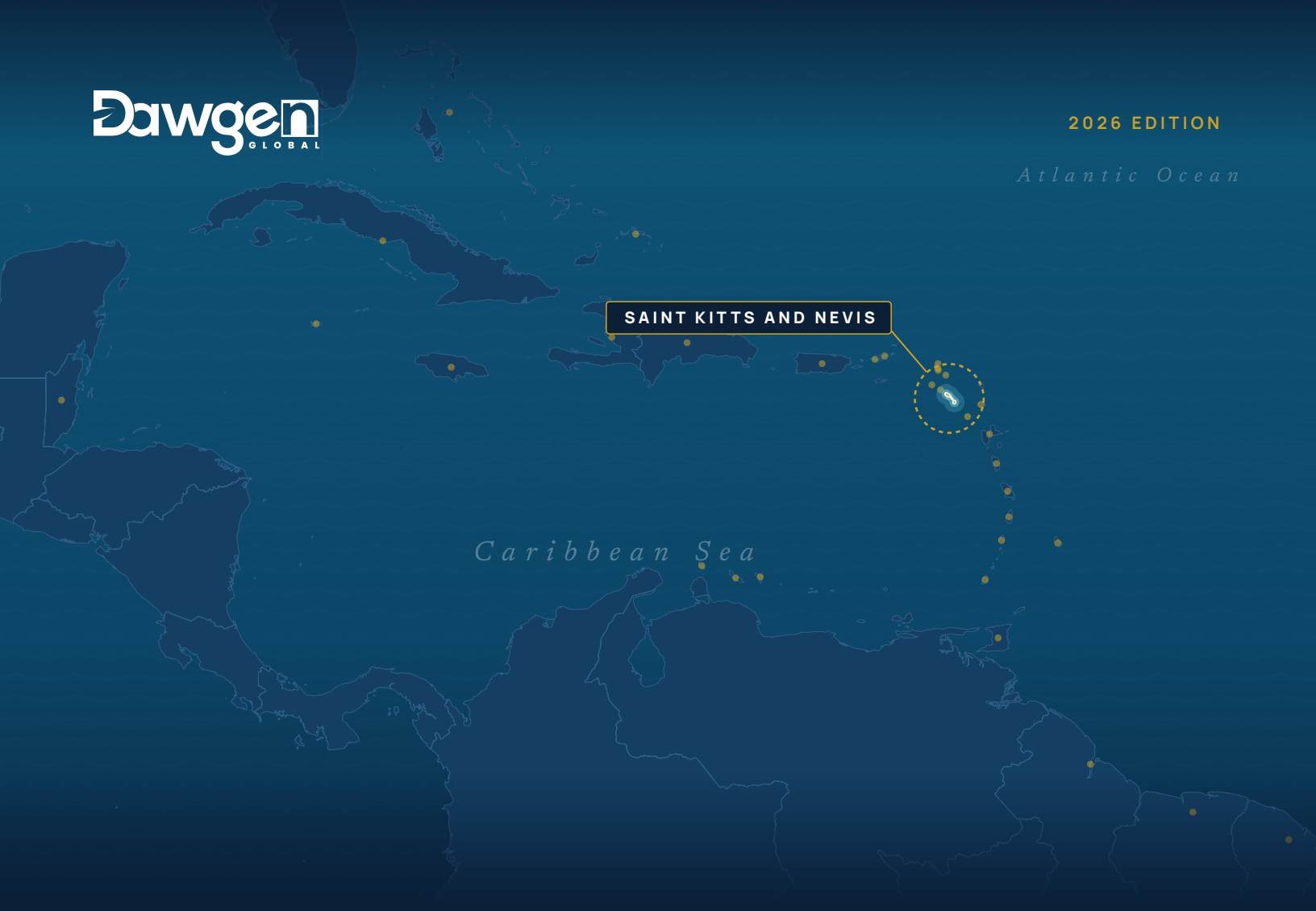
Dawgen GLOBAL

2026 EDITION



CARIBBEAN SERVICE DESK · EASTERN CARIBBEAN

Doing Business in Saint Kitts and Nevis

A practical guide to establishing, operating and growing a business in Saint Kitts and Nevis

CONTENTS

01	Saint Kitts and Nevis at a glance	3
02	Why Saint Kitts and Nevis	4
03	Choosing a business structure	5
04	Setting up: step by step	6
05	Tax at a glance	7
06	Employing people	8
07	Banking, currency and property	9
08	Incentives, trade and customs	10
09	Regulators and compliance calendar	11
10	Your first 90 days: checklist	12
11	How Dawgen Global helps	13

FOREWORD

Saint Kitts and Nevis is a two-island federation with a stable currency, an English common-law tradition and a long record in tourism, international financial services and citizenship by investment.

