



METI

Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry



**START YOUR BUSINESS IN
JAPAN WITH**

STARTUP VISA



Overview



Japan's Startup Visa lets foreign entrepreneurs prepare startups for 2 years, with certified organization review and support to obtain Business Manager status.

In cross-border The Startup Visa is a program designed to strengthen the international competitiveness of Japanese industry and to establish Japan as a hub for international economic activity. It allows foreign entrepreneurs who aim to achieve stable business management under the "Business Manager" residence status to engage in startup preparation activities in Japan for up to two years.


Under this program, organizations certified by the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry in accordance with a public notice (such as local governments and private companies) review the startup preparation activity plans submitted by foreign entrepreneurs, in cooperation with experts who possess knowledge of





business establishment and management. If the plan is confirmed to meet the prescribed requirements (described below), the applicant may apply to the Immigration Services Agency together with a confirmation certificate issued by the certifying organization. Upon approval of residence, the entrepreneur may conduct startup preparation activities for up to two years.


Foreign entrepreneurs are required to attend a monthly progress review meeting (interview) on their startup preparation activities with the certifying organization. As necessary, they may also receive support in areas such as talent acquisition, market expansion, and fundraising. By utilizing these support measures, entrepreneurs are expected to change their residence status to “Business Manager” within two years.

Process for Utilizing the Program

1  The foreign entrepreneur submits a Startup Activity Plan to a certified organization (such as a local government) that has jurisdiction over the city where the startup preparation activities (Note 1) will be conducted.

2  The certified organization reviews the submitted plan in cooperation with a third party possessing expertise in business establishment and management. If the plan is deemed to meet the requirements stipulated in the public notice (Note 2), the organization issues a Certificate of Confirmation.

3  The foreign entrepreneur applies to the Regional Immigration Services Bureau with jurisdiction over the city where the startup preparation activities will be conducted for a Certificate of Eligibility under the residence status of "Designated Activities (Public Notice No. 51)."

4  The Immigration Bureau conducts an examination, and if approved, grants the residence status of "Designated Activities (Public Notice No. 51)." In many cases, an initial period of stay of one year is granted.

The certified organization conducts monthly interviews and progress reviews and provides necessary support.

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If the foreign entrepreneur needs to extend the startup preparation period, they must apply to the certified organization for confirmation of an updated Startup Activity Plan before the expiration of their current period of stay. (The subsequent process follows steps B through E above.)

Ultimately, the entrepreneur aims to change their residence status to "Business Manager."



Definition of Startup Preparation Activities

(Public Notice No. 2-1)

“Startup preparation activities” means activities conducted by a foreign national to secure a business office and carry out other preparatory actions necessary to commence business management in Japan, as well as remunerated activities incidental thereto. It also includes activities to continue managing the business after commencing business operations in Japan.

However, this does not include activities related to adult entertainment businesses (i.e., businesses defined under Article 2, Paragraph 1 of the Act on Control and Improvement of Amusement Business, etc. (Act No. 122 of 1948); store-based sex-related special businesses defined in Paragraph 6 of the same Article; specified entertainment and restaurant businesses defined in Paragraph 11 of the same Article; activities conducted at business establishments where such businesses are operated; as well as non-store-based sex-related special businesses defined in Paragraph 7; image transmission-type sex-related special businesses defined in Paragraph 8; store-based telephone introduction services defined in Paragraph 9; and non-store-based telephone introduction services defined in Paragraph 10 of the same Article).

Requirements for Use of the System

(At the Time of Initial Application)



The startup preparation activities to be conducted by the prospective Specified Foreign Entrepreneur must be appropriate for strengthening Japan's international industrial competitiveness and for forming international economic hubs (or, where the implementing body of the Foreign Entrepreneur Startup Promotion Program is a local government, for strengthening the industrial competitiveness of that local government).

The plan related to the startup preparation activities must be proper and feasible.



The scale of the business related to the startup preparation activities must be expected, within one year after landing in Japan or after change of status of residence, to meet all of the following conditions:

- (i) *The business must be operated with the engagement of at least one full-time employee residing in Japan (excluding persons residing under a status of residence listed in the left-hand column of Appended Table I of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act), other than those engaged in management or administration.*
- (ii) *The total amount of assets to be used for the business (including the amount of stated capital and total investment) must be at least 30 million yen.*

It must be expected that the foreign national will secure a business office in Japan within one year after landing in Japan or after change of status of residence.



