

Kanagawa Startup Visa Q&A

1. Who can use this program?

This program is implemented under the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry's Foreign Entrepreneur Promotion Program.

This program is for foreign nationals who plan to start a new business in Kanagawa Prefecture and prepare for their startup activities in Kanagawa before launching their business; carry out startup preparation activities in Kanagawa, and then establish a business office in Kanagawa Prefecture and commence their business there.

2. I already have another status of residence. Can I use this program?

This program is generally intended for foreign nationals who currently live outside Japan.

However, the handling may differ depending on your individual circumstances. Please first send an email to kanagawa-startup-visa★tsucrea.com (replace “★” with “@”). We will review your current situation and then advise you accordingly. Please include your name in the email.

Depending on the circumstances, it may also be necessary to confirm the matter with the Immigration Services Agency or with a professional advisor.

3. Do I need to carry out startup preparation activities in Kanagawa Prefecture and establish my business office there?

Yes. This program is intended for foreign nationals who carry out startup preparation activities in Kanagawa Prefecture and then establish a business office in Kanagawa Prefecture and start their business there.

There is no restriction on your current address itself. However, depending on your current address and your planned base of activities, if it is considered difficult for you to carry out sufficient startup preparation activities in Kanagawa Prefecture, your Startup Preparation Activity Plan may be judged insufficient.

If you plan to establish your business office outside Kanagawa Prefecture, you cannot use this program.

4. What are the benefits of using this program?

This program is designed to secure a preparation period for obtaining the “Business Manager” status of residence.

Ordinarily, in order for a foreign entrepreneur to obtain “Business Manager” status, certain requirements must be met, such as securing a business office, employing at least one full-time employee, and preparing business assets or capital of at least JPY 30 million.

Under this program, foreign nationals who are expected to meet these requirements within the approved startup preparation period may be granted the status of residence of “Designated Activities” to prepare for starting a business in Kanagawa.

This program gives you time to prepare your business in Kanagawa before applying for a Business Manager visa, allowing you to move forward more smoothly and efficiently. In addition, because a

residence card will be issued under the “Designated Activities” status, it becomes easier to proceed with various startup preparation activities such as signing a lease agreement for business premises.

Please note that this program involves a two-step process: first, obtaining confirmation of the Startup Preparation Activity Plan from Kanagawa Prefecture, and then applying to the Immigration Services Agency.

5. If I have family members or co-founders, who can apply?

Only the applicant themselves may apply. Under this program, the applicant must actually start the business as a sole proprietor or as a manager/executive of the business.

Even if your family members or relatives are involved in the business, they cannot be the applicant.

If multiple people will co-found the business, each application for status of residence will be examined individually. Therefore, each applicant must prepare and submit their own application documents.

Employees or persons in a similar position who are not involved in management are not eligible for this program. Whether a person is involved in management will be determined substantively, considering matters such as their shareholding ratio and their role in the business.

6. Can I use this program if I will take over an existing business?

No. This program is intended for foreign nationals who will newly start a business. Therefore, if you are taking over an existing company or business, you are not eligible.

However, another status of residence may be applicable, so we recommend consulting the Immigration Services Agency or a professional advisor.

7. Can I work in Japan while I am carrying out startup preparation activities?

In principle, you are not permitted to engage in work in Japan other than startup preparation activities under this program (such as part-time work or other employment). This period of stay is granted solely for the purpose of preparing to start your business.

8. How can I make an inquiry or submit an application?

The application documents can be downloaded from Kanagawa Prefecture’s website.

For inquiries and consultations, please send an email to kanagawa-startup-visa★tsucree.com (replace “★” with “@”). Please include your name in the email. As the contractor for this program, TSUCREA Co., Ltd. will send you the URL of the inquiry form within two business days.

Before submitting your application, you are required to participate in a mentoring session with us. At that stage, we will confirm the content of your business plan, your current situation, and whether the necessary documents have been properly prepared.

Please contact us by email, not by telephone, for your initial inquiry.

9. Please tell me about application fees, submission by a representative, and the review period.

There is no fee for the application or for the issuance of the Certificate of Confirmation of the Startup Preparation Activity Plan.

In principle, the applicant should prepare the Application for Confirmation of the Startup Preparation Activity Plan, the Startup Preparation Activity Plan, and all other required documents in Japanese language by themselves. The application can be submitted by either the applicant or representative.

