

Q. What is a UK Expansion Worker visa?

A. The UK Expansion Worker visa is a sub-category of the UK's Global Business Mobility (GBM) route. A UK Expansion Worker visa allows the holder to come to the UK to set up a branch of an overseas business that has not started trading in the UK yet. Applicants must already work for the overseas business as either a senior manager or specialist employee. From 11 April 2022, this visa has replaced the Sole Representative route.

Q. How is the UK Expansion Worker route different to the Sole Representative route?

A. Whereas its predecessor route was an unsponsored route, the UK Expansion Worker route requires the worker to have a UK sponsor. That sponsor will be a branch or wholly-owned subsidiary of an established overseas business. Under the old Sole Representative route, overseas businesses were only permitted to send one senior employee to the UK to undertake the expansion work. In contrast, the new UK Expansion Worker route allows a team of employees to come to the UK to undertake the set-up phase (up to a maximum of 5 workers at any one time).

Q. How do I gain sponsor approval under the UK Expansion Worker route?

A. Before the overseas business can send employees to the UK to set up a UK branch, it must [apply for a Sponsor Licence](#) on the Global Business Mobility: UK Expansion Worker route. This route can only be used when the business has not yet begun trading in the UK. If the business is already trading in the UK, you should apply for a licence on a different route (for example, the Senior or Specialist Worker or Skilled Worker route) instead.

Q. What are the specific requirements for businesses applying to sponsor UK Expansion Workers?

A. As well as meeting the general requirements to qualify for a sponsor licence, businesses applying to sponsor workers under the UK Expansion Worker route must meet additional requirements to show that they have:

- **A UK 'footprint'** – You can show this by:
 - Providing evidence you have UK business premises – for example, a lease agreement or documents showing you have purchased the premises.
 - Providing evidence that the business is registered with Companies House as either an overseas company branch or a new company that is a subsidiary of the overseas linked business – in this case, you need only provide your Companies House reference number, or numbers.
- **An overseas trading presence** - The overseas business that is expanding to the UK must be active and trading overseas and, unless an exception applies, demonstrate they have been active and trading for at least 3 years before the date of application. You can demonstrate this by providing evidence such as corporate bank statements and audited accounts.
- **Credible plans to expand to the UK and establish a business presence within 2 years** – To demonstrate this, you will need to provide evidence of your business planning and finances. The Home Office may also consider the size of your business, its previous activity and its potential.

Q. Where can I find a list of the documents I need to provide?

A. A detailed list of documents you can provide can be found in [Appendix A](#) of the sponsor guidance. Your SSW Immigration Consultant can help you to identify the specific documentation you will need for your licence application.

Q. What are the exceptions?

A. Some businesses may not have to provide specific evidence to show that they satisfy all of the criteria above. Exceptions apply for certain businesses, such as for Japanese businesses seeking to establish a UK branch under the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, and for overseas businesses that are listed on certain stock exchanges. SSW can advise you on whether your business qualifies for an exception.

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Q. Do my appointed Key Personnel have to be based in the UK?

A. In common with other sponsored work routes, you must nominate an Authorising Officer (AO), a Key Contact and at least one Level 1 User when you apply for your licence. Your AO can be either a worker who is already based in the UK and will be overseeing the expansion, or a senior employee of the overseas business who will be assigned to the UK to oversee the expansion. If the AO is a worker based in the UK, they can appoint themselves or another eligible person as the Level 1 User and/or Key Contact. If the AO named in your application is an employee of the overseas business, they must also be the Level 1 User. If your licence application is approved, that person must assign a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) to themselves in order to make an application for entry clearance. The AO can appoint different people to these roles once they are legally resident in the UK and you have obtained an A-rating for your licence.

Q. How many Certificates of Sponsorship (Cos) can I assign to UK Expansion Workers?

A. You can only sponsor the number of UK Expansion Workers you genuinely need to establish the UK business (up to a maximum of 5 workers at any one time). Your CoS allocation will therefore not be higher than 5 at any time. You can replace individual workers within this allocation (for example, if a sponsored worker leaves the company or returns to their employer overseas) but you will not be permitted to sponsor more than 5 workers on this route at any one time.

Q. What are the sponsorship fees?

A. For sponsor licencing fee purposes, the UK Expansion Worker route is classified as a 'Temporary Worker' route. . This means that organisations applying for a licence to sponsor UK Expansion Workers on or after 11 April 2022 will pay the standard fee for a Temporary Worker sponsor licence (£536), regardless of their size or charitable status. CoS assigned to workers on this route will be charged the standard Temporary Worker CoS fee (£21). Unlike the Senior or Specialist Worker route, sponsors are not required to pay the Immigration Skills Charge (ISC) for UK Expansion Workers. The visa application fee is £259 for main applicants and dependants. Applicants and their dependants must also pay the Immigration Health Surcharge (HIS), which is £624 per year, or £470 per year for under 18s.

Q. How long will my Sponsor Licence be valid for?

A. If your sponsor licence application is successful, your licence will be valid for 4 years, in common with other sponsored work routes. However, you will not be able to apply to renew your licence for this route at the end of the 4 years. The Home Office expects businesses using the UK Expansion Worker route to have successfully established a UK trading presence within two years. If you fail to do so, you will no longer be permitted to sponsor any new workers on this route, your existing sponsored workers will not be permitted to extend their stay (even if they would otherwise be eligible), and you may lose your sponsor licence.

Q. Can I continue to sponsor my UK Expansion Workers after the UK branch has been established?

The maximum time you can stay in the UK on a UK Expansion Worker visa is 2 years. If your employees wish to stay in the UK beyond that 2 year period, they will need to apply to switch to another visa route if they meet the relevant requirements. Once you have established a UK trading presence, you can apply to add other routes to your licence (for example, Skilled Worker or Senior or Specialist Worker). You will then be able to issue a new Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) to the worker(s) for the relevant route so they can apply for a new visa. Once the UK business entity has been established, you can choose whether or not to have your licence for the UK Expansion Worker route made dormant. In either case, it will automatically expire after 4 years and you will not have the option to renew it.

Q. Where can I find out more?

A. For more information on sponsoring workers under the UK Expansion Worker route and the other four Global Business Mobility routes, please refer to the Home Office guidance for sponsors [here](#). Alternatively, your SSW Immigration Consultant is on hand to provide tailored advice and answer any questions you may have.