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Canadian Immigration & Refugee Law

ALBERTA ADVANTAGE IMMIGRATION PROGRAM

Rural 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.

Rural Entrepreneur Stream

Client Information Guide – Requirements and Process

Prepared by Kabir & Alam Lawyers | August 2026

1. Overview

The Rural Entrepreneur Stream of the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program (AAIP) is a pathway to Canadian permanent residence for experienced business owners and senior managers who establish a new business – or purchase an existing one – in a rural Alberta community and actively manage it day-to-day. “Rural” is generously defined: any community with a population under 100,000 located outside the Calgary and Edmonton Census Metropolitan Areas qualifies, which includes sizeable centres such as Red Deer, Lethbridge, and Grande Prairie.

Like British Columbia's Regional stream, the community plays a formal role: before submitting an Expression of Interest, you must complete an exploratory visit and obtain a Community Support Letter endorsing your Business Proposal Summary. Alberta pairs this with some of the most accessible financial thresholds among the major provinces – a \$300,000 net worth and a \$100,000 investment – and, notably, has no general urban entrepreneur stream: for experienced (non-graduate) entrepreneurs, this rural stream is Alberta's principal business immigration pathway.

\$300,000	\$100,000	3 / 4 yrs	1 job	CLB 4	51/100%
Minimum personal net worth (CAD)	Minimum investment of own equity	3 yrs as owner or 4 yrs senior manager (last 10)	New full-time job for a non-relative citizen/PR	Minimum language level (all four abilities)	Ownership: 51% new biz or 100% on purchase

Figure 1: Core requirements at a glance.

2. Eligibility and Requirements

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

Requirement	Details
Business experience	At least 3 years of experience as an active business owner-manager, or at least 4 years of experience as a senior manager, within the past 10 years.

Requirement	Details
Net worth	Minimum CAD \$300,000 in net worth, owned personally by you or your spouse/common-law partner, legally obtained. Net worth and the source of funds are verified through a report from an AAIP Qualified Service Provider after you are asked to submit a Business Application.
Investment	Minimum CAD \$100,000 invested from your own equity into the Alberta business.
Ownership	At least 51% ownership when establishing a new business (any partners must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents), or 100% ownership when purchasing an existing business.
Education	A minimum of high school completion, with foreign education verified as equivalent to a Canadian high school diploma through an Educational Credential Assessment (ECA).
Language	Minimum Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level 4 in each of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, in English or French, from an approved test.
Community support	A Community Support Letter from the participating rural community, together with the community-endorsed Business Proposal Summary, obtained after a mandatory exploratory visit.
Business location	A physical business located in a rural Alberta community – population under 100,000, outside the Calgary and Edmonton Census Metropolitan Areas.
Job creation	Create at least one full-time job for a Canadian citizen or permanent resident who is not a relative; additional jobs earn additional EOI points.
Active management	You must reside in or near the community and be involved in the day-to-day management of the business; remote or passive ownership does not qualify.

The authoritative sources are the Rural Entrepreneur Stream pages and Program Guide at alberta.ca (Alberta Advantage Immigration Program). The AAIP does not guarantee that all eligible candidates will be invited or nominated, and criteria are subject to change.

2.1 The Community Support Letter

Each participating community designates an economic development contact who reviews business proposals from prospective applicants. The process typically runs: submit your business plan to the community, an interview or discussion, the mandatory exploratory visit, and – if the community concludes the business would genuinely benefit the local economy – the Community Support Letter and endorsement of your Business Proposal Summary. Communities give priority to businesses that address real local needs; concepts duplicating existing local businesses are commonly declined at this stage.

2.2 EOI scoring and succession purchases

Expressions of Interest are scored on the Rural Entrepreneur Stream points grid, which rewards stronger language, education, experience, higher investment, job creation, and adaptability factors. Purchasing an established rural business as a succession acquisition earns additional points – Alberta, like the Atlantic provinces, is actively encouraging buyers for businesses whose owners are retiring – though a purchase requires 100% ownership.

