so in one uniform way.

Some countries operate dedicated startup visas. Others rely on self-employment residence permits, investor routes, exceptional-talent categories, or founder pathways embedded inside wider economic-migration laws. A program may reward innovation, while another may focus on capital, local hiring, personal achievement, government endorsement, or a proven operating business.

That difference matters. A strong technology founder may qualify for a route that would not suit a restaurant owner. An experienced businessperson may have a viable self-employment route even when a “startup visa” is unavailable. A high-growth project can be attractive in one country but fail another country’s definition of innovation.

This handbook therefore does not treat immigration as a list of visas. It treats it as a strategy connecting four questions: Who is the founder? What is the business? Why this country? What evidence proves the case?

The central idea

The strongest application is not necessarily the one with the most documents. It is the one in which the founder profile, business model, funding, market logic, and immigration category all support the same story.

Start with Your Profile, Then Compare Countries

The country chapters are designed to help you identify possible directions, not to replace a formal eligibility review. Each chapter uses the same framework so that you can compare options consistently.

- 2026 status: whether the route is active, an alternative business pathway, paused, or closed to new applicants.
- Route type: dedicated startup, entrepreneur/self-employment, investor, or talent route.
- Founder focus: the kind of applicant or business model the route is designed to attract.
- Capital test: whether the program sets a specific investment amount, requires proof of support funds, or evaluates financing case by case.
- Core eligibility themes: the issues most likely to determine whether the case is viable.
- Application strategy: practical preparation points that can strengthen a properly eligible case.
- 2026 watchpoint: important current changes, restrictions, or distinctions.

Before you select a destination

Compare immigration eligibility with market access, taxation, banking, language, operating costs, family plans, fundraising needs, hiring, regulatory obligations, and the realistic path from temporary status to longer-term residence. A visa that is easy to describe may still be a poor commercial fit for your business.



CONTENTS

Book Structure

PART I Building a Founder Immigration Strategy

1. Understanding Startup Visas
2. The Five Main Founder Pathways
3. Choosing the Right Country
4. Building an Immigration-Ready Startup
5. Building a Visa-Ready Business Plan

PART II North America

6. United States
7. Canada

PART III Europe

8. United Kingdom
9. Estonia
10. Netherlands
11. Portugal
12. Spain
13. Lithuania
14. Ireland
15. France
16. Germany
17. Denmark
18. Italy
19. Austria
20. Belgium
21. Finland
22. Sweden
23. Latvia
24. Malta
25. Cyprus
26. Greece
27. Hungary
28. Serbia
29. Slovakia

PART IV Asia-Pacific

30. Singapore
31. Japan
32. South Korea
33. Australia
34. New Zealand

PART V Middle East

35. United Arab Emirates
36. Saudi Arabia

PART VI Application Toolkit

37. Global Comparison Matrix
38. Founder Document Checklist
39. Financial and Source-of-Funds Preparation
40. Family and Relocation Planning
41. Common Application Weaknesses
42. Global Visa Assessment Process
43. Official Research Sources & Update Notes

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BUILDING A FOUNDER IMMIGRATION STRATEGY

Before comparing countries, understand how startup and entrepreneur immigration works, what immigration authorities usually test, and how to build a business case that is credible on both commercial and immigration grounds.

CHAPTER 1

Understanding Startup Visas

"Startup visa" is a convenient global label, but it is not a single legal concept. One country may operate a dedicated startup residence permit for innovative founders; another may use a self-employment permit; another may invite exceptional entrepreneurs through a talent category; and another may offer residence only after a specified investment.

Common purposes of founder immigration programs

- Attract innovative companies and technology talent.
- Create local jobs and build high-value industries.
- Bring foreign capital, investors, and business networks into the country.
- Commercialize research, intellectual property, or new technology.
- Encourage international founders to locate headquarters, R&D, or expansion operations locally.
- Strengthen the destination country's position in global entrepreneurship and venture capital.

Common eligibility tests

- Innovation: Is the product, service, process, or business model meaningfully different?
- Viability: Can the founder realistically execute the project?
- Scalability: Can the company grow beyond a small owner-operated business?
- Economic benefit: Will the project create jobs, investment, exports, tax revenue, or strategic value?
- Founder credibility: Does the applicant have relevant experience, achievements, skills, or leadership history?
- Funding: Are there sufficient resources to launch and sustain both the business and the founder?
- Endorsement: Does a designated body, incubator, government panel, or investor need to approve the project?

Important distinction

Registering a company does not automatically create immigration eligibility. In most jurisdictions, company formation and immigration permission are separate legal questions.

CHAPTER 2

The Five Main Founder Pathways

1. Dedicated Startup Visa
Designed specifically for innovative or high-growth founders. Typical examples include Startup Denmark, Finland's start-up entrepreneur permit, Malta's Startup Residence Programme, and the Startup Korea Special Visa.

2. Entrepreneur / Self-Employment Residence
Designed for people who will operate their own business or act as an executive. Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Serbia, Slovakia, and Hungary provide examples of broader business or self-employment routes.

3. Investor / Business Investment Route
Residence is linked principally to qualifying investment or acquisition. Greece's startup-investment Golden Visa is an example. New Zealand's current Business Investor Work Visa focuses on investing in an established business rather than launching a new startup.

4. Talent / Exceptional Ability Route
The founder qualifies primarily because of personal achievements, impact, or exceptional talent. The U.S. O-1A and Australia's National Innovation Visa can be relevant to qualifying founders, but they are not generic startup visas.

5. Expansion / Multinational Route
An existing foreign company expands into a new country and transfers a founder, executive, or manager. U.S. L-1A is a major example. This can be stronger than a startup route when the founder already has a substantial operating business abroad.

Strategy rule

Do not force your profile into a "startup visa" if a stronger entrepreneur, investor, talent, or multinational route is available.

CHAPTER 3

Choosing the Right Country

Immigration fit and business fit must work together

Decision factor	Key question
Immigration eligibility	Do you meet the legal requirements now, or can you realistically build the missing evidence?
Business market	Are your customers, partners, suppliers, or strategic relationships located there?
Funding ecosystem	Is the destination appropriate for your funding stage and industry?
Capital requirements	Does the program require a fixed investment, or simply sufficient funds for a credible business?
Founder control	Must you own a minimum percentage or actively manage the company?
Family needs	Can your spouse and children accompany you, and can your spouse work?
Residence pathway	Is the route temporary only, or can it lead to permanent residence if conditions are met?
Language and culture	Can you operate, sell, hire, and comply effectively in the local environment?
Tax and corporate structure	Will the personal and corporate tax consequences fit your plan? Seek qualified tax advice.
Time and operational readiness	Can you satisfy incorporation, office, hiring, endorsement, banking, or licensing requirements in the required sequence?

Avoid "easiest visa" thinking

A route that appears simple on paper can become expensive or unsustainable if the business model, local market, funding plan, or family situation does not fit the destination.

CHAPTER 4

Building an Immigration-Ready Startup

1. Define the problem and the customer
Immigration reviewers and endorsing bodies should be able to understand the customer problem in plain language. Avoid relying on buzzwords. Show why the problem matters, who experiences it, and what evidence supports market demand.

2. Demonstrate what is genuinely different
If innovation is part of the legal test, identify the specific technical, commercial, operational, or delivery advantage. Explain what competitors already do, what your company changes, and why the difference matters.

3. Build evidence of traction

- Minimum viable product or prototype
- Pilot users or paying customers
- Letters of intent, purchase orders, or partnership discussions
- Accelerator or incubator acceptance
- Awards, grants, patents, publications, or technical validation
- Investment commitments or credible fundraising activity

4. Make the numbers credible
Forecasts should connect directly to pricing, customer acquisition, staffing, operating costs, and realistic market assumptions. Aggressive growth without evidence can weaken credibility rather than strengthen it.

5. Explain why the business belongs in the destination country
The country choice should have a commercial reason: customers, sector cluster, university partnership, strategic investor, manufacturing base, regulatory advantage, logistics, skilled labor, or a clear expansion market.



