

Solving the Startup Visa Problem

Problem: Immigrant entrepreneurs have great difficulty getting a visa, making investing in them an intolerable risk—often referred to as “visa risk.” The result is a catch-22, where a startup founder needs a visa to attract investment, but needs capital to secure a visa.

Solution: By partnering with universities via the Global Entrepreneur-In-Residence (Global EIR) program, founders can qualify for an H-1B work visa that is exempt from the cap and therefore always available. This long-duration work visa reassures investors through being available to entrepreneurs on demand through a predictable and repeatable process, minimizing visa risk.

How it Works:

1. *Cap Exemption:* Under an immigration law from 2006, universities can apply for H-1Bs without being subject to the cap under the premise that the academic calendar and cap are misaligned. The federal immigration department agreed with our argument on the expansion of the university mission and approved many Global EIR-model visa applications.
2. *Two Paths:* Global EIR founders qualify for the cap-exemption under two pathways: direct, employment or through a legal collaboration and colocation model. Direct employment means the founders work part-time for the university under the cap-exempt H-1B as mentors, while they build their startup. Collaboration and colocation means the founders work directly for their startup as long as it has sufficient capital in the bank to pay their salaries and an independent board that controls their employment.
3. *Visa Exits and Program Success:* Ultimately, Global EIR founders can use their stable, predictable visa status to pitch their startup with a sufficient visa runway to satisfactorily address investor concerns about the founder(s) being forced to leave the country.

With outside funding secured or sufficient revenues generated, other visa or green card options become feasible and desirable. The most common conclusions will be a Global EIR founder applying for either a traditional H-1B visa or an O-1 extraordinary talent visa.

Validation: Currently, Global EIR programs are running in Massachusetts, Colorado, New York, and Alaska, with more in the pipeline, and 26 visas have been approved (100% approval rate to date) by USCIS off of hundreds of interested entrepreneurs applying to university Global EIR programs, with Global EIR-affiliated companies raising over \$100M and creating over 200 jobs.

Community Impact: The Pledge 1% Foundation helps startups make a pledge to give 1% of their equity back to local charities. This program is an immediate demonstration of engaging with local startup communities and represents the “give before you get” philosophy underlying our efforts.

Global EIR Coalition: The Global EIR Coalition is a 501(c)3 non-profit that connects founders with university Global EIR programs to get them the work visas they need to get back to the hard work of building great companies.