The applicant must satisfy at least one of the following conditions:

- (i) *Have at least one year of experience in business management or administration.*
- (ii) *Hold a doctoral degree, master's degree, or professional degree (as defined in Article 5-2 of the Degree Regulations (Ministry of Education Ordinance No. 9 of 1953), including an equivalent degree granted by a foreign institution) in a field related to business management or in a field of technology or knowledge necessary for the business concerned.*

The combined total of the following periods must not exceed two years:

- (i) *The period of startup preparation activities conducted by the applicant.*
- (ii) *The period during which the applicant resided under the "Business Manager" status of residence as listed in Appended Table I-2 of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, limited to activities conducted in a National Strategic Special Zone under Article 16-6(1) of the National Strategic Special Zones Act (Act No. 107 of 2013), including startup activities.*



The applicant must intend to reside in Japan during the period of the startup preparation activities.

Requirements for Use of the System

(At the Time of Renewal)



The startup preparation activities conducted by the Specified Foreign Entrepreneur must be appropriate for strengthening Japan's international industrial competitiveness and for forming international economic hubs (or, where the implementing body of the Foreign Entrepreneur Startup Promotion Program is a local government, for strengthening the industrial competitiveness of that local government).

The plan related to the startup preparation activities conducted by the Specified Foreign Entrepreneur must be proper and feasible.



The scale of the business related to the startup preparation activities must be expected, within six months after renewal of the period of stay, to meet all of the following conditions:

- (i) *The business must be operated with the engagement of at least one full-time employee residing in Japan (excluding persons residing under a status of residence listed in the left-hand column of Appended Table I of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act), other than those engaged in management or administration.*
- (ii) *The total amount of assets to be used for the business (including the amount of stated capital and total investment) must be at least 30 million yen.*

It must be expected that a business office related to the business under the startup preparation activities will be secured in Japan within six months after renewal of the period of stay.



The combined total of the following periods must not exceed two years:

- (i) The period of startup preparation activities conducted by the applicant.*
- (ii) The period during which the applicant resided under the "Business Manager" status of residence as listed in Appended Table I-2 of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, limited to activities conducted in a National Strategic Special Zone under Article 16-6(1) of the National Strategic Special Zones Act (Act No. 107 of 2013), including startup activities.*

The applicant must intend to reside in Japan during the period of the startup preparation activities.





Reference

Future Creation Human Resources System (J-Find):

A system that grants the status of residence “Designated Activities (Future Creation Human Resources)” to outstanding graduates of overseas universities, etc., who engage in “job hunting” or “startup preparation activities” in Japan, allowing them to reside in Japan for up to two years.

<https://www.moj.go.jp/isa/content/001401538.pdf>

Highly Skilled Professional Points-Based System:

A system that provides preferential immigration and residency measures through a points-based framework to highly skilled foreign professionals engaging in “Advanced Academic Research Activities,” “Advanced Specialized/Technical Activities,” or “Advanced Business Management Activities” in Japan.

<https://www.moj.go.jp/isa/content/001398892.pdf>

Special Highly Skilled Professional System (J-Skip):

Separate from the Highly Skilled Professional Points-Based System, this system grants the status of residence “Highly Skilled Professional” to foreign nationals who meet certain thresholds for educational background or professional experience and annual income, and recognizes them as “Special Highly Skilled Professionals” eligible for expanded preferential measures.

