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Canadian Immigration & Refugee Law

ALBERTA ADVANTAGE IMMIGRATION PROGRAM

Graduate 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.

Alberta Advantage Immigration Program (AAIP)

Graduate Entrepreneur Stream

Client Information Guide – Requirements and Process

Prepared by Kabir & Alam Lawyers | August 2026

1. Overview

The Graduate Entrepreneur Stream of the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program (AAIP) nominates international graduates of Alberta's publicly funded post-secondary institutions for permanent residence when they establish or operate a business in the province. It is one of the most flexible entrepreneur pathways in Canada: there is no minimum net worth or fixed investment requirement, the business can be located anywhere in Alberta – including Calgary and Edmonton – and international graduates who already own and operate an Alberta business for at least a year can apply directly on the strength of that operating history.

The trade-offs are a high language bar (CLB 7 in all four abilities, the highest of any Alberta entrepreneur stream) and competitive selection: Expressions of Interest are scored on a 125-point grid covering the business, human capital, and adaptability, and only the highest-ranking candidates are invited to submit a Business Application.

2 years	PGWP	CLB 7	34%	No min.	125 pts
Full-time study at an AB public post-secondary	Valid Post-Graduation Work Permit at EOI	Minimum language level (all four abilities)	Minimum ownership in the Alberta business	No fixed investment floor; points from \$25K-\$75K+	EOI scored on the stream points grid

Figure 1: Core requirements at a glance.

2. Eligibility and Requirements

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

Requirement	Details
Alberta education	At least two years of full-time education resulting in a degree or diploma from an Alberta Advanced Education publicly funded post-secondary institution.

Requirement	Details
Work permit	A valid Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) issued by IRCC at the time your Expression of Interest is submitted.
Language	Minimum CLB 7 (or NCLC 7 in French) in each of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, from an approved test taken within the last two years. Higher scores earn substantially more EOI points (CLB 9+ earns the grid maximum).
Business establishment	Establish a new business or buy an existing one in Alberta with at least 34% ownership. Business partners must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents. You are not required to establish the business until your Business Application is approved.
Investment	No fixed minimum – but total business investment earns EOI points on a sliding scale, from \$25,000 or less (5 points) up to \$75,001 or more (20 points).
Active management	You must reside in Alberta and be involved in the day-to-day management of the business from a physical place of business; remote management from another province or country is not permitted.
Status	You must hold valid temporary resident status; refugee claimants and those under removal proceedings are not eligible.

The authoritative source is the Graduate Entrepreneur Stream eligibility page and points grid at alberta.ca (updated August 2026). The AAIP does not guarantee that all eligible candidates will be invited or nominated.

2.1 The 125-point EOI grid

Selection runs on a points grid with three groups: business establishment factors (up to 75 points – management/ownership experience up to 15, economic benefit up to 40, and total investment up to 20), human capital factors (up to 25 – language and Alberta education), and adaptability factors (up to 25 – age 21–49, spouse's Alberta employment, study or language, and Alberta relatives). Economic benefit points reward priority sectors (energy, agriculture, technology, aviation and aerospace, financial services), job creation for non-relatives (up to 15 points for three or more jobs of at least six months), rural location outside the Edmonton and Calgary CMAs, and succession. Six months of business management experience – or equivalencies such as incubator/accelerator participation or completion of recognized Alberta entrepreneurship program courses – earns experience points but is not mandatory.

2.2 The established-business pathway

International graduates who already own and operate a business in Alberta can use this stream as a direct permanent residence pathway: if the business has operated for at least one year immediately before the EOI is submitted, no additional operating period is required after applying. Eligible candidates are issued a nomination after submitting the Business Application and must

simply continue operating the business while IRCC processes the permanent residence application. For graduates already running a business on a PGWP, this is one of the fastest entrepreneur routes to nomination in the country.

3. Ineligible Businesses

Businesses that are not eligible under the stream include:

- Passive investment or businesses lacking active management, including property rental, investment, and leasing; real estate development or brokerage; insurance or business brokerage
- Payday loan, cheque cashing, and related businesses; businesses trading in used goods
- Coin-operated businesses, including laundromats and car washes
- Project-based or seasonal businesses
- Home-based businesses (including those not zoned commercial/industrial), bed-and-breakfasts, and lodging houses
- Businesses that are part of a succession plan – including businesses owned or operated by a close relative, previously operated by an AAIP entrepreneur candidate within the past 4 years, or that changed ownership within the 3 years before application
- Businesses involving sexually explicit products or services, and any business that would bring the AAIP or the Government of Alberta into disrepute

