

Tel: +44 (0) 203 617 9173
Fax: +44 (0) 203 004 1611
Email: info@richmondchambers.com



INNOVATOR FOUNDER VISA



CONTENTS

Introduction	03
Requirements for an Innovator Founder visa	04
Endorsement criteria for an Innovator Founder visa	05
Indefinite leave to remain as an Innovator Founder	08
The 5 year route to British citizenship	09
Frequently asked questions	10
Case studies	13
Our services	15
Our fees	17
Testimonials	18

INNOVATOR FOUNDER VISA

The Innovator Founder visa is for start-up entrepreneurs and experienced businesspersons seeking to establish a business in the UK.

Applicants do not need to have any specific level of funds to invest in their proposed business, but must have an innovative, viable and scalable business idea, supported by a business plan, which has been approved by an endorsing body.

Applicants for an Innovator Founder visa must have generated, or have significantly contributed to, their business idea. Innovator Founders must also intend to have a key role in the day-to-day management and development of their business.

Innovator Founder visas are valid for 3 years and can lead directly to indefinite leave to remain in the UK at the end of this period. Innovator Founders can bring a partner and children under 18 to the UK.



REQUIREMENTS FOR AN INNOVATOR FOUNDER VISA

Initial applications for an Innovator Founder visa

In order to qualify for an Innovator Founder visa, you will need to satisfy UK Visas and Immigration that:

- You are at least 18 years old;
- You have a letter of endorsement issued by an approved UK endorsing body;
- Your endorsement letter was issued not more than 3 months before the date of your visa application;
- You are competent in the English language to at least CEFR Level B2 (equivalent to IELTS 5.5 in reading, writing, listening and speaking);
- If you are outside the UK or have been in the UK for less than 12 months, you have at least £1270 to support yourself, plus £285 for a dependent partner, £315 for a first child and £200 for each additional child;
- You have provided a TB test certificate, if required.

Is there an investment funds requirement?

Innovator Founder visa applicants do not need to show any specific amount of funds to invest in their proposed business

However, the requirement to have a 'viable' and 'scalable' business idea means that, in practice, you will need to demonstrate that you have access to a level of investment funds that is sufficient to set up and grow your business.

The investment funds requirement for an Innovator Founder visa is, therefore, a flexible provision that is capable of being satisfied by anyone with a genuine proposal for an innovative business and an appropriate level of funds to deliver it, based on the specific financial needs of their business.

DID YOU KNOW?:

Richmond Chambers is a trusted introducer to endorsing bodies, ensuring eligible clients direct contact with investment panel members as well as transparent and timely decision-making.



ENDORSEMENT CRITERIA FOR AN INNOVATOR FOUNDER VISA

Initial applications for an Innovator Founder visa based on a new business

In order for your business proposal to be endorsed, an approved endorsing body will need to be satisfied that you meet various requirements:

- You are a fit and proper person to receive endorsement under the Innovator Founder route;
- The endorsing body has no concerns over the source of any funds invested into your business;
- The endorsing body has no reason to believe that you or your business may be the beneficiary of illicit or unexplained wealth;
- You have a business plan and have either generated or made a significant contribution to the ideas in that business plan;
- You will have a day-to-day role in carrying out the business plan;
- You will have at least two Contact point meetings with your endorsing body at regular intervals;
- You are either the sole founder or an instrumental member of the founding team; and
- You have an innovative, viable and scalable business venture.

Innovative, Viable and Scalable Business Venture Requirement

In order to satisfy the innovative, viable and scalable business requirement for an Innovator Founder visa, your business idea will need to meet all of the following criteria:

- **Innovation:** You must have a genuine, original business plan that meets new or existing market needs and/or creates a competitive advantage;
- **Viability:** Your business plan must be realistic and achievable based on your available resources and you must have, or be actively developing, the necessary skills, knowledge, experience and market awareness to successfully run your business;

- **Scalability:** There must be evidence of structured planning and of potential for job creation and growth into national and international markets.

