TN explained for HR

A two-minute briefing for hiring a Canadian professional under the USMCA.

What TN is

TN is a U.S. work classification created by the USMCA trade agreement. It lets a Canadian citizen work in the United States for a U.S. employer in one of 63 listed professions (accountants, engineers, nurses, computer systems analysts and others), for up to three years at a time. Your candidate applies in person at a U.S. port of entry or airport preclearance; a government officer decides on the spot.

TN vs H-1B at a glance

TOPIC	TN	H-1B
Lottery	None	Annual registration lottery
Employer petition	None at the border	Required, with a Labor Condition Application
Fees your company pays	None for a border application	Several thousand dollars in USCIS fees
Time to start	Days — decided when your hire applies	Months — cap cases generally start October 1
Renewals	Three-year increments, no fixed total	Generally six years in total

What you ARE asked to do

- Offer the job in writing.
- Review a support letter that describes the job, its duties, its length and the pay — correct anything that is not accurate.
- Print it on company letterhead and sign it.

That is the employer's whole TN-specific role for a border application.

What you are NOT asked to do

- No petition to file with USCIS.
- No lottery to enter.
- No Labor Condition Application.
- No government fee to pay for a border application.
- No account to create.

Typical timeline

1. You make the offer.
2. The letter is drafted and sent to you for review and signature.
3. Your hire applies at the border or preclearance with the letter and their credentials.
4. If admitted, they start work — admission is for up to three years.

Government fees

Your hire pays CBP $50 for the TN, plus $30 for the I-94 at a land port of entry ($50 total at airport preclearance). The employer pays no government fee for a border application.

About TNPath

TNPath is the tool your candidate uses to prepare the letter draft; you review it, edit anything inaccurate, and sign the final letter on your letterhead.

General information, not legal advice. Last reviewed October 19, 2026. More detail: tnpath.com/guides/tn-visa-employer-guide/