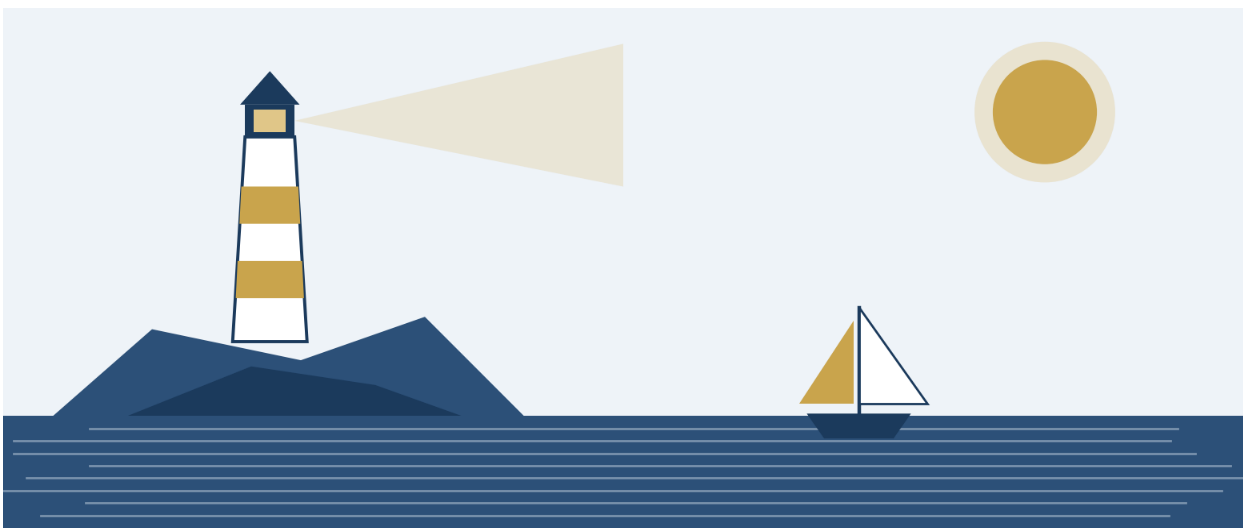
**KABIR & ALAM LAWYERS**
*Canadian Immigration & Refugee Law*

NOVA SCOTIA NOMINEE PROGRAM

# Entrepreneur Stream

*Requirements and Process*



**Client Information Guide**

Prepared August 2026

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*This guide is for general information only and does not constitute legal advice.*

Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP)

# Entrepreneur Stream

*Client Information Guide – Requirements and Process*

Prepared by Kabir & Alam Lawyers | August 2026

## 1. Overview

The Entrepreneur stream of the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP) is a pathway to Canadian permanent residence for experienced business owners and senior managers who want to establish a new business – or purchase and grow an existing one – in Nova Scotia and actively manage it day-to-day while living in the province.

The stream is work-permit-first: successful applicants sign a Business Performance Agreement with the province, come to Nova Scotia on a temporary work permit, and must operate their business for at least one continuous year before they can be nominated for permanent residence. Selection runs through an Expression of Interest (EOI) system, and applying is by invitation only. Note that this is a "base" nomination – it is not aligned with Express Entry, so it does not add 600 Comprehensive Ranking System points; the permanent residence application is made separately to IRCC under the Provincial Nominee Class. The full cycle from EOI to permanent residence typically spans two and a half to three and a half years.

As of February 18, 2026, Nova Scotia consolidated its nominee program into four streams. The Entrepreneur stream now also incorporates the former International Graduate Entrepreneur pathway as sub-criteria for graduates of Nova Scotia institutions; this guide focuses on the main pathway for experienced entrepreneurs.

A distinctive feature of the stream is that the financial thresholds depend on where the business will be located: businesses outside the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) qualify for meaningfully lower net worth and investment requirements, and rural and smaller-town locations also earn additional points on the EOI grid.

| $600K/$400K | $150K/$100K | 3 / 5 yrs | 1 job | CLB 5 | 21+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Minimum net worth: HRM / outside HRM (CAD) | Minimum investment of own funds: HRM / outside HRM | 3 yrs ownership (33.3%+) or 5 yrs senior mgmt in last 10 | New FT job for non-relative citizen/PR (new business) or retain staff (purchase) | Minimum language level in English or French | Minimum age, plus Cdn high school equivalent education |