CHAPTER 5

Building a Visa-Ready Business Plan

- Executive summary and founder profile
- Problem, customer, and market need
- Product or service and innovation
- Market size and competitor analysis
- Business model and pricing
- Go-to-market and customer acquisition
- Operations and company structure
- Founder and management responsibilities
- Hiring and job-creation plan
- Funding, use of funds, and source of funds
- Three- to five-year financial projections
- Milestones and implementation timeline
- Risk analysis and mitigation
- Economic benefit to the destination country
- Evidence appendix: contracts, IP, awards, market validation, letters of support

Business plan principle

The plan should be commercially useful even if the visa application did not exist. Immigration criteria should shape the evidence, but they should not turn the plan into an artificial document built only to satisfy a checklist.

Founder narrative

A strong business plan should also explain why this founder is capable of executing the project. Connect prior experience, leadership roles, technical knowledge, industry networks, investment history, or achievements to the proposed company.



PART II

NORTH AMERICA

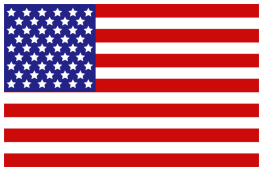
North America offers some of the world's most developed capital markets and startup ecosystems, but the United States and Canada use very different immigration frameworks for founders.



CHAPTER 6

United States

Multiple founder pathways rather than one formal startup visa



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	KEY POINT
Multiple active routes	Talent / investor / expansion / parole	Varies by route	No single U.S. startup visa

The United States does not operate one general immigration category called a startup visa. A founder may instead qualify through extraordinary ability, treaty investment, multinational expansion, national-interest work, immigrant investment, or the International Entrepreneur Rule. Choosing the correct route depends on the founder's nationality, achievements, ownership, capital, company history, and long-term objective.

O-1A - extraordinary ability

O-1A can be relevant to founders who can document sustained distinction in business, science, technology, or another qualifying field. Evidence can include nationally or internationally recognized awards, selective memberships, published material about the applicant, judging, original contributions, leading or critical roles, high remuneration, and other comparable evidence. Founder evidence must be organized around the legal criteria rather than simply showing that a company exists.

E-2 - treaty investor

E-2 can be a strong option for nationals of treaty countries who make a substantial, at-risk investment in a real and operating U.S. enterprise and will develop and direct that business. There is no single statutory minimum investment amount; proportionality and the nature of the business matter. Bangladesh is currently listed by the U.S. Department of State as an E-2 treaty country, making this route particularly relevant for qualifying Bangladeshi founders.

Founder fit

O-1A is driven primarily by the founder's record of achievement. E-2 is driven primarily by treaty nationality, ownership/control, a substantial committed investment, and an operating enterprise. They solve different problems.

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International Entrepreneur Rule (IER)

Parole for qualifying high-growth U.S. startup founders

The International Entrepreneur Rule is not a visa and is not an admission in a formal nonimmigrant status. It is a discretionary parole framework for entrepreneurs who can show that their U.S. startup has substantial potential for rapid growth and job creation.

- The startup generally must have been formed in the United States within the required recent period.
- The entrepreneur must hold a qualifying ownership interest and play a central, active role in the startup.
- The case can be supported by qualifying U.S. investment, qualifying government grants or awards, or other compelling evidence of substantial potential for rapid growth and job creation.
- Parole can be granted for an initial period and may be followed by re-parole if the startup continues to meet the applicable standards.
- The entrepreneur is authorized to work only for the qualifying startup under the parole grant.

2026 filing thresholds

USCIS currently lists inflation-adjusted IER thresholds, including at least $311,071 in qualifying investment or at least $124,429 in qualifying government grants/awards for filings governed by the current adjustment. Always verify the current threshold before filing.

Family

A spouse and unmarried children may seek parole as dependants. A qualifying spouse may apply separately for employment authorization; children are not employment authorized solely because of dependent parole.



L-1A, EB-1C and Multinational Expansion

For founders who already operate a business abroad

When a founder already owns or manages a functioning foreign company, a U.S. expansion strategy may be more natural than trying to present the company as a new startup. L-1A can support the temporary transfer of a qualifying executive or manager to an affiliated U.S. entity, including a qualifying new office. EB-1C can later be relevant in some cases to qualifying multinational managers or executives seeking permanent residence.

Typical planning questions

- Is there a qualifying relationship between the foreign and U.S. entities?
- Has the founder worked abroad for the qualifying organization in the required executive or managerial capacity?
- Does the U.S. business have adequate premises, capitalization, and an operational plan?
- Will the U.S. organization grow to support a genuine managerial or executive role rather than requiring the founder to perform primarily day-to-day operational tasks?
- Does the foreign business continue operating while the U.S. company develops?

Best evidence

Organizational charts, payroll, revenue, staff responsibilities, contracts, premises, financial records, operating history, and a credible hiring plan are often more persuasive than generic statements that the founder will “manage the company.”



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Permanent-Residence Options for Founders

EB-1A, EB-2 NIW, EB-5 and other strategies

EB-1A extraordinary ability

EB-1A is a self-petition immigrant category for people who can demonstrate extraordinary ability under a demanding evidentiary standard. A founder's entrepreneurial achievements may form part of the evidence when they align with the statutory and regulatory criteria.

EB-2 National Interest Waiver

EB-2 NIW can be relevant when the applicant qualifies for EB-2 and can demonstrate that the proposed U.S. endeavor has substantial merit and national importance, that the applicant is well positioned to advance it, and that waiving the normal job-offer and labor-certification requirements would benefit the United States. Entrepreneurship can be the vehicle for the proposed endeavor, but company ownership alone does not establish eligibility.

EB-5 immigrant investor

- EB-5 is an immigrant-investor program rather than a startup visa. It requires a qualifying investment in a new commercial enterprise and creation of the required full-time jobs for qualifying U.S. workers, together with extensive source-of-funds evidence. Current statutory investment thresholds and visa-set-aside rules should be verified before filing.

Planning issue

Temporary founder status and permanent-residence strategy should be considered together. The best first visa is not always the same as the best long-term immigration route.



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CHAPTER 7

Canada

Start-Up Visa Program paused to new applications in 2026



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	KEY POINT
Paused to new applications	Federal startup immigration	Innovative, globally competitive startup	Existing files continue

Canada's federal Start-Up Visa Program became one of the best-known founder immigration routes because it connected entrepreneurs with designated venture capital funds, angel investor groups, and business incubators. However, the program is not currently open to new applications.

Major 2026 update

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada states that the Start-Up Visa Program was paused to new applications effective June 30, 2026. Existing applications continue to be processed. Applicants should monitor IRCC for details of any successor or targeted entrepreneur pilot.

What the former/open-file framework focused on

- A qualifying Canadian business
- A letter of support from a designated organization
- Language ability at the required Canadian Language Benchmark level
- Sufficient settlement funds
- Active and ongoing management of the business in Canada
- Ownership and voting-right requirements among founders and the designated organization

Do not market an unavailable program

A 2026 client assessment should not present the federal Start-Up Visa as an open route for a new applicant unless IRCC announces a new intake or replacement program.

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Entrepreneur Planning While the Federal SUV Is Paused

Provincial and future federal options require separate assessment

Canada continues to have a strong entrepreneurship ecosystem, but founder immigration planning now requires more careful route selection. Provincial nominee programs, Quebec business pathways, work-permit strategies, and future federal entrepreneur pilots may use different eligibility rules, investment thresholds, nomination systems, or business-performance obligations.

What to review before recommending Canada

- Is the applicant seeking permanent residence immediately, or are they open to a temporary business work permit first?
- Which province is commercially appropriate for the business?
- Does that province currently operate an entrepreneur stream and accept the applicant's business type?
- What minimum net worth, investment, ownership, exploratory visit, language, and job-creation requirements apply?
- Will the applicant be required to operate the business for a performance period before nomination?
- Does the program accept passive investment, or is active management mandatory?