The endorsing body will also need to be satisfied that you have either generated or made a significant contribution to the ideas in your business plan and that you will have a day-to-day role in carrying out your business plan.



Applications for an Innovator Founder visa based on the same business

If you are pursuing a business that has previously been assessed by a Home Office approved endorsing body while you had permission on the Innovator, Innovator Founder, Start-up or Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) route, either for a previous endorsement application or at a contact point, then you may also apply for a further endorsement as an Innovator Founder.

This might be appropriate if you are looking to switch into the Innovator Founder route from one of the aforementioned routes or apply for an extension of stay as an Innovator Founder.

In order to qualify for an endorsement on the basis of running the same business as in a previous endorsement application, and receive an Innovator Founder endorsement letter, you will need to satisfy a Home Office approved endorsing body that:

- Your business is registered with Companies House and you are listed as a director or member of the business;
- Your business is active, trading and sustainable;
- You have made significant progress against your business plan;
- You are active in the day-to-day management and development of your business.



If you have, or last had, permission as an Innovator or Innovator Founder, you will also need to demonstrate that you attended at least 2 Contact point meetings with your endorsing body (or similar checkpoints with a legacy endorsing body) at regular intervals during your period of permission and confirm that you will have at least two Contact point meetings with the endorsing body at regular intervals during your period of permission.

INDEFINITE LEAVE TO REMAIN AS AN INNOVATOR FOUNDER

In order to qualify for indefinite leave to remain as an Innovator Founder you will need to satisfy UK Visas & Immigration that:

- You have been endorsed by an approved UK endorsing body that is satisfied that you have shown significant achievements judged against the business plan assessed in your previous endorsement, you are registered with Companies House as a Director or Member of your business, your business is active, trading and appears sustainable for at least the following 12 months and you have had an active key role in the day-to-day management and development of the business.
- You satisfy at least **two** of the following:
 1. At least £50,000 has been invested into the business and actively spent furthering your business;
 2. The business has created the equivalent of at least 5 full-time jobs for settled workers, which have an average salary of at least £25,000 a year;
 3. The business has created the equivalent of at least 10 full-time jobs for resident workers with no average salary requirement;
 4. The number of customers has at least doubled within the most recent 3 years and is currently higher than the mean number of customers for other UK businesses offering comparable main products or services;
 5. The business has engaged in significant research and development activity and has applied for intellectual property protection in the UK;
 6. The business has generated a minimum annual gross revenue of £1 million in the last full year covered by its accounts;
 7. The business has generated a minimum annual gross revenue of £500,000 in the last full year covered by its accounts, with at least £100,000 from exporting overseas.
- You have spent not more than 180 days outside the UK in any rolling 12 month period during the 3 years prior to the date of application; and
- You have sufficient knowledge of the English language and Life in the UK.

OUR COMMITMENTS TO OUR CLIENTS INCLUDE:

- Direct access to specialist immigration barristers
- Expert knowledge of immigration law and procedure
- Honest and independent legal advice
- Professional and reliable service with fast response times
- Practical and affordable immigration solutions
- Consistent record of success and positive client feedback

THE 5 YEAR ROUTE TO BRITISH CITIZENSHIP

INNOVATOR FOUNDER VISA

Initial Application

- At least 18 years old
- No specific level of investment funds required
- Endorsed by an approved UK endorsing body
- Endorsement letter issued within last 3 months
- English language requirement
- Maintenance funds requirement

Three
years
granted

INNOVATOR FOUNDER VISA

Settlement application

- Endorsed by an approved UK endorsing body
- Satisfy as least 2 specified business criteria
- Residence requirement
- English language requirement
- Life in the UK requirement

Indefinite leave
to remain
granted

Naturalisation application*

- Immigration status requirement
- Residence requirement
- Good character requirement
- English language and Life in the UK

British
citizenship
granted

*Innovator Founders can qualify for ILR after 3 years, but an application for naturalisation as a British citizen can only be made after 5 years in the UK (unless married to a British citizen).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

INNOVATOR FOUNDER VISA

Is there an investment funds requirement for an Innovator Founder visa?

