

United Arab Emirates: Remote Working Visa Scheme Implemented

March 28, 2022

Country



United Arab Emirates

At a Glance

- The Remote Working Visa scheme, first announced in March 2021, has opened to applicants.
- The scheme allows foreign nationals to work remotely for their overseas employer while living in the United Arab Emirates for up to one year.
- Foreign nationals will be able to work from the United Arab Emirates without a local employment contract and benefit from the UAE's digital infrastructure and location as a travel hub in the Middle East.

The situation

The Remote Working Visa scheme, first announced in March 2021, has opened to applicants. The scheme allows foreign nationals to work remotely for their overseas employer while living in the United Arab Emirates for up to one year, with the possibility of renewal.

A closer look

Details of the program include:

- **No sponsorship requirement.** Remote Working Visa applicants are not subject to a sponsorship requirement in the UAE (or a local employment contract). Instead, they must have worked for their current home country employer for at least three months prior to the submission date of the visa application.
- **Minimum salary.** The applicant must earn a minimum salary of USD 3,500 per month (or equivalent in a foreign currency).
- **Other requirements.** The applicant must have health insurance valid in the United Arab Emirates and must provide a confirmation letter from the employer that they have no objections to the applicant working remotely from the United Arab Emirates, among other conditions.
- **Application process.** Foreign nationals can apply for the Remote Working Visa in-country or from outside the United Arab Emirates online or through accredited typing centers (for those in Abu Dhabi).
- **Application fee.** The government fee is approximately USD 81 (excluding the medical examination and Emirates ID card fees).
- **Processing times.** The expected processing time is five to seven days.

- **Dependents.** Remote Working Visa holders may sponsor residence permits for their dependent spouse, children and parents.
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Impact

Foreign nationals will be able to work from the United Arab Emirates without a local employment contract and benefit from the UAE's digital infrastructure and location as a travel hub in the Middle East.

Background

- **Dubai remote work program.** In October 2020, the emirate of Dubai launched a Virtual Working Program for foreign nationals seeking to work remotely while remaining employed in their home country. This program continues to be operational, although it has slightly different eligibility requirements than the United Arab Emirates Remote Working Visa scheme.
 - **Global trend to support local economy.** The government has seen the remote work program as a way to support United Arab Emirates' economy when many industries are in a recession due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Other countries have implemented similar remote programs recently, including Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Bermuda, Cyprus, Estonia and Georgia.
 - **Remote work visa warning.** In countries where remote work is unregulated, workers and employers may unknowingly put themselves at risk of noncompliance with many aspects of the law, exposing them to possible fines or other penalties, depending on the country. Importantly, repeated noncompliance with regulations may result in employers losing their rights to hire foreign labor, including in the United Arab Emirates.
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Looking ahead

It is expected that as the non-traditional workforce grows and countries focus on post-COVID-19 economic remobilization, more governments will begin to implement remote work programs and to adapt their existing laws to citizens and residents working abroad under these programs.

Generally, as with all remote work visa programs, until clear national policies are established that respond to the numerous open legal questions, employers should be cautious of these programs as opposed to other, more well-established work authorization schemes. Employers should work with a trusted immigration partner to analyze strategies and assess risks associated with remote work visa programs.

This alert is for informational purposes only. If you have any questions, please contact the global immigration professional with whom you work at Fragomen or send an email to mideast@fragomen.com.