2026 strategy

Use Canada only after confirming the exact current provincial or federal program. Do not rely on older Start-Up Visa marketing materials, older designated-organization practices, or historic processing assumptions.



PART III

EUROPE

Europe offers the widest variety of founder immigration models: dedicated startup visas, incubator-based schemes, innovation endorsements, professional cards, self-employment permits, and business residence routes.



CHAPTER 8

United Kingdom

Innovator Founder visa



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Endorsed founder route	Innovative, viable and scalable business	No fixed visa investment minimum

Why founders consider it

The Innovator Founder route is designed for entrepreneurs who want to establish and run an innovative business in the United Kingdom. The central immigration test is not simply whether the founder can finance a company; it is whether an approved endorsing body is satisfied that the venture is innovative, viable, and scalable.

Core eligibility themes

- Obtain endorsement from an approved endorsing body.
- The business concept must meet the innovation, viability, and scalability tests.
- The founder must play a key role in the business and satisfy the immigration requirements.
- Meet the English-language requirement and maintenance requirements where applicable.
- Maintain contact with the endorsing body and satisfy ongoing progress expectations.

Family and longer-term planning

The route can include eligible dependants. The visa is generally granted for three years, and qualifying founders may be able to apply for settlement after three years if the business and residence criteria are met.

Application strategy

Prepare the endorsement case before treating the immigration form as the main application. The business plan, founder capability, competitive analysis, growth model, and evidence of progress should all support the endorsing body's assessment.

2026 watchpoint

The old UK Start-up Visa is not the current founder route. Use the Innovator Founder rules and the current approved endorsing-body framework.

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CHAPTER 9

Estonia



Startup Visa / startup founder residence pathway

2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Dedicated startup route	Technology-based scalable startup	Support funds; no generic fixed startup investment

Why founders consider it

Estonia's startup framework is aimed at non-EU founders building technology-driven, innovative, globally scalable companies. The ecosystem is closely linked to Startup Estonia and the Startup Committee, while Estonia's digital business infrastructure can make it attractive to founders operating across European markets.

Core eligibility themes

- The business should be technology-based, innovative, and scalable.
- A credible minimum viable product and initial traction are important in the startup assessment.
- The startup should have international growth potential.
- Startup Committee recognition or the applicable startup evaluation is required.
- The founder must demonstrate adequate financial resources and satisfy residence requirements.

Family and longer-term planning

Family and residence options depend on the specific visa or residence-permit basis used. Long-term residence requires continued compliance with Estonia's immigration and residence rules.

Application strategy

Treat the Startup Committee assessment as a core business-evidence exercise. Show product differentiation, global market potential, team capability, early validation, and a realistic funding plan.

2026 watchpoint

Estonia e-Residency is not an immigration status and does not itself give the founder a right to live in Estonia.

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CHAPTER 10

Netherlands

Residence permit for foreign startups



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Facilitator-based startup route	Innovative non-EU founder	Sufficient resources; no universal fixed investment

Why founders consider it

The Dutch startup residence permit allows qualifying non-EU entrepreneurs to develop an innovative company in the Netherlands with the support of an approved facilitator. The facilitator relationship and the innovation assessment are central to the route.

Core eligibility themes

- Work with a reliable facilitator under a signed cooperation agreement.
- Present an innovative product, service, technology, or method.
- Show an active founder role rather than passive investment.
- Prepare a step-by-step plan for developing the company.
- Demonstrate sufficient resources for the founder's stay and meet general residence requirements.

Family and longer-term planning

The startup permit is temporary. A founder who develops the business successfully may later explore a self-employed residence permit or another qualifying status. Family rights depend on the linked residence rules.

Application strategy

Select the facilitator strategically. The facilitator should add genuine value in the company's sector and be acceptable under the Dutch framework. The development plan should show specific milestones, not broad ambitions.

2026 watchpoint

Do not confuse a facilitator with an immigration agent. The facilitator has a defined role in mentoring and supporting the startup under the Dutch scheme.

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CHAPTER 11

Portugal

Startup Visa



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Incubator-based startup residence	Innovative tech/knowledge project	Sufficient funds; incubator acceptance

Why founders consider it

Portugal's Startup Visa is aimed at non-EU entrepreneurs seeking to establish or relocate an innovative business with support from a certified incubator. It is designed around technology, knowledge, qualified employment, and long-term growth potential.

Core eligibility themes

- Develop an innovative business project focused on technology or knowledge.
- Demonstrate potential to create qualified employment.
- Show the project's ability to achieve meaningful scale and economic value.
- Secure interest/acceptance from a certified incubator under the program.
- Demonstrate the required personal financial resources and satisfy residence conditions.

Family and longer-term planning

Residence can support family relocation subject to the applicable family-reunification rules. Longer-term residence and nationality depend on maintaining lawful residence and meeting the separate legal requirements.

Application strategy

Approach certified incubators with a concise, evidence-based founder package: pitch deck, founder CV, product evidence, market validation, funding plan, and a clear explanation of why Portugal is operationally relevant.

2026 watchpoint

Do not confuse the Startup Visa with Portugal's separate investment-residence framework or digital-nomad routes; they use different legal tests.

CHAPTER 12

Spain

Entrepreneur visa / residence under Law 14/2013



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Innovation/economic-interest entrepreneur route	Innovative project of particular economic interest	No fixed universal investment amount

Why founders consider it

Spain offers a specific entrepreneur framework for foreign nationals who intend to develop an innovative entrepreneurial activity of particular economic interest to Spain. The quality and economic value of the project are more important than simply forming a company.

Core eligibility themes

- Present an innovative entrepreneurial project.
- Demonstrate particular economic interest for Spain.
- Prepare a strong business plan addressing market, financing, founder profile, innovation, and economic impact.
- Meet general immigration, insurance, and financial-resource requirements.
- Obtain the required favorable assessment/report through the applicable process.

Family and longer-term planning

Eligible spouses or partners, financially dependent children, and certain dependent ascendants may be able to accompany the entrepreneur under the applicable rules.

Application strategy

Build the application around the economic-interest analysis: innovation, investment, job creation, founder background, and opportunities for the Spanish economy. The business plan should be specific to Spain rather than a generic global plan.

2026 watchpoint

Spain ended its property-based Golden Visa in 2025; the entrepreneur route under Law 14/2013 is a different pathway and remains relevant to innovative founders.

CHAPTER 13

Lithuania

Startup Visa Lithuania / temporary residence for startup founders



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Startup approval + residence	Innovative high-growth founders	Funding plan required; no simple fixed entry investment

Why founders consider it

Lithuania's startup pathway supports founders developing innovative, scalable companies, especially in technology-driven sectors. The startup evaluation and the founder's role in the company are central to the process.

Core eligibility themes

- Obtain the required startup evaluation/approval through the competent innovation authority.
- Demonstrate an innovative and scalable business concept.
- Show the founder's qualifications and active role.
- Prepare a credible funding and implementation plan.
- Establish the company and complete the residence process within the required sequence.

Family and longer-term planning

Startup founders can generally plan for family residence under the applicable rules. Extensions and longer-term residence depend on continued eligibility, lawful residence, and business progress.

Application strategy

Show why the company can grow from Lithuania into a broader European or international market. Product evidence, founder skills, financing, and the implementation timeline are especially important.

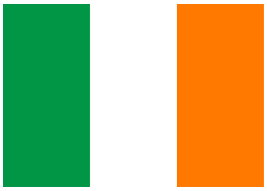
2026 watchpoint

Program details and permit durations have changed over time; verify the current Migration Department requirements before filing.

CHAPTER 14

Ireland

Start-up Entrepreneur Programme (STEP)



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	High-potential startup route	Innovative international-market startup	EUR 50,000 funding generally required

Why founders consider it

Ireland's STEP targets founders of high-potential startups rather than ordinary small businesses. It is designed for innovative companies capable of international growth and job creation, with Ireland serving as a base for development and expansion.