4. The Application Process, Step by Step

AAIP Graduate Entrepreneur Stream: Process Overview

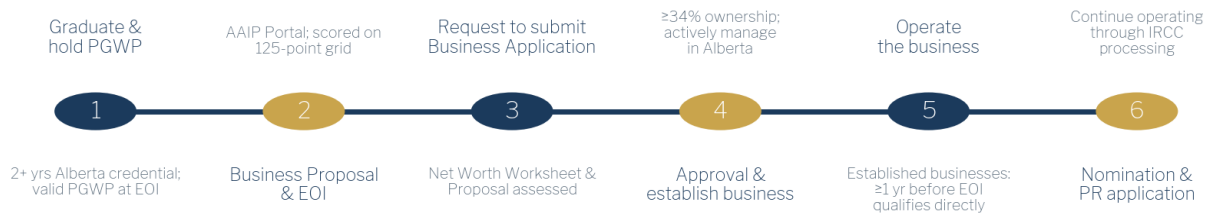


Figure 2: Process overview.

1. **Graduate and hold a valid PGWP:** Complete at least two years of full-time study at an Alberta public post-secondary institution and hold a valid Post-Graduation Work Permit at the time of your EOI.
2. **Prepare the Business Proposal and submit an EOI:** Develop the business concept, complete the Business Proposal Summary and Net Worth Worksheet, and submit your Expression of Interest through the AAIP Portal. The EOI is scored on the 125-point grid.
3. **Request to submit a Business Application:** The AAIP selects the highest-ranking candidates and invites them to submit a full Business Application, which is assessed against the eligibility criteria; your EOI points are verified and an AAIP officer may contact you for more information.
4. **Approval and business establishment:** On approval, establish the business (or, for the established-business pathway, continue operating it) with at least 34% ownership, a physical place of business, and day-to-day management from within Alberta.
5. **Operate the business:** New businesses operate in accordance with the program's requirements before nomination; established businesses that already meet the one-year operating history are nominated after the Business Application without a further operating period.
6. **Nomination and permanent residence:** The nomination supports a permanent residence application to IRCC under the Provincial Nominee Class for you and your dependent family members. You must continue to operate the business in Alberta throughout IRCC processing.

5. Fees and Costs

Item	Cost
AAIP application fee (entrepreneur streams)	\$3,500 CAD – confirm the current amount on alberta.ca
Language test	Applicant's cost
Business plan preparation and professional advice	Applicant's cost
IRCC fees (work permit extensions; permanent residence)	Federal fees apply

Verify the current AAIP fee schedule on alberta.ca before submitting; program fees have changed in recent years.

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

The AAIP operates four entrepreneur streams; the two graduate streams differ mainly in where the applicant studied:

Criteria	Graduate Entrepreneur	Foreign Graduate Entrepreneur	Rural Entrepreneur
Who it serves	Alberta post-secondary graduates with a PGWP	Graduates of institutions outside Canada	Experienced owners/senior managers
Language	CLB 7	CLB 5	CLB 4
Ownership	At least 34%	34% urban / 51% regional	51% new / 100% purchase
Investment	No fixed minimum; points to \$75K+	\$100K urban / \$50K regional	\$100K minimum
Net worth	No fixed minimum	Sufficient funds required	\$300K minimum
Location	Anywhere in Alberta	Anywhere; regional lowers thresholds	Rural community under 100,000
Succession purchases	Not permitted	Start-up focused	Encouraged (100% ownership)

7. Practical Considerations

- This is the only Alberta entrepreneur stream fully open to Calgary and Edmonton businesses – a significant advantage for graduates whose market is in the major centres – though a rural location still earns extra grid points.

- Language is the competitive lever: CLB 7 earns just 5 of 15 available language points, while CLB 9 earns all 15. Retesting to a higher band is often the single most efficient way to strengthen an EOI.
- Note the strict anti-succession rules: unlike the Rural stream, this stream excludes businesses bought from relatives, from recent AAIP candidates, or that changed hands within the past three years – the program wants genuinely new ventures or arm's-length acquisitions with history.
- PGWP timing matters: the permit must be valid at EOI submission, so graduates should plan the EOI early in the permit's life to leave room for the application, establishment, and nomination stages.
- Graduates already operating an Alberta business for a year should gather clean operating evidence (registrations, financials, payroll, lease) before submitting – the established-business pathway turns that history directly into a nomination case.

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 Graduate Entrepreneur Stream as published by the Government of Alberta (alberta.ca) as of August 2026. Program criteria, 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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