

International Entrepreneur Parole Program: A Way for Foreign Nationals to Start a Business in the U.S.

The International Entrepreneur Parole (IEP) Program allows certain foreign entrepreneurs to stay in the U.S. temporarily to start and grow a business. While it is not a visa, it offers similar benefits. This program is for entrepreneurs who may not qualify for other visa programs but want to build a startup and contribute to the U.S. economy.

What Is the International Entrepreneur Parole Program?

The program allows foreign entrepreneurs to come to the U.S. to run a startup if they can show their business will grow quickly and create jobs. It was first introduced under the Obama administration, paused under Trump, and restarted under Biden in 2021 to boost the economy.

The U.S. does not have a "startup visa," which makes it harder for foreign entrepreneurs to come and start businesses. The IEP program helps fill this gap.

Key Points: This is not a visa, but a parole status

- Temporary Stay & Work: This allows you to live and work in the U.S. temporarily.
 - No Green Card: It does not lead to permanent residency (a green card).
 - For Entrepreneurs: This is for foreign entrepreneurs whose businesses provide significant public benefit to the U.S.
 - Case-by-Case Approval: The Department of Homeland Security decides each case individually.
 - No Change of Status: You cannot switch to this status from another U.S. visa (like an F-1 student visa).
 - Must Leave & Reenter: If you are in the U.S. on an F-1 visa, you must leave the country and reenter under parole status.
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Benefits of the Program

- Stay in the U.S. for up to 5 years (initially 30 months, with a possible 30-month extension).
 - Work for your startup—this is the only job allowed under this program.
 - Spouses can apply for work authorization, but children cannot work.
 - Open to entrepreneurs from any country, unlike some visas that have nationality restrictions.
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Requirements to Qualify

To apply, you must meet these conditions:

- ✓ Your startup must be less than 5 years old at the time of application.
 - ✓ You must own at least 10% of the company.
 - ✓ You must actively run the business (not just invest money).
 - ✓ The startup must have:
 - At least \$250,000 in investment from U.S. investors -OR-
 - At least \$100,000 in government grants -OR-
 - Strong evidence that the business will grow quickly and create jobs.
 - ✓ Only 3 entrepreneurs per startup can receive IEP status.
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Extending Your Stay

To extend the parole period beyond 30 months, your business must show progress by meeting at least one of these:

- ✓ Business continues to operate.
 - ✓ Entrepreneur retains >5% ownership interest and maintains active role
 - ✓ Created at least 5 jobs in the U.S.
 - ✓ Raised \$500,000 in investment or grants.
 - ✓ Earned \$500,000 in revenue, with an average 20% annual growth.
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Important Limitations

- ❌ You can ONLY work for your startup. No side jobs or consulting.
 - ❌ This is NOT a path to a green card. If you want permanent residency, you must apply through another visa category.
 - ❌ If your business fails or stops growing, your status may be revoked.
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How to Apply

- ✅ Pay USCIS fees: \$1,285
- ✅ Submit Form I-941 (Application for Entrepreneur Parole)
- ✅ Provide evidence:
 - Proof that your business qualifies as a startup
 - Proof of at least 10% ownership
 - Proof of your active role in the business
 - Proof that your business will benefit the U.S. economy

Each application is reviewed individually. There is no guarantee of approval. If your startup fails or stops benefiting the U.S. economy, your parole status may be revoked.

For more details, visit the [USCIS website](#) or consult our [immigration attorney](#) at John Nicelli & Associates.