

Work Permits under the Immigration Act — Bringing Foreign Staff to Trinidad & Tobago

Any foreign national who intends to engage in a profession, trade, or occupation in T&T must hold a valid work permit, unless they are a citizen, a resident, or entering for gainful occupation for no more than 30 days in any 12-month period. Applications are submitted through the TTBizLink e-portal, with fees updated by the Immigration (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2025.

Key Points

- Work permits are administered by the Ministry of Homeland Security.
- The 30-day exemption is per 12-month rolling period, cumulative.
- Applications must be submitted at least 6 weeks before the intended start date.
- Fees (per 2025 regulations): TT\$1,200 application + TT\$900/month duration fee (minimum TT\$2,700).
- The employer must advertise the role for at least 7 consecutive days in a daily newspaper.
- Applicants need a police certificate of character dated within 6 months.
- Renewals require submission of an Annual Return with the standard documents.

1. Who needs a work permit?

Any foreign national engaging in a profession, trade, or occupation in T&T needs a work permit, with the following exceptions:

- Citizens of T&T.
- Permanent residents.
- Foreign nationals entering for a gainful occupation for a period not exceeding thirty (30) days within any twelve (12) consecutive months. This is measured cumulatively, three visits of ten days each in a year exhaust the exemption.

Directors travelling to attend board meetings, engineers commissioning equipment, and consultants on short assignments typically fall inside the 30-day exemption; longer or recurring assignments require a permit.

2. Application pathway (TTBizLink)

All work permit applications, individual (1–9 persons) and group (10 or more persons), are processed through the TTBizLink e-portal at <https://app.ttbizlink.gov.tt>. The employer typically submits the application; where the applicant is self-employed or the employer does not conduct business in T&T, an attorney-at-law may submit on their behalf.

Applications must be submitted at least six (6) weeks before the intended start date.

3. Required documents

The standard package includes:

- A covering letter from the employer or attorney explaining why a national cannot fill the role, the scope of work, and the requested duration.
- Completed and signed application forms.
- Proof of a job advertisement (minimum 3" x 5") run for at least seven consecutive days in a daily newspaper, and directing applicants to contact the Chief Manpower Officer at the Ministry of Labour.
- An evaluation report of applications received and interviews conducted, with CVs attached.
- Police Certificate of Character (dated within 6 months) from every country of domicile in the past 5 years, with a fingerprint search.
- Two character references (one employer, one personal), each dated within 6 months and spanning at least one year of acquaintance.
- Passport bio-data page and recent entry stamp.
- Curriculum Vitae, academic and professional qualifications, and one passport photograph.
- Tax Clearance Certificate (Form C) if previously employed in T&T.
- Employer's business registration documents.

4. Fees (per Immigration (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2025)

The 2025 regulations updated the fee schedule:

- Application fee, TT\$1,200.
- Duration fee, TT\$900 per month.
- Minimum total, TT\$2,700 (i.e. one month is charged as three).

Payments can be made online through TTBizLink or in person at the Work Permit Secretariat, Temple Court II, 52–60 Abercromby Street, Port of Spain. If paying in person, print the Processing Fee Acknowledgement Document; the resulting receipts must be uploaded to TTBizLink.

5. Renewals and Annual Returns

Renewals require an Annual Return in addition to the standard application documents. Best practice is to start the renewal at least eight weeks before expiry. A lapsed permit means the employee cannot legally work, including remotely from T&T, until the renewal is granted.

Employers should also confirm that CIPRIANI / NIS registrations are current and that monthly PAYE deductions are being remitted.

6. Common pitfalls

The most frequent mistakes:

- Under-estimating the advertising requirement, the advertisement must be run for 7 CONSECUTIVE days and must instruct applicants to contact the Chief Manpower Officer.
- Submitting a stale police certificate (older than 6 months).
- Missing the employer's Tax Clearance for renewals.
- Assuming that a director travelling on business does not need a permit, the 30-day rule is cumulative and per-person.
- Leaving too little lead time, 6 weeks is the minimum; more is prudent.

Sources

- Ministry of National Security, Work Permit Guidelines (December 2025)
- Immigration (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2025
- TTConnect, Work Permit

This guide is an informational summary prepared by the Tobago Foreign Direct Investment Commission for the benefit of prospective investors. It does not constitute legal, tax, or financial advice. Legislation and administrative practice change from time to time, always consult a qualified attorney-at-law admitted in Trinidad & Tobago before acting on any of this material. Where a discrepancy exists between this guide and the underlying statute, the statute prevails.