*Figure 1: Core requirements at a glance.*

## 2. Eligibility and Requirements

To qualify under the Entrepreneur stream, you must meet all of the following criteria:

| Requirement | Details |
|---|---|
| **Age** | Must be at least 21 years old. There is no upper age limit, though the EOI points grid awards fewer points at older ages. |
| **Net worth** | Minimum CAD $600,000 in net business and personal assets for a business located within the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), or CAD $400,000 for a business located outside HRM. Net worth must be legally accumulated and is verified by a designated third-party professional after an invitation to apply. |
| **Investment** | Minimum investment of CAD $150,000 of your own funds (CAD $100,000 outside HRM) to establish or purchase a business in Nova Scotia. You must own at least one-third (33.3%) of the equity in the business. The investment is made after signing the Business Performance Agreement and is confirmed by an approved financial statement review provider. |
| **Business experience** | At least 3 years of business ownership experience (with at least 33.3% ownership), or more than 5 years of experience in a senior business management role within the last 10 years. |
| **Education** | At least a Canadian high school diploma or the foreign equivalent. Additional EOI points are available for post-secondary education (including for a spouse's Nova Scotia education). |
| **Language** | Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level 5 or higher in all four abilities (listening, speaking, reading, writing) in English or French, from an approved testing agency. Higher levels earn additional EOI points. |
| **Job creation / retention** | For a new business: create at least one full-time job for a Canadian citizen or permanent resident who is not a family member. For the purchase of an existing business: offer employment to existing staff on similar terms and conditions, including maintaining existing wages. |
| **Active management** | You must intend to live in Nova Scotia permanently and actively participate in the day-to-day management of the business. Passive or arm's-length investment does not qualify. |
| **Business plan** | A Business Establishment Plan is required with the application. This plan forms the basis of your Business Performance Agreement with the province, and material changes after signing require approval. |
| **EOI / ITA** | Application is by invitation only: you must submit an Expression of Interest (free of charge) and receive an Invitation to Apply. The province can also issue targeted invitations in support of key sectors and business succession opportunities. |

*The authoritative sources are the NSNP Entrepreneur Stream Application Guide and the liveinnovascotia.com program pages, administered by Nova Scotia's Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration. Criteria are subject to change, streams may close, and decisions are final with no appeal process.*

### 2.1 EOI points assessment

Expressions of Interest are scored on a points matrix covering eight factors: language abilities, education, business ownership or management experience, level of investment in the business, net worth, age, adaptability, and alignment with Nova Scotia's priorities. Adaptability points can include factors such as a spouse's Nova Scotia education, and the priorities factor rewards businesses aligned with the province's economic objectives – including business succession (buying from a retiring owner), which the province actively encourages. The highest-scoring candidates are invited in periodic draws, and the province can also strategically invite candidates in support of key sectors.

### 2.2 Additional conditions when purchasing an existing business

- The business must have been in continuous operation by the same owner for the previous five years.
- You must complete an exploratory visit and meet the current owner(s) in person.
- You must provide evidence that reasonable efforts were made to establish a fair market value for the business.
- The business must be actively operating and not in receivership.
- You must offer employment to existing staff on similar terms and conditions, including maintaining existing wages.

## 3. Ineligible Businesses

The business must provide a genuine economic benefit to Nova Scotia and be actively managed by you from within the province. Following the stream's 2024 relaunch, real estate development and construction businesses may now qualify on a case-by-case basis where the applicant demonstrates a compelling benefit to the Nova Scotia economy. The current Application Guide contains the complete ineligibility list and should be reviewed against any specific business concept; among others, the following remain ineligible:

- Passive investment vehicles and arm's-length investments without active day-to-day management
- Businesses paying employees solely on commission
- Businesses that could bring the program into disrepute