Innovator Founder visa applicants do not need to show any specific amount of funds to invest in their proposed business

However, the requirement to have a 'viable' and 'scalable' business idea means that, in practice, you will need to demonstrate that you have access to a level of investment funds that is sufficient to set up and grow your business.

The investment funds requirement for an Innovator Founder visa is, therefore, a flexible provision that is capable of being satisfied by anyone with a genuine proposal for an innovative business and an appropriate level of funds to deliver it, based on the specific financial needs of their business.

Where can I find out more about Innovator Founder visa endorsing bodies?

The Home Office has published a list of endorsing bodies for Innovator Founder visa applications. This list of endorsing bodies contains the names of all currently approved Innovator visa endorsing bodies, as well as links to their websites and, where available, details of their application process and endorsement criteria. Our barristers can advise you on the most appropriate endorsing body for your application.

ADVANTAGES OF LIVING AND WORKING IN THE UK:

- Stable and democratic political system;
- Internationally renowned schools and universities;
- High quality of life, cosmopolitan society and attractive lifestyle opportunities;
- Strong and respected system of law;
- Favourable tax regime;
- British Pound considered by many to be a "safe haven" currency.

Which endorsing body should I apply to?

The right endorsing body for your application will depend on your individual requirements, such as the field in which your business will operate, the timing of your application, where you plan to base your business, and what support, if any, your business requires.

How can Richmond Chambers help with securing an Innovator Founder visa endorsement?

Our barristers can advise you on the most appropriate endorsing body for your application. Richmond Chambers is also a trusted introducer to endorsing bodies, ensuring eligible clients direct contact with investment panel members as well as transparent and timely decision-making.

Can I switch into the Innovator Founder visa category?

Applications for Innovator Founder visas can be made from outside the UK, but it is also possible to switch into the Innovator Founder visa category from within the UK provided you do not have, or were not last granted, permission as a Visitor, Short-term Student, Parent of a Child Student, Seasonal Worker, Domestic Worker in a Private Household or outside the Immigration Rules.

Can Innovator Founder visa applicants join an existing business?

The Innovator Founder visa category is suitable for start-up entrepreneurs and experienced businesspersons who are looking to set up a new business in the UK which is innovative, viable and scalable. Applicants are expected to present a new business idea. Generally, the business that forms the basis of the new business idea will not already exist in the UK. However, where it does, the business should not yet have fully started trading.

Can I apply for an Innovator Founder visa as part of a team?

You do not need to be the sole founder of your business and you may be a member of a founding team. However, if applying as part of a founding team you will need to be an instrumental member of the team and each applicant must receive their own individual endorsement from an approved endorsing body.

Are there any restrictions on the type of business I can set up?

Your business idea may relate to any sector, provided the business idea is sufficiently innovative, viable and scalable. Applicants can also develop other businesses as well as their main business idea.





What is the role of the endorsing body once I have my Innovator Founder visa?

You will need to have at least two contact point meetings with your endorsing body at regular intervals during your period of permission as an Innovator Founder. A contact point meeting is a checkpoint assessment between you and your endorsing body to assess progress against your business plan.

The endorsing body will need to be satisfied that you are continuing to work on your business venture and have demonstrated reasonable progress in relation to either your original or a new business idea that is innovative, scalable and viable.

Your Innovator Founder Visa may be cancelled if you fail to undergo a contact point meeting with your endorsing body.

How long is an Innovator Founder visa valid for?

Your initial Innovator Founder Visa will be valid for 3 years.

Will I be able to extend my Innovator Founder visa and apply for ILR?

It is possible to extend an Innovator Founder Visa for periods of 3 years at a time, subject to being re-endorsed each time. There is no maximum time limit in the Innovator Founder category.