Core eligibility themes

- Be of good character and satisfy immigration requirements.
- Have the required startup funding, generally at least EUR 50,000 for the principal founder.
- Present an innovative business proposal with international growth potential.
- Show founder capability and a credible implementation plan.
- Demonstrate that the project fits the STEP concept rather than a locally oriented conventional business.

Family and longer-term planning

Successful founders can receive residence permission and may include qualifying family members. Renewal and long-term residence depend on continued compliance and business activity.

Application strategy

The application should look like an investor-ready startup case: product, team, market, revenue model, international growth, and use of capital. Avoid presenting a conventional retail, hospitality, or low-growth service business as a high-potential startup.

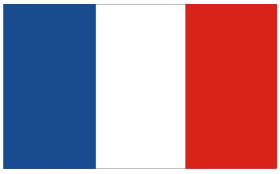
2026 watchpoint

STEP accepts applications on an ongoing basis but evaluation occurs through the program's review process. Use the current official forms and guidance.

CHAPTER 15

France

Talent residence - business creation / innovative economic project



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Talent / entrepreneur route	Founder with credible project or recognized innovation	EUR 30,000 for business-creation route; resources required

Why founders consider it

France provides several founder-relevant routes within its talent residence framework. Depending on the project, a founder may qualify through a business-creation category or an innovative economic project recognized by a public body.

Core eligibility themes

- For the business-creation route, demonstrate a real and serious project and the required professional background or comparable experience.
- Meet the applicable business financing requirement, including the current EUR 30,000 threshold for the business-creation category.
- For an innovative economic project, obtain the required recognition by a public body.
- Demonstrate sufficient means of support.
- Meet the general residence and documentation requirements.

Family and longer-term planning

The talent framework can support family residence under the accompanying-family provisions. Permits can be multi-year, subject to the specific category and continued eligibility.

Application strategy

Choose the correct French talent subcategory before building the documentation. A recognized innovative project and a conventional company-creation case use different evidence and should not be mixed.

2026 watchpoint

“French Tech Visa” is often used as a marketing label, but applicants should identify the exact legal talent/residence category that applies to the founder.

CHAPTER 16

Germany

Residence permit for self-employment



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Entrepreneur / self-employment	Founder with economic interest or regional demand	Financing must be secured; no single statutory fixed amount

Why founders consider it

Germany's self-employment residence permit is a broad entrepreneur route rather than a narrow startup visa. A founder must show that the proposed activity has a sound economic basis and is likely to have a positive effect on the economy.

Core eligibility themes

- Show an economic interest or regional demand for the product or service.
- Demonstrate a positive expected effect on the economy.
- Secure financing through own capital or a loan commitment.
- Present a credible business plan, founder qualifications, and market evidence.
- Applicants over the relevant age threshold may need to show adequate old-age provision.

Family and longer-term planning

The permit can initially be issued for up to three years. Successful business founders may be able to apply for a settlement permit after three years if the statutory conditions are met. Family residence is governed by the applicable reunification rules.

Application strategy

Local demand and financing should be evidenced, not asserted. Use German market research, customer or partner letters, contracts, financing documents, and a realistic local operating plan.

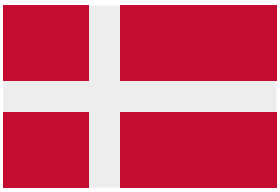
2026 watchpoint

The route can work for innovative and conventional businesses, but the economic-interest test remains central. Local immigration and trade-office practice can affect implementation.

CHAPTER 17

Denmark

Start-up Denmark



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Dedicated startup route	Innovative high-growth business	Self-support funds; business must pass expert panel

Why founders consider it

Start-up Denmark is a dedicated scheme for talented non-EU/EEA entrepreneurs who want to establish an innovative growth company in Denmark. The business idea must first be approved by an expert panel before the residence-and-work permit application proceeds.

Core eligibility themes

- Submit a business plan for panel approval.
- The business must be innovative and have meaningful growth potential.
- Ordinary restaurants, retail, small trade, import/export, and similar businesses generally do not qualify unless the concept itself is sufficiently innovative.
- The founder must actively operate the approved business.
- Demonstrate sufficient funds to support the founder and accompanying family/

Family and longer-term planning

Qualifying founders may bring immediate family under the applicable accompanying-family rules. Continued residence depends on the approved business remaining active and the immigration conditions being maintained.

Application strategy

The innovation test is the gatekeeper. Build the submission around differentiation, scalability, founder competence, market size, and a clear Denmark-based growth strategy.

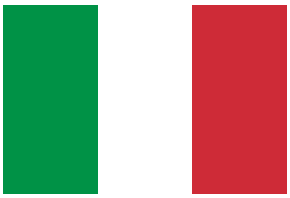
2026 watchpoint

Panel approval and the immigration permit are separate steps. Approval of the business concept does not remove the need to satisfy the residence requirements.

CHAPTER 18

Italy

Italia Startup Visa (ISV)



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Dedicated innovative-startup route	Non-EU innovative founder	At least EUR 50,000 financial resources for startup

Why founders consider it

Italia Startup Visa is designed for non-EU innovators who want to establish an innovative startup in Italy. The program uses a centralized startup assessment and then a self-employment visa/residence process.

Core eligibility themes

- Present an innovative startup business model.
- Demonstrate at least EUR 50,000 in financial resources available for the innovative startup under current program guidance.
- Submit the required application form and financial-resource cover documentation.
- Provide the business presentation and supporting materials requested by the program.
- After approval, complete the consular visa and in-country residence-permit steps.

Family and longer-term planning

The program provides an initial startup self-employment visa/residence period, with a pathway to renewal when the innovative startup has been properly established and the founder continues to meet the requirements. Family options follow the relevant Italian rules.

Application strategy

Use the official Italia Startup Visa forms and evidence structure. Show precisely how the proposed company meets Italy's innovative-startup framework and document the available startup capital clearly.

2026 watchpoint

Do not rely on older summaries claiming a generic two-year startup visa. The official ISV site currently describes a one-year initial startup self-employment visa and residence permit followed by renewal procedures.

CHAPTER 19

Austria

Red-White-Red Card - Start-up Founders



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Points-based startup founder route	Innovative founder with capital and management control	Minimum EUR 30,000 capital; at least 50% equity

Why founders consider it

Austria's Red-White-Red Card includes a specific Start-up Founders category for entrepreneurs establishing an innovative company and personally exercising a controlling influence on its management.

Core eligibility themes

- Establish a company to develop and launch innovative products, services, processes, or technologies.
- Submit a consistent business plan.
- Personally exercise controlling influence over the management of the new company.
- Demonstrate at least EUR 30,000 in capital for the company with an equity share of at least 50%.
- Achieve at least the required points under the start-up founder criteria.

Family and longer-term planning

The Red-White-Red Card is generally issued for a limited period, with potential transition to a Red-White-Red Card Plus when the applicable conditions are satisfied. Family members may have linked residence options.

Application strategy

Complete the points analysis before spending heavily on incorporation. The business plan and proof of capital should be built to demonstrate both innovation and the founder's controlling role.

2026 watchpoint

Points, capital, and other thresholds can be amended; use the current Austrian migration portal criteria at the time of filing.

CHAPTER 20

Belgium

Professional card for self-employed entrepreneurs



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Self-employment / professional card	Founder creating economic or innovative value	Varies by region and project

Why founders consider it

Non-EU founders who want to carry out a self-employed activity in Belgium generally need a professional card, with the relevant regional authority assessing the proposed activity. The system is regional, so the evidence and emphasis can vary between Flanders, Brussels, Wallonia, and the German-speaking Community.

Core eligibility themes

- Identify the correct regional authority and professional-card procedure.
- Demonstrate the economic, innovative, social, cultural, or other recognized value of the activity.
- Show the founder's professional competence and a credible business model.
- Document financing, projected activity, and regulatory compliance.
- Complete the residence/visa process linked to the approved self-employed activity.

Family and longer-term planning

Family reunification may be available under Belgian immigration rules. Longer-term residence depends on maintaining lawful residence, business activity, and the applicable integration and residence conditions.

