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*Canadian Immigration & Refugee Law*

ALBERTA ADVANTAGE IMMIGRATION PROGRAM

# Foreign Graduate Entrepreneur Stream

*Requirements and Process*

**Client Information Guide**

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Alberta Advantage Immigration Program (AAIP)

# Foreign Graduate Entrepreneur Stream

*Client Information Guide – Requirements and Process*

Prepared by Kabir & Alam Lawyers | August 2026

## 1. Overview

The Foreign Graduate Entrepreneur Stream of the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program (AAIP) nominates talented graduates of post-secondary institutions outside Canada who launch start-up enterprises and innovative businesses in Alberta. It is Alberta's answer to the former federal Start-Up Visa: rather than a government officer assessing the venture alone, the stream runs as a collaboration between the AAIP and approved designated agencies – incubators and business organizations that vet candidates, hear their pitch, and issue the letter of recommendation without which no Expression of Interest can be submitted.

The stream favours innovation-driven concepts in Alberta's priority sectors and offers meaningfully lower thresholds for businesses located outside the Calgary and Edmonton metropolitan areas – a $50,000 minimum investment regionally versus $100,000 in the urban centres.

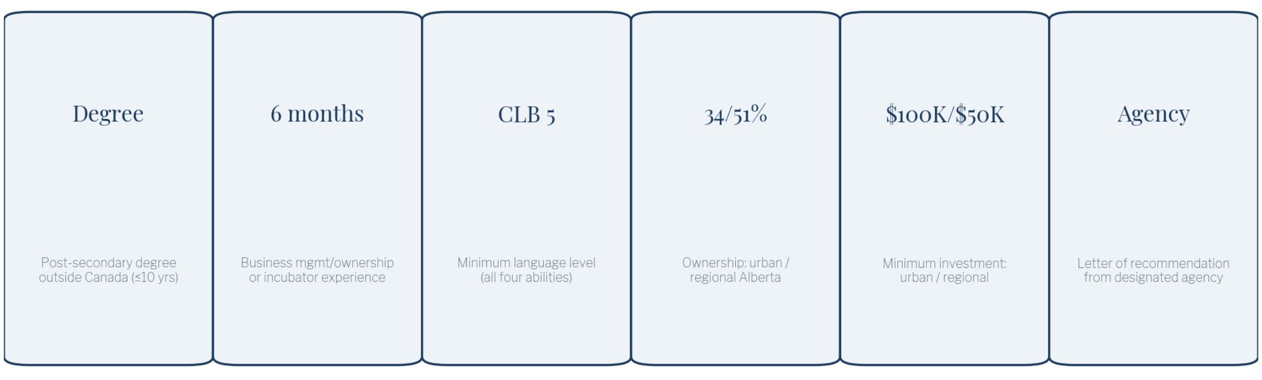


*Figure 1: Core requirements at a glance.*

## 2. Eligibility and Requirements

To qualify under the Foreign Graduate Entrepreneur Stream, you must meet all of the following criteria:

| Requirement | Details |
|---|---|
| **Education** | A degree from a recognized post-secondary institution outside Canada, completed within the last 10 years. |

| Requirement | Details |
|---|---|
| **Experience** | At least 6 months of full-time experience in business management or ownership – or equivalent participation in a business incubator or accelerator program. |
| **Language** | Minimum CLB 5 (or NCLC equivalent in French) in each of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, from an approved test with results less than two years old at EOI submission. |
| **Designated agency** | A letter of recommendation from an AAIP-approved designated agency, obtained after presenting the proposed business (typically a 10-minute investor-style pitch). The letter is a precondition for the EOI. |
| **Investment** | A minimum investment of CAD $100,000 for a business in an urban centre, or CAD $50,000 for a business in a regional area outside the Calgary and Edmonton Census Metropolitan Areas. The investment may come from your own equity or from a recognized Canadian financial institution, venture capital firm, or angel investor. |
| **Ownership** | At least 34% ownership for an urban business, or at least 51% for a regional business. Business partners must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents. |
| **Settlement funds** | Sufficient funds to establish the business and support yourself and your family, scaled to family size and the population of the destination community. |
| **Business type** | A start-up or innovative business concept; the stream prioritizes ventures in sectors such as technology, aerospace, financial services, energy, agriculture, tourism, life sciences, and pharmaceuticals. |

*The authoritative sources are the Foreign Graduate Entrepreneur Stream pages at alberta.ca, including the list of approved designated agencies and the stream points grid. The AAIP does not guarantee that all eligible candidates will be invited or nominated.*

## 2.1 The designated agency's role

Designated agencies are the stream's gatekeepers. They assess the founder and the venture – the concept's innovation, its commercial prospects in Alberta, and the applicant's capacity to execute – before issuing the letter of recommendation. Practically, this means preparing the way you would for seed investors: a tight pitch deck, a defensible market analysis, financial projections, and a clear account of why Alberta is the right home for the venture. Agencies may also provide incubation support after arrival, which strengthens the file.

## 2.2 Urban versus regional strategy

The stream builds in a deliberate regional incentive: locating outside the Calgary and Edmonton CMAs halves the minimum investment to $50,000, though it raises the required ownership stake to 51%. For capital-constrained founders whose venture is not tied to the major centres, the regional route can materially lower the barrier to entry – but the business plan must be credible in the smaller market.