You will be able to apply for indefinite leave to remain (settlement) as an Innovator Founder after spending 3 years in the Innovator Founder visa category.

Does the Innovator Founder visa have a residence requirement?

In order to qualify for indefinite leave to remain as an Innovator Founder you will need to have spent not more than 180 days outside the UK in any rolling 12 month period during the 3 years prior to the date of application.

Will I be able to undertake other work?

You will be permitted to engage in employment outside the running of your business, provided any such secondary employment is in a skilled role (i.e. skilled to at least RQF Level 3).

CASE STUDIES

Our business immigration team has assisted many entrepreneurs and their families to relocate to the UK under the Innovator visa route. For example:

Our immigration barristers assisted a Kuwaiti national to obtain an Innovator endorsement from a Home Office approved endorsing body in order to set up and run his innovative engineering firm in the UK. Our client had previously run businesses in the US and Middle East and had secured a patent for his product.

Our client was a financial services expert from Nigeria. We assisted her and her family to make successful Innovator visa and dependent applications to come to the UK, in order to set up an innovative financial services firm in the UK.

We assisted an Indian family working in financial services in the Middle East to gain Innovator endorsement to start an innovative financial services firm in the UK.

We assisted an Armenian national to obtain endorsement as an Innovator in order to develop his business idea of creating a new methodology for evaluating economic development. After obtaining endorsement, we were able to assist with his application for entry clearance to the UK.

The Richmond Chambers immigration team prepared an application for endorsement for our Russian client, who received several offers of endorsement for his mobile application company. Our client was then able to make his application for leave to remain in the UK as an Innovator.

Our immigration barristers assisted a Pakistan national to obtain entry clearance as an Innovator, allowing him to come to the UK to establish his health technology company.

We assisted a Jordanian national obtain endorsement as an Innovator, in order to start her educational company providing training in AI and STEM subjects. After securing endorsement we assisted with her visa application to come to the UK.

The Richmond Chambers Immigration Team assisted our Indonesian client to secure endorsement as the sole distributor in the UK of a specialist instant coffee, produced with an innovative technique.



OUR SERVICES

Our immigration barristers work directly with individuals and businesses, within the UK and overseas, to prepare high quality visa and immigration applications.

If you instruct us to prepare an application for entry clearance, leave to remain or settlement as an Innovator Founder we will:

- Provide you with a dedicated and experienced immigration barrister to work on your matter;
- Accurately identify how your application should be structured for success;
- Provide you with expert advice as to the requirements of the Immigration Rules for your immigration application, as well as any relevant Home Office policies and case-law;
- Research and identify appropriate Home Office approved endorsing bodies to approach for endorsement;
- Introduce you and your business plan to at least one Home Office approved endorsing body;
- Advise you in detail as to the documentary evidence that you will need to submit in support of your immigration application, including any requirements in terms of the content and format of these documents;
- Check all your supporting documents for compliance with the requirements of the Immigration Rules and advise you as to any required or recommended amendments;
- Complete the relevant immigration application form(s);

- Draft a witness statement in support of your immigration application (this is a detailed personal statement, which you will sign, explaining the factual basis of your application);
- Draft a 'barrister's opinion' in support of your immigration application (this is an expert legal opinion, prepared by your barrister, which will set out all the requirements of the Immigration Rules and explain to the Home Office, in detail, why your application should be approved);
- Prepare your application bundle ready for submission to the Home Office;
- Arrange for a second immigration barrister to independently check your completed immigration application prior to submission to the Home Office;
- Scan your finalised application bundle ready for submission to the Home Office;
- Submit your immigration application to the Home Office on your behalf;
- Act as your agent for all correspondence with the Home Office, up to and including receipt of the decision on your immigration application;
- Provide you with professional advice throughout the process of preparing your immigration application, by email, telephone or in-person as required;
- Provide you with professional advice as to the next steps once you have received a decision on your immigration application.