Application strategy

Build a region-specific case. A plan for Brussels should not simply be reused for Flanders without addressing the regional economic-value criteria and local market.

2026 watchpoint

The professional card is not one national "startup visa." Regional rules and competent authorities matter.

CHAPTER 21

Finland

Residence permit for a start-up entrepreneur



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Business Finland eligibility + residence	Scalable startup team	Personal income/support requirement; financing assessed

Why founders consider it

Finland's start-up entrepreneur residence permit is designed for founders of growth-oriented startups. Before applying for the residence permit, the founder must obtain a positive Eligibility Statement from Business Finland.

Core eligibility themes

- Obtain a current Business Finland Eligibility Statement.
- Demonstrate a scalable startup business with a capable founding team.
- Show adequate financing and resources for the company.
- Meet the personal income requirement for the founder's living costs.
- The founder's main activity in Finland must be startup entrepreneurship.

Family and longer-term planning

The first permit may be granted for a period that reflects the available support and program rules, and qualifying family members can apply under the applicable family provisions. Extensions require continued eligibility and sufficient resources.

Application strategy

Treat the Business Finland statement as the commercial gatekeeper. Show international growth potential, team competence, market need, competitive advantage, financing, and a realistic Finland operating plan.

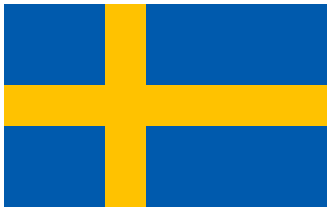
2026 watchpoint

The Eligibility Statement has a limited validity period, so coordinate the Business Finland stage and the residence application carefully.

CHAPTER 22

Sweden

Residence permit for self-employed persons



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Self-employment	Experienced founder owning and running business	Business + personal support funds required

Why founders consider it

Sweden does not rely on a single startup visa. Non-EU entrepreneurs can apply for a residence permit to run their own business, subject to ownership, experience, business viability, customer connections, and financial-resource requirements.

Core eligibility themes

- Demonstrate relevant industry experience and experience running a business.
- Show sufficient knowledge of Swedish or English for the proposed activity.
- Own at least 51% of the business and have decisive responsibility for it.
- Present a credible budget and show established customer contacts or networks.
- Show sufficient personal support funds and enough capital to operate the business.

Family and longer-term planning

The permit may be granted for up to two years initially. Qualifying family members can apply, and some accompanying family members may have work rights under the applicable rules. Permanent residence can become possible after a qualifying period and successful extension.

Application strategy

Use customer evidence. Sweden's route is not designed for a speculative paper company. Contracts, letters of intent, supplier arrangements, cash-flow assumptions, and the founder's operating experience are critical.

2026 watchpoint

The Swedish Migration Agency publishes specific support-fund amounts that can change; verify the current figures immediately before filing.

CHAPTER 23

Latvia

Temporary residence for startup / innovative product activities



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Startup / innovative-product residence	Founder developing qualifying innovative product	Program-specific financing and startup conditions

Why founders consider it

Latvia provides a residence framework for foreigners connected with qualifying startup and innovative-product activity. The route is intended to support genuine innovation rather than ordinary passive company ownership.

Core eligibility themes

- Prepare evidence of the innovative product and business activity.
- Submit the business information and development plan required by the residence process.
- Demonstrate sufficient personal financial resources.
- Complete required company and management registrations within the prescribed period.
- Satisfy the program's ongoing investment, venture-capital, or business-development conditions where applicable.

Family and longer-term planning

Family residence may be available under Latvia's immigration rules. Longer-term status requires lawful residence and compliance with the conditions of the permit and the business.

Application strategy

Because Latvia's startup provisions have detailed post-arrival conditions, map the first 18 months before filing: company registration, management role, financing milestones, and reporting requirements.

2026 watchpoint

Specific funding and venture-investment conditions can change; verify the current Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs rules rather than relying on older promotional material.

CHAPTER 24

Malta

Malta Startup Residence Programme

2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Dedicated startup residence	Innovative founder with Malta-based startup	Minimum EUR 25,000 tangible investment/paid-up share capital

Why founders consider it

Malta's Startup Residence Programme provides a structured residence route for third-country founders and core employees of qualifying innovative startups. It combines business eligibility with genuine Malta presence and residence expectations.

Core eligibility themes

- The startup must fall within the program's eligibility rules and generally be relatively young.
- Demonstrate innovation and a credible business model.
- Make at least the required tangible investment and/or paid-up share capital, currently starting at EUR 25,000.
- Maintain genuine presence and operate the startup from Malta.
- Meet health-insurance, good-conduct, and other residence requirements.

Family and longer-term planning

Founders can receive a multi-year startup residence permit and may include qualifying family members. The program provides extension options subject to continued eligibility and activity.

Application strategy

Prepare the company structure, capitalization evidence, founder roles, and Malta operating plan together. A residence application that is disconnected from the company's real Malta operations will be weaker.

2026 watchpoint

The program includes specific founder numbers, employee rules, fees, and qualifying-business criteria. Use the latest Residency Malta handbook at filing.

CHAPTER 25

Cyprus

Cyprus Startup Visa Scheme



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active through current scheme period	Dedicated startup scheme	High-growth innovative founder/team	Funding/resources assessed by scheme

Why founders consider it

Cyprus operates a Startup Visa Scheme for talented third-country entrepreneurs who want to establish, operate, and develop high-growth startups in Cyprus. The scheme can accommodate individual founders or startup teams, subject to the current eligibility rules.

Core eligibility themes

- Develop an innovative, high-growth startup concept.
- Meet the scheme's founder/team and ownership requirements.
- Submit the business plan and startup evaluation materials to the competent authority.
- Demonstrate access to the resources needed to establish and operate the company.
- After approval, complete the immigration and residence stages.

Family and longer-term planning

The scheme is designed to support founder residence and can include family rights under the applicable immigration rules. Long-term options depend on continued lawful residence and the separate permanent-residence/nationality requirements.

Application strategy

Prepare for both innovation assessment and immigration review. The business case should show technology or innovation, addressable market, founder capability, funding, and measurable economic contribution to Cyprus.

2026 watchpoint

The current scheme has been renewed for a defined period and is stated to run through December 2026. Confirm whether it has been extended before accepting a later filing.

CHAPTER 26

Greece

Startup investment residence / Golden Visa

2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Investor residence linked to startup investment	Investor in registered Greek startup	EUR 250,000 startup investment

Why founders consider it

Greece introduced a startup-focused investment residence option within its wider Golden Visa framework. It is primarily an investor route, not a classic founder-incubator visa, and it is tied to investment in a startup registered in the national startup ecosystem.

Core eligibility themes

- Invest at least EUR 250,000 in a startup registered in the National Startup Registry / Elevate Greece under the applicable framework.
- The investment must meet the statutory ownership and structure conditions.
- The startup must create at least two new jobs within the first year under the current legislation.
- The required employment level must be maintained for the specified period.
- Complete the investor-residence documentation and source-of-funds process.

Family and longer-term planning

Investor residence can include qualifying family members under the Golden Visa framework. Citizenship is a separate process and generally requires actual residence and other naturalization conditions.

Application strategy

Treat this as an investment due-diligence project as well as an immigration case. Review the startup, valuation, ownership terms, job-creation obligations, source of funds, and exit/liquidity risk before investing.

2026 watchpoint

This route is materially different from buying real estate. Startup investments carry business risk and should not be presented as a guaranteed immigration investment.

CHAPTER 27

Hungary

Residence permit for guest self-employment

2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Self-employment / company executive	Self-employed founder or business executive	Sufficient resources; business viability evidence

Why founders consider it

Hungary's guest self-employment residence permit can be used by a third-country national who will work independently for remuneration or act as the chief executive of a business organization. It is a broader entrepreneur route rather than an innovation-only startup visa.