## 3. Ineligible Businesses

Businesses that are not eligible under the stream include:

- Passive investment businesses or those lacking active management, including property rental, leasing, and lending
- Real estate development or brokerage, insurance brokerage, or business brokerage
- Payday loan, cheque cashing, and related businesses
- Businesses involving sexually explicit products or services
- Any business that would tend to bring the AAIP or the Government of Alberta into disrepute

# 4. The Application Process, Step by Step

AAIP Foreign Graduate Entrepreneur Stream: Process Overview

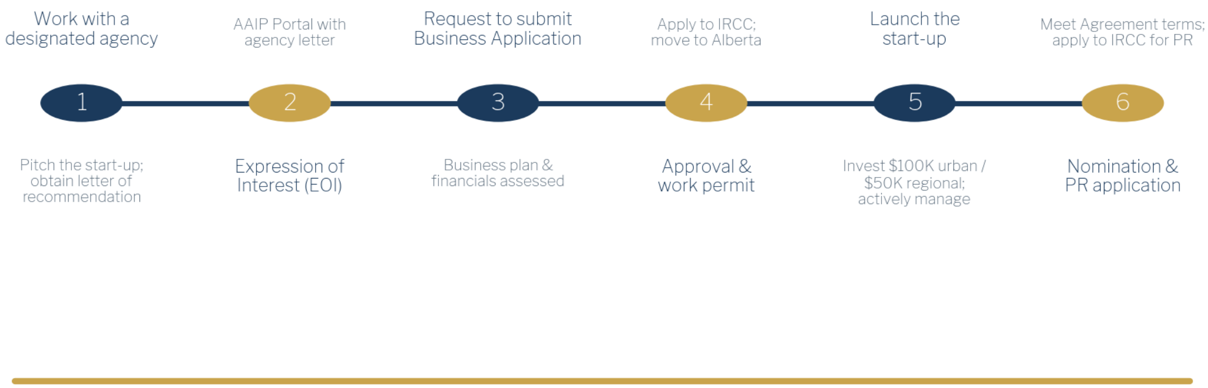


*Figure 2: Process overview.*

1. **Engage a designated agency:** Select an AAIP-approved designated agency, prepare the business concept and pitch, and present the venture. If the agency is satisfied the concept and founder meet the stream's requirements, it issues the letter of recommendation.
2. **Submit an Expression of Interest:** Submit your EOI through the AAIP Portal with the agency's letter of recommendation. EOIs are scored on the stream's points grid and ranked competitively.
3. **Request to submit a Business Application:** The highest-ranking candidates are invited to submit a full Business Application, with the business plan and financial evidence assessed by the AAIP.
4. **Approval and work permit:** On approval, the AAIP supports a work permit application to IRCC so you can move to Alberta and launch the venture.
5. **Launch and operate the start-up:** Make the qualifying investment ($100,000 urban / $50,000 regional), establish the business with the required ownership stake, and actively manage it from within Alberta in accordance with your agreement with the province.
6. **Nomination and permanent residence:** After demonstrating the business is established and the agreement's terms are met, you may be nominated. The nomination supports a permanent residence application to IRCC under the Provincial Nominee Class for you and your dependent family members.

# 5. Fees and Costs

| Item | Cost |
|---|---|
| AAIP application fee (entrepreneur streams) | $3,500 CAD – confirm the current amount on alberta.ca |

| Item | Cost |
|---|---|
| Designated agency fees (assessment/incubation, where charged) | Varies by agency |
| Language test, credential documentation, translations | Applicant's cost |
| IRCC fees (work permit; permanent residence) | Federal fees apply |

*Verify the current AAIP fee schedule and each designated agency's own fee structure before engaging.*

## 6. How This Compares to Alberta's Other Entrepreneur Streams

The AAIP operates four entrepreneur streams; this stream is the start-up-focused pathway for graduates educated outside Canada:

| Criteria | Foreign Graduate Entrepreneur | Graduate Entrepreneur | Rural Entrepreneur |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Who it serves** | Graduates of institutions outside Canada | Alberta post-secondary graduates with a PGWP | Experienced owners/senior managers |
| **Business focus** | Start-ups and innovative ventures | Any eligible business | Any eligible rural business |
| **Language** | CLB 5 | CLB 7 | CLB 4 |
| **Investment** | $100K urban / $50K regional | No fixed minimum; points to $75K+ | $100K minimum |
| **Ownership** | 34% urban / 51% regional | At least 34% | 51% new / 100% purchase |
| **Gatekeeper** | Designated agency recommendation | None (EOI points grid) | Community Support Letter |
| **Location incentive** | Regional halves the investment | Rural earns grid points | Rural location required |

## 7. Practical Considerations

- The designated agency letter is the file's foundation – treat the agency pitch as the real application. A generic small-business plan will not pass agencies looking for innovation and growth potential; the concept should show what is new, defensible, and scalable.
- Outside capital counts: unusually among provincial streams, the qualifying investment can come from a Canadian financial institution, venture capital, or an angel investor rather than solely the founder's own funds – a genuine advantage for venture-backed concepts.
- The 10-year education window and the two-year validity of language tests both run from the EOI, so sequencing matters for older credentials.

- The regional option ($50,000 investment, 51% ownership) suits founders whose venture can operate from a mid-sized Alberta centre; the urban option suits ventures that need the Calgary or Edmonton ecosystem and investor base.
- Settlement funds are assessed separately from the business investment and scale with family size – budget for both, plus start-up losses, before committing.

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### Important Notice

This guide is provided for general information only and does not constitute legal advice for any specific case. It summarizes the requirements of the AAIP Foreign Graduate Entrepreneur Stream as published by the Government of Alberta (alberta.ca) as of August 2026. Program criteria, designated agencies, points grids, and fees change from time to time and should be verified against the current program materials before any step is taken. Please contact our office to discuss how these requirements apply to your circumstances.

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