3. Ineligible Businesses

Businesses that are not eligible under the stream include:

- Passive investment or unmanaged enterprises, including property rental, leasing, and lending businesses
- Real estate development or brokerage, insurance brokerage, or business brokerage
- Payday loan, cheque cashing, and related businesses; businesses trading in used goods without value-add
- Coin-operated businesses, including laundromats and automated car washes
- Project-based or seasonal businesses
- Home-based businesses, bed-and-breakfasts, and lodging houses
- Businesses producing, distributing, or selling 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 Rural Entrepreneur Stream: Process Overview

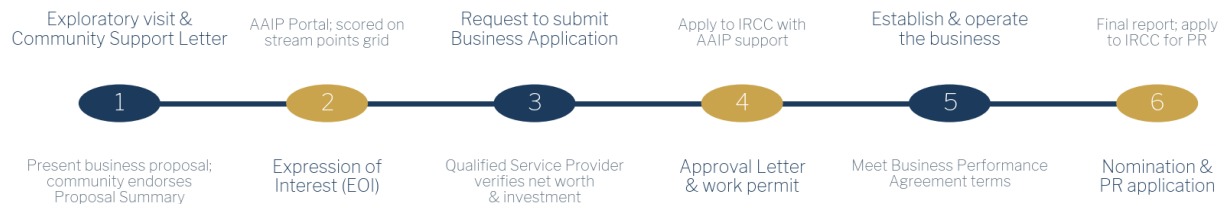


Figure 2: Process overview.

1. **Choose a community and secure support:** Identify a rural Alberta community suited to your concept, submit your business plan to its designated contact, complete the mandatory exploratory visit, and obtain the Community Support Letter with the endorsed Business Proposal Summary.
2. **Submit an Expression of Interest:** Submit your EOI through the AAIP Portal with the Business Proposal Summary, Net Worth Worksheet, and Community Support Letter. The AAIP scores the EOI on the stream's points grid.
3. **Request to submit a Business Application:** The highest-ranking candidates are asked to submit a Business Application. At this stage, engage one of the AAIP's Qualified Service Providers, who assesses your net worth and business investment and reports directly to the program.
4. **Business Application Approval Letter and work permit:** If your application is approved, the AAIP issues a Business Application Approval Letter supporting a work permit application to IRCC so you can move to Alberta and establish the business.
5. **Establish and operate the business:** Make the qualifying investment, launch or take over the business in the community, create the required employment, and actively manage the business day-to-day in accordance with your agreement with the province.
6. **Nomination and permanent residence:** After demonstrating the business is established and operating as committed, 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, and you must continue operating the business through IRCC processing.

5. Fees and Costs

Item	Cost
AAIP application fee (entrepreneur streams)	\$3,500 CAD – confirm the current amount on alberta.ca
Qualified Service Provider net worth report	Applicant's cost
Educational Credential Assessment, language tests, translations	Applicant's cost
Travel for the mandatory exploratory visit	Applicant's cost
IRCC fees (work permit; permanent residence)	Federal fees apply

AAIP fees have been introduced and adjusted in recent years; verify the current fee schedule on alberta.ca before submitting.

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

The AAIP operates four entrepreneur streams. For experienced entrepreneurs, the Rural stream is the principal pathway; the graduate streams serve recent graduates, and a separate Farm Stream serves farm owner-operators:

Criteria	Rural Entrepreneur	Graduate Entrepreneur	Foreign Graduate Entrepreneur
Who it serves	Experienced owners/senior managers	Alberta post-secondary graduates with a PGWP	Graduates of institutions outside Canada
Net worth / investment	\$300K net worth; \$100K investment	No fixed minimums; investment earns points	\$100K urban / \$50K regional investment points
Ownership	51% new / 100% purchase	At least 34%	34% urban / 51% regional
Language	CLB 4	CLB 7	CLB 5
Location	Rural community under 100,000	Anywhere in Alberta	Anywhere; regional earns lower thresholds
Gatekeeper	Community Support Letter	None (EOI points grid)	Designated agency recommendation

7. Practical Considerations

- Alberta has no general urban entrepreneur stream: an experienced entrepreneur who wants Calgary or Edmonton proper has no AAIP pathway, while communities just outside the two

metropolitan areas – including mid-sized cities – qualify as rural. Location strategy is therefore the first conversation.

- The Community Support Letter is the real gate. Communities receive many proposals and support the ones that fill demonstrated local gaps – healthcare-adjacent services, trades, food and agriculture, tourism, and professional services are frequently cited needs.
- A succession purchase (100% ownership of an established business) earns additional points and comes with existing revenue and staff, but requires careful valuation and due diligence.
- Net worth must be personally owned by you or your spouse, legally accumulated, and fully traceable; the Qualified Service Provider's report goes directly to the AAIP.
- An EOI does not guarantee an invitation, and the AAIP expressly does not guarantee that all eligible candidates will be nominated. A competitive file combines strong grid points with a community that genuinely wants the business.

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 Rural Entrepreneur Stream as published by the Government of Alberta (alberta.ca) as of August 2026. Program criteria, points grids, fees, and participating communities 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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