Investors choose Saint Kitts and Nevis for good reason: a business-friendly tax system with no personal income tax, a currency held at a fixed rate to the US dollar, and its place at the heart of the Eastern Caribbean, as host to the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank. Opportunity sits alongside complexity. The two islands have different registries and some different rules, and registration, tax, land holding, employment and licensing all need careful handling from the first day.

This guide sets out what you need to know in plain language: how to choose a structure on either island, how the set-up process works, what taxes apply, how to employ people, and which incentives may be available. It is written for investors, entrepreneurs and regional and international groups considering Saint Kitts and Nevis.

We serve clients in Saint Kitts and Nevis through Dawgen Global's Caribbean Service Desk, managed from our headquarters in Kingston, and we are ready to help you turn a plan into a well-run, compliant business.

Dr. Dawkins Brown, Ph.D., MCMI, ACFE

Executive Chairman, Dawgen Global

How to use this guide

This guide gives a practical overview of establishing and running a business in Saint Kitts and Nevis. It is general information, current to October 2026, and is not a substitute for advice on your circumstances. Rates and rules change; speak to us before you act.

OVERVIEW

01 Saint Kitts and Nevis at a glance

A federation of two islands in the Leeward Islands, with an economy built on tourism, international financial services, education and citizenship by investment.

CAPITAL
Basseterre
Charlestown is the main town of Nevis

POPULATION
About 50,000
Most live on Saint Kitts

LANGUAGE
English
Official language of business and law

CURRENCY
EC dollar (XCD)
Pegged at XCD 2.70 to US$1; issued by the ECCB

LEGAL SYSTEM
English common law
Final appeal to the Privy Council, London

TIME ZONE
UTC−4
Atlantic Standard Time all year; no daylight saving

CORPORATE INCOME TAX
25%
No personal income tax

VALUE ADDED TAX
17%
10% on accommodation and restaurants

TRADE AGREEMENTS
CARICOM, OECS, EU, UK
CSME; OECS Economic Union; EPAs; Caribbean Basin Initiative

Leading sectors

Tourism and hospitality · International financial services · Citizenship by investment · Real estate and construction · Tertiary education · Light manufacturing · Renewable energy · Agriculture and fisheries

Gateways

Robert L. Bradshaw International Airport (Saint Kitts) has direct flights to North America and the region; Vance W. Amory International Airport serves Nevis. Port Zante is a major cruise port, and ferries link Basseterre and Charlestown.

Public holidays

About a dozen public holidays a year, including Emancipation Day (August), National Heroes Day (16 September) and Independence Day (19 September). Overtime on a public holiday is paid at double time.

INVESTMENT CLIMATE

02 Why Saint Kitts and Nevis

A simple tax system, a fixed exchange rate and its role as a centre of the Eastern Caribbean make the federation a practical base for regional business.

Eastern Caribbean hub

Basseterre hosts the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank and the Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange. The federation is part of the OECS Economic Union and CARICOM, with access to regional markets and free movement of OECS nationals.

Competitive tax system

There is no personal income tax on individuals, and gains on assets held for more than a year are generally not taxed. Companies pay corporate income tax at 25%, and investment incentives are available for approved projects.

Familiar legal framework

Company, contract and property law follow English common law. Nevis has its own international financial services laws, widely used for corporations, limited liability companies and trusts. Foreign nationals may own land under a licence.

A changing economy

Tourism and citizenship by investment drive growth and government revenue. The government has set out plans for a sustainable island state, with investment in renewable energy, including solar generation and geothermal exploration on Nevis, food security and the modernisation of public services.

