

Rural Renewal Stream Policies and Procedure

STEP Economic Development Alliance

Overview

The Alberta Advantage Immigration Program (AAIP) Rural Renewal Stream (RRS) addresses current labour needs and skill shortages in rural Alberta communities and helps newcomers settle into the community.

Rural Renewal Stream Designation was received by the County of St. Paul, on behalf of partner municipalities, the Town of St. Paul, the Town of Elk Point and the Summer Village of Horseshoe Bay, on March 10, 2023. The region has opted to extend the designation by an additional 2 years to a maximum of 5 years ending March 10, 2028.

The STEP Economic Development Alliance Committee acts on behalf of the designated community to administer the program and safeguard program integrity. Endorsement represents community support and is granted at the discretion of the Committee. Participation in the program is not an entitlement and remains subject to Committee approval.

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The STEP RRS program is employer lead requiring the process to be initiated by the employers through the steps laid out in the program. The program does not assist candidates to secure a position or negotiate with an employer.

Portage College Community Adult Learning Program (CALP) helps settle newcomers by sharing information on settlement supports. This may include information pertaining to accommodation, education, health care and other services.

Adoption

All matters pertaining to the implementation of the STEP RRS program approved prior to the date of adoption of Rural Renewal Stream Policies and Procedures, as set out herein, will be grandfathered. All new applications and requests will be subject to these policies and procedures upon adoption.

This Rural Renewal Stream Policies and Procedures was originally adopted January 11, 2024 and substantially amended April 2, 2026.

This version supersedes all previous Rural Renewal Stream policies and procedures of the STEP Economic Development Alliance.

Alignment with Alberta Advantage Immigration Program (AAIP)

AAIP establishes the governing eligibility requirements, procedures, and policy framework for the Rural Renewal Stream. Provincial requirements take precedence over local program administration.

Employers and candidates are responsible for reviewing and meeting all AAIP requirements. STEP does not assess or confirm full AAIP eligibility.

Community endorsement does not guarantee provincial approval, nomination, or immigration status.

Candidates must meet AAIP minimum requirements, which may include language proficiency, education, and work experience as determined by the Province.

Occupations requiring higher levels of education, training, or certification are more likely to align with AAIP requirements.

Program Governance and Committee Authority

The STEP Committee exercises local authority to evaluate employer participation, candidate endorsement, and program compliance in alignment with community labour needs and provincial program requirements.

The Committee may approve, deny, review, or reassess participation at any time where necessary to protect the integrity of the program or the interests of the community.

The Committee may consider overall distribution of endorsements across sectors and occupations to support program outcomes and community needs.

The Rural Renewal Stream is subject to change by AAIP. STEP administration will adjust local procedures to align with provincial updates.

RRS Program Procedure https://stepeconomicdevelopment.ca/?page_id=1747

Step 1 – Employer Application and Eligibility - STEP verifies that the employer meets eligibility requirements.

Step 2 – Request for LOE Submission - The employer submits a request for Letter of Endorsement identifying the candidate for endorsement. The candidate must be currently employed at the time of application.

Step 3 – Employment Verification - STEP confirms that the candidate is employed in a genuine, ongoing position within the region, and that employment conditions meet program expectations.

Step 4 – Assessment - STEP assesses based on program alignment, AAIP criteria, labour needs, and allocation.

Step 5 – Committee Review - Applications are reviewed collectively once each month by the STEP Economic Development Alliance Committee for decision.

Step 6 – Endorsement - Approved candidates are issued a Letter of Endorsement.

Step 7 – Conditions - Employers and candidates must maintain the conditions under which endorsement was issued.

Step 8 – Revocation - STEP may refuse or revoke an endorsement where criteria or conditions are not met.

Endorsement Framework

Endorsements are issued based on community needs and within annual allocation limits.

STEP LOE Priority Rules

- Candidate must have a valid work permit and job offer in the region
- Candidate must already be employed by the employer requesting endorsement
- Employer limited to a maximum number of nominations per year (as per policy)
- Applications are reviewed collectively

Endorsement letters are valid for twelve (12) months. Expired endorsement letters require a request for update. These requests may be reviewed as per policy.