If a representative submits the application, documents showing the relationship between the applicant and the representative, or documents explaining the representative's role, may be required.

If all required documents are properly prepared and submitted, the result will generally be provided in about two weeks after review. However, more time may be required if additional information or documents are needed, or if a large number of applications are submitted at the same time.

Please note that the document issued by Kanagawa Prefecture is the Certificate of Confirmation of the Startup Preparation Activity Plan. It is not the Startup Visa itself.

After receiving this certificate, you must apply to the Immigration Services Agency for the status of residence of "Designated Activities."

10. If I receive the Certificate of Confirmation of the Startup Preparation Activity Plan, will I definitely be granted "Designated Activities" status of residence?

No. Receiving the certificate from Kanagawa Prefecture does not guarantee that the Immigration Services Agency will grant the "Designated Activities" status of residence. The Certificate of Confirmation of the Startup Preparation Activity Plan issued by Kanagawa Prefecture is an important document for the examination by the Immigration Services Agency.

11. What points are examined when the Startup Preparation Activity Plan is reviewed?

In the review of the Startup Preparation Activity Plan, Kanagawa Prefecture assesses whether the applicant is likely to qualify for the ordinary "Business Manager" status of residence after the startup preparation period.

Accordingly, the Startup Preparation Activity Plan and its supporting documents must clearly describe, in particular, the following points:

- what business you plan to conduct
- where the business office will be established
- if a corporation will be incorporated, who the officers will be and what roles each of them will play
- how much funding will be required for the startup preparation activities and how that funding will be secured (including the prospect of business assets or capital of at least JPY 30 million)
- what preparations and activities will be carried out before the business begins
- whether there is a prospect of employing at least one full-time employee
- whether the applicant has at least one year of experience in business management/administration, or a master's-equivalent or higher degree
- whether the applicant plans to reside in Japan during the startup preparation period

If the documents do not clearly demonstrate that the plan is realistic and feasible, the certificate will not be issued.

12. Is the Certificate of Confirmation of the Startup Preparation Activity Plan valid for a limited period?

Yes. The Certificate of Confirmation of the Startup Preparation Activity Plan is valid for three months from the date of issuance.

Within that validity period, you must submit it, together with the necessary supporting documents, to the Immigration Services Agency and apply for a Certificate of Eligibility for the status of residence of “Designated Activities.”

13. Can I prepare the application documents in my own language?

Please prepare all application documents and related materials in Japanese. Your name may be written in Roman letters, hiragana, or katakana.

If any supporting document has been prepared in a language other than Japanese, please attach a Japanese translation.

14. Can I still apply if my business plan is not yet completely finalized?

Please include in your Startup Preparation Activity Plan only content that has a certain basis and is considered realistically achievable. Do not include content that is unlikely to be realized or that lacks feasibility.

You may still submit an application even if there are some sections that you are unable to complete. However, feasibility will be assessed based on the contents of the plan. Therefore, if many sections are left blank, we recommend that you further consider your business plan and apply only after preparing a plan that you believe has a high degree of feasibility.

Starting a new business generally requires a substantial amount of funding and effort, and it involves risk. For this reason, before applying, we recommend that you gain sufficient knowledge of your intended business field, conduct sufficient research on the Japanese market, and prepare a clear and concrete business plan.

15. How should I describe my role, background, qualifications, and experience?

If the applicant will effectively start the business alone, possible descriptions include, for example, “Representative Director,” “overall supervision of the business,” or “managing the business as the representative.”

If the applicant will start the business jointly with another foreign national or a Japanese national, please describe the applicant’s specific role in the business. Examples may include “Vice President in charge of sales for the XX region,” “Director responsible for planning, development, and production of the XX project,” or “CFO responsible for fundraising, financial management, and business planning.”

In the review of the Startup Preparation Activity Plan, particular importance is placed on whether the applicant is likely to actually launch the business during the startup preparation period and transition to “Business Manager” status of residence.

If you have qualifications, experience, skills, or any other background that would be advantageous for the business you plan to undertake, these can increase the feasibility of your plan. Please describe your academic background, work experience, achievements, qualifications, and any other information demonstrating feasibility as specifically as possible.

16. What business fields are eligible?

Eligible businesses under this program are limited to those that contribute to strengthening the international competitiveness of Kanagawa Prefecture's industries and enhancing its role as an international economic hub.