Core eligibility themes

- Show the legal basis for self-employment or executive activity.
- Provide a detailed declaration/business activity plan supported by credible evidence.
- Demonstrate sufficient resources, accommodation, and health coverage.
- For an executive route, show either qualifying local employment or that the applicant's presence is essential and the business can generate sufficient income.
- Comply with regular reporting and residence conditions.

Family and longer-term planning

The permit has a limited maximum period under the current law. Family options and future residence should be assessed separately because Hungary's newer immigration framework places specific restrictions on some permit categories.

Application strategy

Use contracts, revenue evidence, customer agreements, and operational documents to prove that the company will be real and economically sustainable. A dormant company is not enough.

2026 watchpoint

Do not confuse guest self-employment with Hungary's guest-worker route. Guest-worker rules changed in 2026 and are separate from entrepreneur residence.

CHAPTER 28

Serbia

Self-employment - Visa D / single residence and work permit



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Self-employment / business residence	Founder, shareholder or sole proprietor	No startup-specific minimum; business and residence evidence

Why founders consider it

Serbia recognizes self-employment as a valid basis for residence and work. A foreign founder may establish a company or register as an entrepreneur and, depending on nationality and circumstances, apply through a Visa D or the single temporary residence and work permit framework.

Core eligibility themes

- Register the relevant Serbian business or establish the legal basis for self-employment.
- Prepare the visa or single-permit application under the correct self-employment category.
- Provide business registration evidence and required personal documents.
- Establish accommodation/address evidence and satisfy general residence conditions.
- Understand that company registration alone does not guarantee immigration approval.

Family and longer-term planning

Temporary residence/work permission can be issued within the current statutory framework and may support family residence under separate provisions. Long-term residence requires meeting Serbia's residence conditions over time.

Application strategy

Separate the incorporation plan from the immigration plan. Decide who will own, manage, and work for the company, and make sure the founder's legal role matches the residence basis used.

2026 watchpoint

Serbia's official portal expressly warns that establishing a company is a valid purpose of residence but does not guarantee that a visa or permit will be granted.

CHAPTER 29

Slovakia



Temporary residence for the purpose of business

2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Business residence	Sole trader or company executive	Business and personal funds required

Why founders consider it

Slovakia allows third-country nationals to seek temporary residence for the purpose of business as a sole trader or as an executive of a commercial company. The route is not limited to innovative startups, but the business purpose and financial sustainability must be documented.

Core eligibility themes

- Document the business purpose through a business plan and evidence of feasibility and sustainability.
- A startup can use the innovative-project business-plan format where applicable.
- Demonstrate personal financial means for the residence period.
- Demonstrate separate financial resources for the business activity at the current statutory level.
- Apply through the required Slovak diplomatic mission/Foreign Police procedure and provide accommodation and other supporting documents.

Family and longer-term planning

Business residence can be granted for a multi-year period under the current law. Family reunion and later permanent-residence planning are separate processes and depend on continued lawful residence and compliance.

Application strategy

Build two financial files: one proving the founder can support personal living costs and another proving the company has sufficient business resources. Keep business funds and personal support evidence clearly separated.

2026 watchpoint

The financial thresholds are linked to Slovakia's subsistence minimum and were updated in July 2026; verify the current amounts before filing.

PART IV

ASIA-PACIFIC

Asia-Pacific founder pathways range from dedicated startup and entrepreneur passes to invitation-only innovation visas and business-investment routes. Program definitions matter: not every entrepreneur category is designed for a new startup.



Global Diaspora Venture Capital

CHAPTER 30

Singapore

EntrePass

2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Entrepreneur pass	Venture-backed or innovative-tech founder	No minimum salary; business eligibility tests apply

Why founders consider it

Singapore's EntrePass is designed for foreign entrepreneurs who want to operate a Singapore business that is venture-backed or owns innovative technologies. It is not intended as a generic small-business visa and uses founder and business-quality criteria.

Core eligibility themes

- Be an eligible foreign entrepreneur and establish or intend to establish a qualifying Singapore private limited company.
- Hold the required ownership interest under the current rules.
- The business must be venture-backed or own innovative technologies.
- Meet at least one qualifying founder/business criterion published by the Ministry of Manpower.
- Maintain the business and meet renewal benchmarks as the company develops.

Family and longer-term planning

Family eligibility is linked to business spending and local workforce thresholds under the EntrePass framework. Permanent residence is a separate application assessed under Singapore's immigration policies.

Application strategy

Choose the qualifying criterion first - funding, intellectual property, research collaboration, accelerator track record, or other accepted basis - and then build the evidence around it. Do not submit a generic business plan without proving the selected criterion.

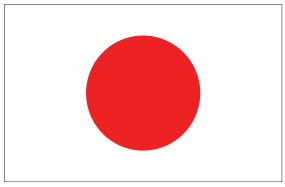
2026 watchpoint

EntrePass renewal requirements can become more demanding as the business grows, including business spending and local workforce benchmarks.

CHAPTER 31

Japan

Startup Visa - Foreign Entrepreneurship Promotion Program



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Startup preparation status	Founder preparing to meet Business Manager rules	Startup preparation period; later Business Manager thresholds

Why founders consider it

Japan's Startup Visa framework allows qualifying foreign entrepreneurs to carry out startup-preparation activities with support from approved local organizations before they satisfy all requirements for the Business Manager status. The program was expanded nationwide under the current framework.

Core eligibility themes

- Apply through an approved foreign-entrepreneurship promotion organization/local authority.
- Submit a Business Preparation Activity Plan and supporting materials.
- Obtain confirmation that the plan is expected to satisfy the Business Manager requirements within the permitted startup-preparation period.
- Use the startup period to establish the office, company structure, capital, staffing, and operational requirements.
- Transition to Business Manager status when the current criteria are met.

Family and longer-term planning

The startup preparation status can support a structured move to Japan, but longer-term residence depends on transitioning to an appropriate status and maintaining the business. Family options depend on the status held.

Application strategy

Plan backward from the Business Manager requirements. As of 2026, Japan's current rules include significantly higher business thresholds than older guides: JETRO identifies a business premises requirement, at least JPY 30 million in capital/investment, and at least one qualifying full-time employee.

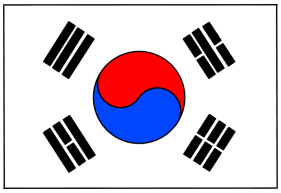
2026 watchpoint

Japan changed the Business Manager criteria effective October 16, 2025. Old references to a JPY 5 million capital alternative are outdated for new cases under the current framework.

CHAPTER 32

South Korea

Startup Korea Special Visa D-8-4(S)



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Special startup visa	Innovative foreign entrepreneurial talent	Business feasibility/innovation evaluation

Why founders consider it

South Korea launched the Startup Korea Special Visa, D-8-4(S), to attract foreign entrepreneurial talent. The special route emphasizes business feasibility and innovation through a private evaluation process and a recommendation from the Ministry of SMEs and Startups.

Core eligibility themes

- Prepare the special-visa application and business plan through the designated startup channels.
- Pass an evaluation of business feasibility and innovation by the private evaluation committee.
- Obtain the recommendation letter from the Ministry of SMEs and Startups.
- Submit the visa/status application to Korean immigration or an overseas diplomatic mission.
- Establish and operate the qualifying company in accordance with the visa conditions.

Family and longer-term planning

Family and longer-term residence options depend on the status granted and Korea's accompanying-family/permanent-residence rules. Separate criteria apply for permanent residence.

Application strategy

Build the application as an innovation and commercialization case: problem, technology, market, team, intellectual property, Korea market strategy, and traction. The recommendation stage is central.

2026 watchpoint

Korea continues to refine D-8-4 technology-startup rules; in 2026 the Ministry of Justice also announced expansion of point-system exemptions for certain technology-startup applicants.