<https://www.moj.go.jp/isa/content/001401537.pdf>

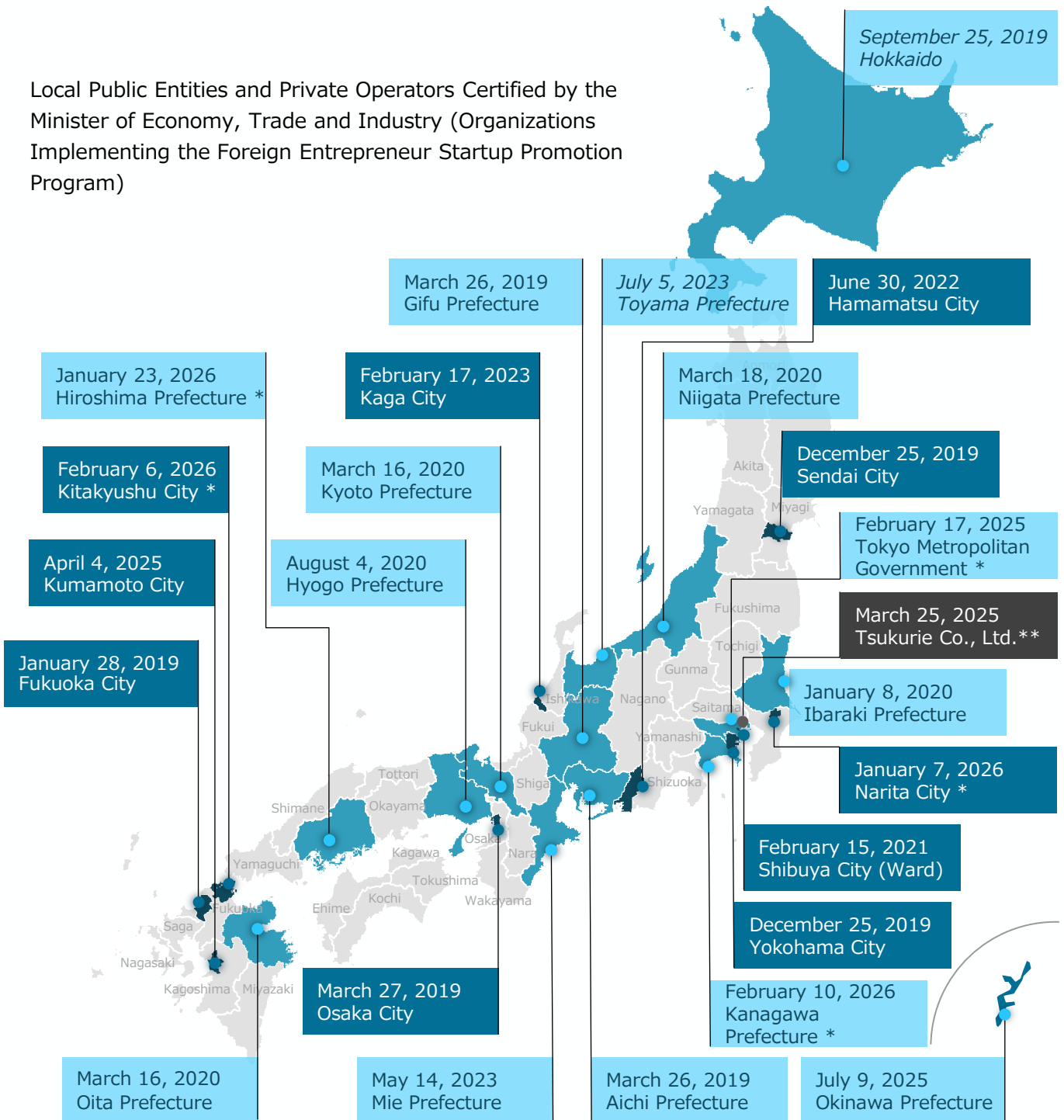
Status of Residence “Business Manager”:

A status of residence granted to foreign nationals who engage in the operation of trade or other businesses in Japan or who engage in the management of such businesses (excluding activities involving the operation or management of businesses that legally require qualifications listed under the “Legal/Accounting Services” category in Appended Table I-2 of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act).

<https://www.moj.go.jp/isa/applications/status/businessmanager.html?hl=en>

Main Participating Local Governments

Local Public Entities and Private Operators Certified by the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry (Organizations Implementing the Foreign Entrepreneur Startup Promotion Program)



*Previously, only the Foreign Entrepreneur Startup Promotion Program under the National Strategic Special Zones was implemented. In January 2025, this program was consolidated with the METI-administered program, and the maximum period of stay for foreign entrepreneurs was extended from one year to two years.

**An incubator that operates 18 proprietary facilities nationwide, primarily in the Kanto region