Kanagawa Prefecture recognizes the following industries and business fields as eligible:

- a. Pre-symptomatic Care, life sciences, and welfare-related businesses
- b. Decarbonization and environmental energy-related businesses
- c. IT, AI, and robotics-related businesses
- d. Mobility and transportation equipment-related businesses
- e. Tourism, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and food-related businesses
- f. Advanced materials-related businesses
- g. Aerospace-related industries
- h. Culture and arts-related industries
- i. In addition to the above, any business activities that are specifically recognized by the Governor of Kanagawa Prefecture as contributing to the resolution of social issues, the enhancement of the international competitiveness of industries within the prefecture, and the strengthening of its position as a hub for international economic activities.

Please note that all businesses must also be recognized as having novelty and growth potential. If you are unsure whether your planned business falls within an eligible field, please consult the contractor.

17. How specific do the profit and loss plan, funding plan, and startup preparation schedule need to be?

We understand that it can be difficult to estimate future sales and expenses. However, this information is important for confirming the sustainability of the business.

Please state figures based on a reasonable degree of supporting basis, such as your average unit price and expected number of customers, in a manner consistent with your business and target customers.

In general, a funding plan shows how the funds required for the business will be secured and used, while a profit and loss plan shows the expected profit or loss after expenses are deducted from sales.

In the "Schedule of Startup Preparation Activities," please describe the matters that need to be prepared before the business starts, such as company incorporation procedures, recruitment of officers and employees, preparation of products or services, building relationships with customers and business partners, and fundraising.

You must also attach documents showing that you have secured sufficient living expenses during the startup preparation period. If you plan to cover business funds with your own funds, you must also attach documents showing that those business funds have been secured.

18. What happens after the plan is approved and after the one-year period of stay ends?

During the one-year stay period, you will have a progress interview at least once each month. In principle, a person in charge from Kanagawa Prefecture and a person with specialized knowledge of business management appointed by Kanagawa Prefecture will confirm the progress of the startup preparation activities and compare the actual activities with the plan stated in the Startup Preparation Activity Plan.

They may also review the applicant's funding situation and cash flow.

If you wish to remain in Japan and continue operating your business beyond the one-year period of stay under this program, you must apply for an extension of your period of stay at the Immigration Services Agency.

Please note that, if it becomes difficult to continue your startup preparation activities during the program period, or if an extension of your “Designated Activities” status of residence is not approved, you will be required to return to your home country. Therefore, in addition to your business funds and living expenses, please make sure in advance that you have secured return travel expenses.

19. Do I need to already have JPY 30 million or more at the time of application?

No. You are not necessarily required to already possess the full JPY 30 million at the time of application.

However, under the current requirements, it is important to show a concrete and realistic prospect that, within the required period, the total amount of assets or funds to be used for the business will reach at least JPY 30 million.

Such funding may include your own funds, planned equity investment, loans, contributions from co-founders, or other means of financing. However, you must provide reasonable supporting evidence, such as a bank balance certificate, documents relating to investment, materials showing discussions regarding loans, or other documents demonstrating the feasibility of the financing.

Please note that saving income earned during the preparation period to reach JPY 30 million is generally not considered a realistic funding plan within the one-year timeframe, and may be judged insufficiently feasible in the review. It is desirable that the JPY 30 million be secured through funds already available at the time of application or through concrete prospects of investment or financing.

20. Is it necessary to secure at least one full-time employee?

Under the current requirements, you should show that you plan to hire at least one full-time employee within the required period.

You do not need to have already hired that employee at the time of application. However, in your Startup Preparation Activity Plan, you must explain when you plan to hire the employee, what role they will play, and how their personnel costs will be covered.

If you are unsure, please consult the Immigration Services Agency or a professional advisor.

21. Are there any requirements regarding academic background, work history, or management experience?

Yes. The applicant must meet either of the following conditions:

- have at least one year of experience in the management or administration of a business; or
- hold a master's-equivalent or higher degree in business administration/management, or in a field of technology or knowledge necessary for the business to be applied for

In your resume, please explain your management or administrative experience, your responsibilities, and how they relate to your planned business.

If you meet the requirement based on your degree, please also explain the relationship between the content of your degree and the business you plan to apply for.

Please note that, for the final confirmation, additional materials may be requested depending on the submitted documents and your individual circumstances.