CHAPTER 33

Australia

National Innovation Visa (subclass 858)



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active but invitation-only	Permanent innovation/talent visa	Exceptionally talented entrepreneur or innovator	No generic startup investment minimum

Why founders consider it

Australia closed the former Business Innovation and Investment Program to new applications in 2024. The current National Innovation Visa is a permanent, invitation-only visa for exceptionally talented people, including qualifying entrepreneurs and innovative investors. It is not a general founder visa for anyone opening a new company.

Core eligibility themes

- Submit an expression of interest for consideration for invitation.
- Demonstrate an internationally recognized record of exceptional and outstanding achievement.
- Show that the applicant is prominent in the relevant area and would be an asset to Australia.
- If invited, submit the visa application with the required evidence and nomination/support framework.
- Maintain accuracy regarding achievements, awards, investment history, and impact.

Family and longer-term planning

Because the National Innovation Visa is a permanent visa, successful applicants obtain a much stronger immigration outcome than a temporary startup permit, but the talent threshold is correspondingly high. Eligible family members can generally be included under the visa rules.

Application strategy

Do not position the National Innovation Visa as an “easy replacement” for the old business visa. The case should focus on exceptional achievement and impact, not merely the ability to invest or operate a business.

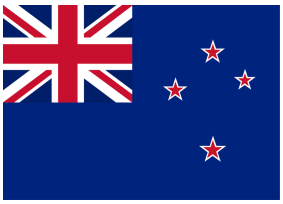
2026 watchpoint

The subclass 188 Business Innovation and Investment visa is closed to new applications. Any 2026 entrepreneur assessment should use the current National Innovation Visa framework or another available visa category.

CHAPTER 34

New Zealand

Business Investor Work Visa



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Business investment / work-to-residence	Experienced investor acquiring established business	NZD 1m or NZD 2m route

Why founders consider it

New Zealand's former Entrepreneur Work Visa is closed to new applicants. The current Business Investor Work Visa focuses on experienced businesspeople who invest in and actively operate an established New Zealand business. This is therefore a business-acquisition route, not a classic startup visa.

Core eligibility themes

- Demonstrate appropriate business experience and meet character/health requirements.
- Invest in an eligible established New Zealand business.
- Use the current investment option - including the NZD 1 million or NZD 2 million pathway - as permitted under the rules.
- Actively operate the business and satisfy the residence-pathway conditions.
- Ensure the business itself meets eligibility rules, including current rules for franchises and other approved structures.

Family and longer-term planning

The visa is designed as a work-to-residence pathway, with timing depending on the investment option and continued compliance. Family inclusion is governed by the current visa rules.

Application strategy

Conduct commercial due diligence on the business before treating the immigration route as viable. Review financials, valuation, ownership, employment, industry restrictions, and the applicant's actual management plan.

2026 watchpoint

The Entrepreneur Work Visa was closed and replaced by a new business-investor model. Do not use older startup-visa materials for New Zealand.

PART V

MIDDLE EAST

The Gulf has become a major destination for global founders, technology companies, investors, and regional headquarters. The UAE and Saudi Arabia now offer entrepreneur-focused long-term residence options with very different eligibility structures.



CHAPTER 35

United Arab Emirates

Golden Residency - Entrepreneur category



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Long-term entrepreneur residence	Founder of qualifying UAE entrepreneurial venture	Program criteria; revenue/recognition routes

Why founders consider it

The UAE's current Golden Residency framework includes an entrepreneur category for founders of qualifying economic projects. The federal criteria can recognize founders of UAE small and medium enterprises meeting the required revenue threshold, approved innovative ideas, or founders with qualifying exit history, subject to official approvals.

Core eligibility themes

- Own or partner in a qualifying UAE entrepreneurial project under the current criteria.
- Meet the applicable revenue, innovation, incubator/authority approval, or qualifying founder-history test.
- Provide the required business, ownership, financial, and approval evidence.
- Meet health-insurance and general residence requirements.
- Use the competent federal or emirate channel for the specific application.

Family and longer-term planning

The current federal Golden Residency framework provides long-term residence and permits sponsorship of qualifying family members. Specific benefits and procedures depend on the category and authority handling the case.

Application strategy

Identify the exact entrepreneur qualification before forming a company solely for immigration. Some Golden Residency entrepreneur criteria require an operating business history or recognition by an approved incubator/authority rather than a newly registered company alone.

2026 watchpoint

Older guides frequently describe a five-year entrepreneur Golden Visa and an AED 500,000 project-value test. The UAE federal ICP portal currently describes a 10-year Golden Residency entrepreneur category with updated qualification criteria. Verify the competent authority for the applicant's emirate.

CHAPTER 36

Saudi Arabia

Premium Residency - Entrepreneur Residency



2026 STATUS	ROUTE TYPE	FOUNDER FOCUS	CAPITAL TEST
Active	Entrepreneur premium residence	Founder raising approved investment round	Category 1: SAR 400k; Category 2: SAR 15m

Why founders consider it

Saudi Arabia's Premium Residency framework includes an Entrepreneur Residency product intended to attract founders and support high-growth companies. The program uses two entrepreneur categories with different investment, ownership, job-creation, and residence outcomes.

Core eligibility themes

- Obtain an entrepreneurial license from the Ministry of Investment as required.
- Secure a qualifying investment round from an approved entity.
- Category 1 currently requires at least SAR 400,000 and the specified founder ownership threshold.
- Category 2 currently requires at least SAR 15 million, the specified ownership threshold, and staged local job creation.
- Obtain the required recommendation and submit the Premium Residency application with complete financial and business evidence.

Family and longer-term planning

Category 1 can provide renewable fixed-term residence subject to the program conditions. Category 2 can provide a direct permanent-residency pathway subject to the investment and job-creation requirements. Family benefits follow the Premium Residency framework.

Application strategy

Choose the category based on the company's real funding stage. A seed-stage founder should not structure an artificial transaction simply to reach a threshold. Evidence of genuine investment, valuation, ownership, and job creation should be commercially defensible.

2026 watchpoint

Saudi entrepreneur residency is linked to an approved investment round and entrepreneurship licensing. It is not the same as simply forming a Saudi company or purchasing an investor license.

PART VI

APPLICATION TOOLKIT

Use this section to compare routes, organize documents, prepare funds, plan family relocation, identify weaknesses, and structure the first client assessment.



CHAPTER 37

Global Comparison Matrix

A practical 2026 overview - not a ranking

Country	Main route	Status	Capital / funds	Core test
United States	O-1A / E-2 / IER / L-1A	Active	Varies by route	Achievement / treaty investment / growth
Canada	Federal Start-Up Visa	Paused	New intake closed	Monitor IRCC
United Kingdom	Innovator Founder	Active	No fixed visa minimum	Endorsement + innovation/viability/scale
Estonia	Startup Visa	Active	Support funds	Tech, innovation, scale
Netherlands	Startup residence	Active	Support funds	Innovation + facilitator
Portugal	Startup Visa	Active	Support funds	Innovation + certified incubator
Spain	Entrepreneur route	Active	No universal fixed amount	Innovation + economic interest
Lithuania	Startup founder	Active	Funding plan	Startup approval + scale
Ireland	STEP	Active	EUR 50k	High-potential startup
France	Talent entrepreneur routes	Active	EUR 30k on business-creation route	Real/serious or recognized innovative project
Germany	Self-employment	Active	Financing secured	Economic interest / positive impact
Denmark	Start-up Denmark	Active	Self-support funds	Panel-approved innovative growth company
Italy	Italia Startup Visa	Active	EUR 50k	Innovative startup + central approval
Austria	RWR Start-up Founders	Active	EUR 30k / 50% equity	Innovation + points
Belgium	Professional card	Active	Varies	Regional economic/innovative value
Finland	Start-up entrepreneur	Active	Support + startup financing	Business Finland statement
Sweden	Self-employed	Active	Personal + business funds	Ownership + experience + customers
Latvia	Startup/innovative activity	Active	Program-specific	Innovation + post-arrival milestones
Malta	Startup Residence	Active	EUR 25k minimum base	Qualifying innovative startup
Cyprus	Startup Visa Scheme	Active	Program-specific	High-growth innovation
Greece	Startup investment residence	Active	EUR 250k	Investment + job creation
Hungary	Guest self-employment	Active	Sufficient resources	Self-employment/executive viability
Serbia	Self-employment single permit	Active	No startup-specific minimum	Registered business + residence basis
Slovakia	Business temporary residence	Active	Personal + business funds	Business plan + sustainability
Singapore	EntrePass	Active	No minimum salary	Venture-backed / innovative tech
Japan	Startup Visa	Active	Later Business Manager thresholds	Startup preparation -> Business Manager
South Korea	D-8-4(S)	Active	Case-specific	Innovation + government recommendation
Australia	National Innovation Visa	Invitation-only	No generic minimum	Exceptional achievement
New Zealand	Business Investor Work Visa	Active	NZD 1m / 2m	Acquire established business
UAE	Golden Residency entrepreneur	Active	Criteria-based	Operating/recognized entrepreneur
Saudi Arabia	Entrepreneur Premium Residency	Active	SAR 400k / 15m categories	Approved investment + ownership/jobs