The STEP Committee may withdraw, rescind, or suspend endorsement where circumstances warrant, including but not limited to:

- Change in employer eligibility
- Change in employment conditions
- Misrepresentation or incomplete information
- Program misuse or integrity concerns
- Candidate or employer no longer meets requirements
- Provincial policy changes
- Inability to verify information
- Risks to community capacity or program integrity

Issuance of a Letter of Endorsement does not guarantee success under AAIP.

RRS Program Policy

1) Program Misuse and Abuse

Misuse may result in suspension or removal from the program. Suspect fraud or misrepresentation may be reported to the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program: <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-advantage-immigration-program-reporting-fraud>

Citizenship or immigration consultants must be a member of the College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants. If an employer is working through an agent, agents status will be checked. <https://www.college-ic.ca/protecting-the-public/find-an-immigration-consultant>

The letter of endorsement will be provided to both the employer and worker.

2) Ensuring opportunities exist for Canadians, locals and youth

- a) The Rural Renewal Stream is intended to address persistent labour shortages and is not intended to replace employment opportunities for local residents, including youth and students. Employers are expected to make reasonable efforts to recruit locally and support youth workforce participation where appropriate.
- b) To balance the AAIP RRS program intent to address labour challenges, while ensuring work is available for Canadians, locals and youth, employers will be subject to the following limitations:
 - (1) **10 or less** current employees - **3** employees through the RRS Program.
Example: if a business has a total of 5, 6 or 7 employees, they are entitled to hire 3 additional employees through the RRS Program.
 - (2) **11 or more** current employees, the employer is permitted to hire an additional **30% of the their current complement** through the RRS Program.
Example: if a business currently has 50 employees, they are able to hire 15 additional employees through the RRS Program.
 - (3) Extenuating circumstances will be considered by the Committee, provided an employer is able to warrant a greater number of hires, at the discretion of the committee.
 - (4) Limits are imposed annually and will be reviewed on the anniversary of the business approval into the program.
- c) All mandatory AAIP candidate requirements of the program will be enforced to ensure candidate success. <https://www.alberta.ca/aaip-rural-renewal-stream-eligibility>

3) Employer Standing and Legitimacy

All Employers will provide proof of establishment in the form of a business license issued through the municipality, should that municipality issue such licenses.

- a) All employers must be in good standing with:
 - i) Employment Standards
 - (1) Registry of employers with unpaid administrative penalties | Alberta <https://www.alberta.ca/employers-unpaid-admin-penalties.aspx>

- (2) Registry of employers with unpaid judgments | Alberta
<https://www.alberta.ca/es-registry-unpaid-judgments.aspx>
- (3) Registry of certificate against corporate directors (corporate directors of a company that are liable for payment of wages owed to an employee)
<https://www.alberta.ca/es-registry-certificates-against-corporate-directors.aspx>
- ii) Workers' Compensation Board
 - (1) <https://decc.wcb.ab.ca/Clearance/RequestClearance.aspx>
- iii) Occupational Health & Safety
 - (1) <https://extern.labour.alberta.ca/ohs-employer-search/occupational-health-safety/employer-records-search.asp?>
- b) Any new business or employers not previously established within the region may be required to provide evidence of business activity (may include building lease, contracts, etc.) to establish validity and intent of business.
- c) An employer, upon submitting an application, may be requested for an interview, at the discretion of the STEP committee, to confirm eligibility for the program.
- d) Businesses may be subject to checks or visits, at the discretion of the STEP Committee, to ensure all requirements are met and maintained.
- e) Employer participation review
 - iv) Employer approval is subject to ongoing review.
 - v) The Committee may suspend, revoke, or terminate employer participation at its discretion where regulatory compliance, program integrity, or community capacity concerns arise.
 - vi) Employer approval is not permanent.
- f) Beyond the requirements stated in STEP policy, employers must meet AAIP requirements:
<https://www.alberta.ca/job-offer-and-employer-requirements#jumplinks-1>
- 4) Newcomer Assistance
 - a) **Portage College's Community Adult Learning Programs (CALP)**

Elk Point

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St. Paul

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- b) The STEP RRS program is employer lead requiring the process to be initiated by the employers through the steps laid out in the program. The program does not assist candidates to secure a position or negotiate with an employer. However, program information brochures and website access is available for newcomers to share with employers and STEP staff is available to answer employer questions about the program.
 - c) Endorsed candidates can access AAIP “How to Apply” at <https://www.alberta.ca/how-to-apply-to-aaip-worker-streams>
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