Our immigration barristers can also assist you to identify a suitably qualified professional business plan writer, instruct the business plan writer on your behalf and then liaise with the plan writer to ensure that your business plan satisfies the requirements of the Immigration Rules.

TRUST RICHMOND CHAMBERS FOR:

- Comprehensive all-inclusive solution for entrepreneurs and their families seeking to relocate to the UK;
- Professional and independent advice in relation to all aspects of the Innovator Founder visa;
- Trusted introducer to Innovator Founder visa endorsing bodies;
- Consistently high success rate in obtaining Innovator visas;
- High quality service delivered by specialist immigration barristers:
- Member of Department of International Trade's UK Advisory Network;
- Authorised and regulated by the Bar Standards Board and Solicitors Regulation Authority;
- Member of Immigration Law Practitioner's Association.

OUR FEES

We conduct all our work on an agreed fixed fee basis. There are no hourly rates and no hidden extras.

We will be pleased to provide you with a range of fixed fee options to choose from, based on the circumstances of your case and the level of service that you require, once we have more information about your matter.

Factors that may increase or decrease our overall fee quote include:

- the seniority of the barrister that you wish to instruct;
- the complexity of the issues in your case;
- the number of applicants, including any dependants;
- the volume of supporting documents;
- the timeframe for completion of the application.

Our fee quotes include all the work set out in the 'Our Services' section of this brochure. There are no hourly rates and we do not bill separately for the usual running expenses of a law firm such as telephone calls, photocopying, printing, stationery, document storage, postage or travel.

Our fees do not include costs related to your matter that are payable to third parties (known as disbursements), such as Home Office fees and translation/interpretation fees. Where such costs arise, you will be responsible for these, so that you always know exactly what is being paid and to whom.

All fees quoted are exclusive of VAT. VAT will be added at 20% where this is required by law. For example, VAT will be added where you are in the UK and have, or previously had, leave to remain. If you normally reside outside the UK then VAT will not be added.

We typically work on the basis of payment of our professional fees in two instalments (50% upon commencement and 50% just prior to submission of the application). Alternative instalment plans can also be agreed.

RICHMOND CHAMBERS OFFERS:

- Fixed fees
- No hourly rates
- All-inclusive service
- Pricing options
- Most expenses included
- Payment by instalments

TESTIMONIALS

At Richmond Chambers, our immigration barristers have an established track-record of achieving successful outcomes for entrepreneurs seeking to establish a business in the UK.

“Superb knowledge and professional service – simply excellent. Richmond Chambers provides outstanding service and their knowledge of the UK immigration process and law is unmatched. I recommend Richmond Chambers highly.”

“What a fantastic team. After one failed self application we phoned many immigration specialists and Richmond Chambers came out head and shoulders above the rest. We cannot praise this organisation enough and would wholeheartedly recommend them to anyone needing the best professional advice on UK immigration and visas.”

“Richmond Chambers is professional, honest, reputable and experienced. If you would like to prepare a strong UK visa application, you are strongly recommended to contact Richmond Chambers!”

“Professional and detailed. Richmond Chambers has a way of making you feel at ease and confident about your immigration status. Their thoroughness and professionalism is compared to none. I will definitely use Richmond Chambers’ services again and refer them to friends and family.”

“Throughout the process the quality of advice we received was excellent ... We found everyone in the team to be polite, professional and conscientious, and ultimately they helped the application to be successful which we are extremely grateful for. As and when a further application is required there is nowhere else we would turn for assistance.”

“The team at chambers went the extra mile, combing through the UK Immigration Rules to find me a solution to my predicament. Thanks to the team’s dedication and tenacity we were able to build a very strong case for my application.”

“The services provided by Richmond Chambers are worth every penny. They demonstrated a very professional approach at each and every step of the case, with amazing response times.”

“Phenomenal! I have to wholeheartedly say that Richmond Chambers has been absolutely amazing in getting me my visa, and that too without an interview. Thank you so much for your work Richmond Chambers, you’re by far the best at what you do.”





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