How to use the matrix

Use the table to identify categories for further assessment. Do not treat it as a substitute for a full eligibility review, because ownership rules, family rights, source-of-funds evidence, processing procedures, and program availability may change.

CHAPTER 38

Founder Document Checklist

Build the file before you build the application

Identity and immigration

Passport and prior passports□
Birth certificate where required□
Marriage certificate / relationship evidence□
Children's birth certificates□
Police clearances□
Medical/insurance evidence where required□
Prior visa and immigration history□

Founder profile

Detailed CV□
Educational credentials□
Employment references□
Business ownership history□
Professional licenses□
Awards and honors□
Media coverage□
Judging or speaking evidence□
Published work / patents / IP□
Professional memberships□

Business evidence

Business plan□
Pitch deck□
Company incorporation documents□
Cap table / ownership evidence□
Shareholders' agreements□
Product screenshots or technical documentation□
Customer contracts / LOIs□
Supplier agreements□
Partnership letters□
Incubator / accelerator evidence□
Market research□
Competitor analysis□

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Financial evidence

Personal bank statements□
Business bank statements□
Investment agreements□
Investor letters□
Source-of-funds documents□
Tax returns□
Sale agreements□
Loan agreements where permitted□
Financial projections□
Use-of-funds schedule□

Country-specific evidence

Endorsement letter□

Incubator acceptance□
Government approval□
Facilitator agreement□
Office lease□
Local company registration□
Employment plan□
Local licenses/permits□
Health insurance□
Accommodation evidence

Document control

Use a master checklist with file names, issue dates, translation status, certification status, and the immigration criterion each document supports. This prevents duplicate uploads and missing evidence.

CHAPTER 39

Financial and Source-of-Funds Preparation

Founder immigration often requires two different financial stories: the founder must be able to support personal living costs, and the business must have enough credible funding to execute the plan. These should be documented separately even when the same person ultimately funds both.

Source-of-funds file

- Identify every material source of capital.
- Create a timeline showing how the money was earned, accumulated, sold, gifted, borrowed, or invested.
- Match bank transfers to supporting documents.
- Keep tax records and business records consistent with the claimed source.
- Translate and certify documents as required.
- Avoid unexplained cash deposits, circular transfers, or last-minute movements that cannot be documented.

Business financing file

- Startup budget and use-of-funds schedule
- Founder capital contribution
- Investor term sheet or subscription documents
- Loan commitment where the program allows debt funding
- Bank evidence showing the funds are actually available
- Projected runway and monthly burn
- Contingency reserve
- Evidence of future revenue or signed customer commitments where available

Compliance principle

Immigration approval does not replace banking, anti-money-laundering, securities, foreign-exchange, or tax compliance. Significant investments should be reviewed with qualified legal, banking, accounting, and tax professionals.

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CHAPTER 40

Family and Relocation Planning

A founder visa is often a family decision. Spouse work rights, children's schooling, healthcare, residence continuity, and travel can be just as important as the founder's business eligibility.

- Can the spouse or partner accompany the founder immediately?
- Does the spouse have open work rights, restricted work rights, or no work authorization?
- What age and dependency rules apply to children?
- Can dependent parents be included?
- Does the founder need private health insurance?
- What physical-presence rules apply to the founder and family?
- Will long absences affect renewal or permanent residence?
- Does the route lead to permanent residence automatically, conditionally, or not at all?
- What language, integration, tax-residence, or citizenship requirements may apply later?
- How will school calendars, housing, banking, and business launch timing be coordinated?

Plan for two timelines

Build an immigration timeline and a family-relocation timeline. A founder may be ready to launch the company months before school, housing, spouse employment, or tax planning is ready.

CHAPTER 41

Common Application Weaknesses

Why potentially good founder cases become difficult

Generic business plan
The plan could be submitted to any country and does not explain local market demand, customers, partners, hiring, or regulation.

Innovation by adjective
The application repeatedly calls the business “innovative” but does not identify what is actually new or defensible.

Unrealistic projections
Revenue rises sharply without a customer-acquisition model, staffing plan, capital needs, or evidence.

Founder-business mismatch
The founder has no demonstrated experience, skills, network, or team to execute the proposed business.

Weak source of funds
Money appears shortly before filing with incomplete evidence showing where it came from.

Paper company
Incorporation documents exist, but there is no office, customer activity, product progress, financing, or operational plan.

Wrong immigration route
The business is conventional but the applicant chooses an innovation-only program, or the founder has a stronger expansion/talent route that is ignored.

Outdated program information
The case relies on rules that have changed - for example, Canada’s paused Start-Up Visa intake or New Zealand’s closed Entrepreneur Work Visa.

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CHAPTER 42

Global Visa Assessment Process

A structured path from idea to filing

Step 1 - Founder Profile Assessment
Review nationality, residence history, education, experience, achievements, business ownership, immigration history, family, and long-term goals.

Step 2 - Business Assessment
Review the business model, innovation, market, ownership, funding, traction, customers, team, and international expansion logic.

Step 3 - Country & Route Shortlist
Identify routes that fit both immigration law and commercial reality. Exclude unavailable or structurally unsuitable programs early.

Step 4 - Evidence Gap Analysis
Create a written list of what is already strong, what must be documented, and what cannot legitimately be fixed.

Step 5 - Business Plan & Application Strategy
Build the founder narrative, country-specific business plan, financial model, and evidence package around the actual legal criteria.

Step 6 - Professional Coordination
Where needed, coordinate with licensed lawyers, accountants, corporate-service providers, incubators, endorsing bodies, facilitators, banks, or other regulated professionals.

Step 7 - Filing & Case Management
Organize forms, supporting documents, translations, appointments, responses, and case milestones under the agreed scope of service.

Step 8 - Pre-Departure & Post-Landing
Plan company activation, residence registration, banking, housing, tax onboarding, family relocation, and ongoing compliance where applicable.

Free initial assessment

Global Visa & Immigration Services Inc. can begin with an initial profile review to identify the most relevant questions before a client commits to a full case strategy. Any formal legal advice or representation should be provided by appropriately authorized professionals where required.

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CHAPTER 42

Founder Intake - Information to Collect

- Full name, nationality, country of residence, and age
- Spouse/partner nationality and children's ages
- Education and professional qualifications
- Current occupation and business role
- Existing company ownership and number of employees
- Annual company revenue and operating history
- Founder awards, press, patents, speaking, judging, or other achievements
- Business concept and industry
- Stage: idea, prototype, MVP, paying customers, revenue, or scale-up
- Available personal capital and business capital
- External investment already raised
- Source of funds
- Preferred countries
- Reason for choosing each country
- Desired move date
- Need for spouse work authorization
- Long-term goal: temporary expansion, permanent residence, or citizenship
- Prior visa refusals, overstays, criminal issues, or other admissibility concerns

Assessment output

A strong assessment should end with a small number of realistic pathways, the key eligibility issues for each, an evidence checklist, major risks, and the next decision the client needs to make.

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