

# UK EXPANSION VISA

## Strategic Business Entry to the UK



A Guide for International Companies  
Establishing a UK Presence





# Launch Your UK Branch with Confidence

The UK Expansion Worker Visa provides an excellent route for international businesses to establish a presence in the United Kingdom by temporarily relocating a senior manager or specialist employee. Whether you're the founder of the business or a key staff member, this route enables you to set up and oversee the launch of a UK branch or subsidiary with ease.

Replacing the former Sole Representative Visa, the Expansion Worker Visa offers greater flexibility. It now allows business owners and shareholders—regardless of majority control—to relocate to the UK under this route. This makes it particularly attractive for entrepreneurs, directors, and founders who previously did not qualify.

# What Is the Expansion Worker Visa?

The UK Expansion Worker Visa is part of the Global Business Mobility routes and is designed specifically for companies that do not yet have a trading presence in the UK. It enables one or more key personnel to come to the UK temporarily to establish the company's first footprint—without the need to start trading or investing beforehand.



## This route is suitable for:

- Senior Managers and Specialist Employees assigned to set up the UK branch.
- Business Owners or Shareholders who will take direct responsibility for launching the UK operations.
- Applicants who have been employed by the overseas business for at least 12 months, unless they will be paid a UK salary of at least £73,900 per year once in the UK.

# Key Requirements

To apply for the UK Expansion Worker Visa, both the overseas business and the assigned employee must meet the following conditions:

**Genuine UK Expansion:**

The overseas company must demonstrate a credible plan to establish and grow its business in the UK. This includes evidence of business activity, trading history (minimum three years), and the commercial rationale for entering the UK market.

**No Active UK Presence:**

The UK branch or subsidiary must not have begun trading before the visa application. It must be legally incorporated but can remain dormant until the visa is granted.

**Senior Role or Specialist Skills:**

The individual must be coming to the UK to take up a senior management role or perform specialised duties essential to the business. This may include directors, department heads, or technical experts.

**Employment History or Salary Threshold:**

The applicant must have worked for the overseas business for at least 12 months, unless they will receive a UK salary of £73,900 or more from the outset.

**Sponsor Licence & Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS):**

The UK entity must obtain a sponsor licence from the Home Office. Once approved, the company issues a Certificate of Sponsorship to the proposed Expansion Worker.

**Minimum Salary Requirements:**

The applicant must be paid at least £48,500 per year or £23.39 per hour (or more if the 'going rate' for their job is higher). If they have not worked for the business for 12 months, a salary of at least £73,900 must be offered.

**Financial Maintenance:**

The applicant must have at least £1,270 in personal savings unless the employer guarantees maintenance on the CoS.



# Step-by-Step Application Process

## **Initial Strategy Consultation**

Define your expansion objectives and assess eligibility of both the business and the chosen employee.

## **UK Company Incorporation**

Register the UK entity, ensuring it remains dormant for visa purposes until the Expansion Worker arrives.

## **Business Plan Preparation**

Draft a comprehensive five-year business plan outlining market entry strategy, staffing, and projected growth.

## **Sponsor Licence Application**

Apply for a UKVI sponsor licence on behalf of the UK entity. Once granted, the business can issue a Certificate of Sponsorship.

## **Visa Application Submission**

Submit the Expansion Worker Visa application along with supporting documents, including the CoS, business plan, and financial evidence.

## **Decision & Relocation**

Upon approval, the applicant travels to the UK to begin setting up and managing the UK branch or subsidiary.



# Indicative Cost Overview

## **Operational Budget:**

A minimum of £100,000 is typically required to cover employee salary, employer taxes, premises lease, and running expenses for a modest UK branch.

## **Professional and Legal Fees:**

Approx. £15,000 – £20,000, covering business plan drafting, sponsor licence and visa application support, compliance guidance, and representation throughout the process.





# Typical Timeline

- **Initial Consultation & Planning:** 1–2 weeks
- **UK Company Incorporation:** 1 week
- **Business Plan & Documentation:** 2–3 weeks
- **Sponsor Licence Application:** 4–8 weeks (standard processing)
- **Visa Decision Post-Submission:** approx. 3 weeks (priority services available)
- *From planning to relocation, the full process typically takes 2 to 3 months with proper preparation.*

# Why Choose the UK Expansion Worker Visa?

- Enables business owners and senior decision-makers to directly establish UK operations
- Requires no English language test or prior UK trading activity
- Offers a clear and realistic pathway for international growth
- Ideal for entrepreneurs and corporates seeking to test the UK market before long-term investment
- Provides an effective alternative to the discontinued Sole Representative Visa

# Ready to Take the Next Step?

Whether you're a business owner seeking to lead your expansion or a specialist employee tasked with launching a UK base, the Expansion Worker Visa offers a structured and achievable route.

Our team supports clients across every step of the journey — from strategy and planning to documentation and compliance — to help ensure your application stands the best chance of success.

Contact us to discuss your UK expansion strategy today.

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