

FEBRUARY 2026

CUMMING & PARTNERS**U.S. & CANADIAN IMMIGRATION INSIGHTS****U.S. IMMIGRATION****REGISTRATION OPENS ON MARCH 4 FOR H-1B CAP**

For the 2027 fiscal year, registration for the H-1B cap will run from March 4, 2026 (starting at noon Eastern) to March 19, 2026 (ending at noon Eastern). Employers or their authorized representatives must electronically register each prospective H-1B beneficiary using a USCIS online account.

USCIS intends to notify registrants of selection results by March 31, 2026. Only those chosen in registration can file a full H-1B petition for 2027. The annual cap of 65,000 visas, plus 20,000 for advanced degree holders, remains unchanged.

[LEARN MORE](#)**NEW RULES FOR H-1B SELECTIONS**

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services will now select unique beneficiaries, not employer registrations. Each beneficiary is entered into the lottery once, regardless of how many employers register them.

A new weighted selection system is replacing a random lottery, to prioritize beneficiaries based on OEWS wage level (higher-paid roles get additional entries in the draw). A beneficiary with multiple registrations will be assigned to the lowest wage level among those registrations.

All employers who registered a beneficiary who was selected may file an H-1B petition. The beneficiary can later choose which employer to proceed with, if approvals are obtained.

[LEARN MORE](#)**UPDATES ON CHANGES TO VISA ISSUANCES**

In January 2026, the U.S. implemented a series of changes that:

- fully or partially suspended visa issuances to foreign nationals of more than three dozen countries; and
- paused immigrant visa issuances for nationals of 75 countries considered at high risk for public benefits usage.

Since those restrictions took effect, the U.S. Department of State has updated the web pages (as of Feb. 2) outlining the rules and limited exceptions.

[LEARN MORE](#)**CAP REACHED FOR H-2B VISAS**

On Feb. 13, 2026, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services announced that it had received enough petitions to reach the cap for the additional 18,490 H-2B visas it had made available. Those were for the first allocation of returning workers of fiscal year 2026, with start dates from Jan. 1 to March 31.

USCIS used a computer-generated selection process to allocate the visas randomly, for petitions received on the first five business days of filing (Feb. 2-Feb. 6, 2026). Premium processing services began shortly after.

[LEARN MORE](#)**CANADIAN IMMIGRATION****EXPRESS ENTRY SYSTEM INTRODUCES NEW CATEGORIES**

Canada has unveiled five new categories and five renewed ones under the Express Entry online system. Express Entry manages three immigration programs: Canadian Experience Class, Federal Skilled Worker Program and Federal Skilled Trades Program.

The category-based round of invitations now includes:

- medical doctors with Canadian work experience;
- researchers with Canadian work experience;
- senior managers with Canadian work experience;
- transport occupations; and
- skilled military recruits with a job offer from the Canadian Armed Forces.

The renewed categories are:

- French-language proficiency;
- health care and social services occupations;
- education occupations;
- science, technology, engineering and math occupations; and
- trade occupations.

The minimum work experience required for all renewed categories has been increased from six months to one year, gained in Canada or abroad over the previous three years.

[LEARN MORE](#)**FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION CONTINUES TO RISE**

For the fourth year in a row, the Government of Canada exceeded its Francophone immigration target, reaching 8.9% of admissions of French-speaking permanent residents outside Quebec in 2025.

The target will increase to 9% in 2026, 9.5% in 2027 and 10.5% in 2028. Starting this year, the government will also reserve 5,000 federal selection spaces for provinces and territories to designate French-speaking immigrants. This is in addition to the annual Provincial Nominee Program allocations.

Together, these measures aim to reach a 12% share of French-speaking permanent residents outside Quebec by 2029.

[LEARN MORE](#)**OINP GETS ITS 2026 NOMINATION ALLOCATION**

The Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) has received its new allocation from the federal government. For 2026, it's 14,119 nominations.

A Feb. 2 draw targeted the following: physicians; candidates invited under the Regional Economic Development through Immigration (REDI) pilot (Foreign Worker, International Student or In-Demand Worker streams); and candidates in health care and early childhood education occupations. On Feb. 18, OINP issued additional invitations to apply to candidates who may qualify for the Employer Job Offer streams in skilled trades-related occupations.

[LEARN MORE](#)**EXPRESS ENTRY ROUND SCORES**

For Express Entry, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada ranks candidates in the pool using the points-based Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS). About every two weeks, IRCC invites the top candidates in the pool to apply for permanent residence during rounds of invitations.

IRCC lists all of the rounds on a searchable table online. For Feb. 3, 2026, the Provincial Nominee Program had 423 invitations issued, and the CRS score of the lowest-ranked candidate was 749. For Feb. 6, 2026, French-Language proficiency 2026-Version 2, there were 8,500 invitations and a lowest CRS score of 400.

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