# 4. The Application Process, Step by Step

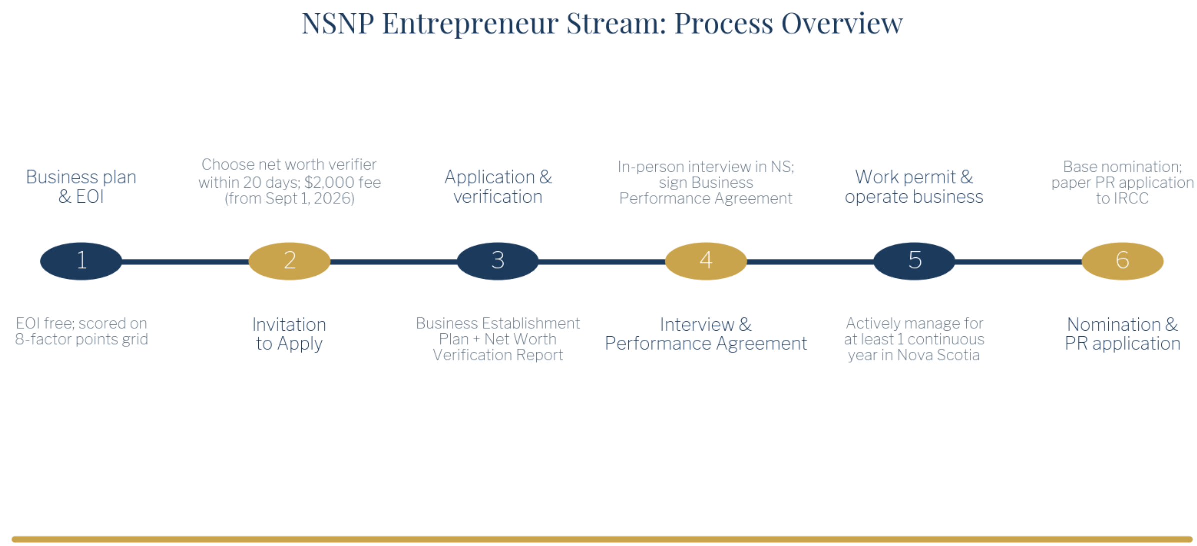


*Figure 2: Process overview.*

1. **Business plan and EOI:** Research the market, settle on a location (noting the HRM / outside-HRM thresholds), prepare a Business Establishment Plan, and submit an Expression of Interest online. The EOI is free and is scored on the eight-factor points grid.
2. **Invitation to Apply:** If your EOI is selected, you receive an Invitation to Apply. You must notify the province of your choice of designated Net Worth Verifier within 20 days of the ITA letter. For candidates invited on or after September 1, 2026, the $2,000 provincial application fee must be paid within 90 calendar days of the invitation (180 days for those purchasing an existing business); unpaid files are closed.
3. **Application and verification:** Submit the complete application with your Business Establishment Plan and the Net Worth Verification Report prepared by the designated third-party professional, verifying both your net worth and the legal accumulation of your funds.
4. **Interview and Business Performance Agreement:** If your application is successful, you will be invited to an in-person interview with an immigration officer in Nova Scotia. Following a successful interview, you sign a Business Performance Agreement (BPA) setting out your investment, job creation, residency, and reporting obligations. Material changes to your business plan after signing require the province's approval.
5. **Work permit and business operation:** With the province's support, apply to IRCC for a temporary work permit, relocate to Nova Scotia, make your qualifying investment (confirmed by an approved financial statement review provider), and actively manage the business day-to-day for at least one continuous year while complying with the BPA.
6. **Nomination and permanent residence:** After at least one year of operation in compliance with the BPA, you may request nomination. If nominated, you submit a permanent residence application to IRCC under the Provincial Nominee Class (a paper-based application, as this is not an Express Entry-aligned stream) for you and your dependent family members. The province may withdraw a nomination at any time before permanent residence is confirmed if BPA terms are not maintained.

## 5. Fees and Costs

| Item | Cost |
|---|---|
| Expression of Interest | Free |
| Provincial application fee (from September 1, 2026) | $2,000 CAD, non-refundable, per principal applicant |
| Net Worth Verification (designated provider) | Applicant's cost (typically several thousand dollars) |
| Financial statement review of business plan | Applicant's cost |
| Language tests, credential assessments, translations | Applicant's cost |
| IRCC fees (work permit; permanent residence) | Federal fees apply |

*Important: the $2,000 provincial application fee was announced on August 6, 2026 and applies to candidates selected from the EOI pool on or after September 1, 2026. Candidates invited before that date are not subject to the fee. Payment must be made online in a single transaction; fee waivers are not available.*

## 6. How This Compares to Other Streams

For reference against the other provincial entrepreneur programs:

| Criteria | NS Entrepreneur | NL Intl Entrepreneur | BC PNP Base |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Net worth** | $600K HRM / $400K outside | $600K (transferable) | $600K |
| **Minimum investment** | $150K HRM / $100K outside | $200K (or $1M equity) | $200K |
| **Language** | CLB 5 | CLB 5 | CLB 4 |
| **Age** | 21+, no cap | 21–59 | No limit |
| **Provincial fee** | $2,000 (from Sept 1, 2026) | None | $300 + $3,500 |
| **Operating period** | At least 1 year | At least 1 year | 18–20 months |
| **Exploratory visit** | Required for business purchases | Mandatory (if outside NL) | Recommended only |

## 7. Practical Considerations

- Location strategy is a genuine lever in Nova Scotia: siting the business outside Halifax lowers the net worth threshold by $200,000 and the investment minimum by $50,000, and earns additional EOI points – but the business plan must reflect the realities of the smaller local market.

- Business succession is actively encouraged: the province works with partners to match buyers with retiring owners, and succession purchases can attract additional points. The five-years-same-owner rule, fair-market-value evidence, and staff retention conditions all apply.
- The timing of the new application fee matters: candidates invited before September 1, 2026 pay no provincial fee; those invited on or after that date pay $2,000. If an EOI is already in the pool, this is outside the candidate's control, so budget for the fee.
- The 20-day deadline to select a Net Worth Verifier after the ITA is short; identifying the verifier and assembling financial documentation before the invitation arrives avoids a scramble.
- Because this is a base (non-Express Entry) nomination, federal PR processing is slower than Express Entry-aligned nominations – factor this into the overall timeline and any status planning for the family.
- There is no appeal process for NSNP decisions, and nominations can be withdrawn for non-compliance with the Business Performance Agreement at any point before PR is confirmed. Consistent compliance and record-keeping during the operating year are essential.

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### Important Notice



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