Where the opportunities are

Sector	Examples of opportunity
Tourism	Hotels, villas and resorts, cruise and yachting services, attractions, and supply chains for food and services
Financial services	Corporate and trust services, insurance and wealth management, particularly through Nevis
Education	Services to the international medical and veterinary schools and their students
Energy	Solar and geothermal generation, storage and energy efficiency
Agriculture	Food production, agro-processing and import substitution

Investment promotion

The St Kitts Investment Promotion Agency (SKIPA) supports investors on Saint Kitts, and the Nevis Investment Promotion Agency does the same on Nevis. Both help with information, approvals and introductions to government agencies.

LEGAL VEHICLES

03 Choosing a business structure

Local businesses usually use a company under the federal Companies Act, registered on either island. Nevis also offers its own corporation and LLC laws, used mainly for international business.

Vehicle	Key features	Typical use	Main obligations
Company (Companies Act)	Separate legal entity; limited liability; registered office on either island	Most local operating businesses and subsidiaries	Annual return to the Registrar; tax returns with financial statements
Nevis Business Corporation	Formed under the Nevis Business Corporation Ordinance through a licensed Nevis registered agent	Holding, investment and international trading companies	Annual fee; records kept with the registered agent
Nevis LLC	Formed under the Nevis Limited Liability Company Ordinance; single-member LLCs allowed	Asset holding, joint ventures and family structures	Annual fee; registered agent in Nevis
Branch (external company)	Overseas company registered to do business in the federation; not a separate legal entity	Projects, contracts and market entry	Registration; tax on local profits; 15% branch remittance tax
Partnership	General or limited partnership; general partners may be personally liable	Professional practices and family businesses	Registration; partners taxed on their profits
Sole trader	Individual trading under their own or a registered business name; unlimited liability	Small owner-managed businesses	Business name registration; 4% unincorporated business tax

Two islands, two regimes

The Nevis Island Administration runs a separate international financial services regime, supervised by its Financial Services Regulation and Supervision Department. Since 2019, new Nevis corporations and LLCs have no statutory tax exemption and are taxed like other companies where they are resident or earn local income.

Ownership and transparency

Foreign investors may own 100% of a company in most sectors; regulated activities need a licence first. Companies and registered agents must keep accurate information on shareholders, directors and beneficial owners, available to the authorities on request.

GETTING STARTED

04 Setting up: step by step

Companies are registered with the Registrar of Companies on Saint Kitts or on Nevis, usually through an attorney or licensed registered agent. Bank accounts and licences usually take longer than incorporation.

1 **Plan the structure, island and name** — WEEK 1

Choose the vehicle, the island of registration, shareholding and directors, and check that the proposed name is available.

2 **Incorporate** — WEEK 1–2

File the articles and notices of directors and registered office with the Registrar, through a local attorney or, for a Nevis corporation or LLC, a licensed Nevis registered agent.

3 **Open a bank account** — WEEK 2–6

Banks apply full know-your-customer checks on the company, directors and beneficial owners. Allow extra time where owners are overseas.

4 **Register for tax and social security** — WEEK 2–4

Register with the Inland Revenue Department, and for VAT once taxable supplies exceed EC$150,000 a year (EC$96,000 for professional services). Register as an employer with the Social Security Board.

5 **Obtain licences and permits** — VARIES

Apply for sector licences, planning approval where you will build, an Alien Landholding Licence if foreign owners will hold land, and work permits for foreign staff.

6 **Review data protection** — BEFORE TRADING

Businesses processing personal data should align their practices with the Data Protection Act, 2018, covering consent, security and disclosure.

7 **Set up accounting and compliance** — BEFORE TRADING

Put in place bookkeeping, payroll, IFRS-compliant reporting, a tax and filing calendar, and anti-money laundering controls where your sector requires them.

Documents you will usually need

Certified passport and proof of address for each director, shareholder and beneficial owner; bank or professional references; a registered office or registered agent in the federation; and, for an external company, certified constitutional documents and a certificate of good standing from its home registry.

TAXATION

05 Tax at a glance

Resident companies are taxed on worldwide income and non-residents on local-source income. Federal taxes apply on both islands. The headline rates are below.

Business taxes	
Corporate income tax	25%; losses carried forward five years, against up to 50% of a year's income
Capital gains	Taxed only on assets sold within a year of purchase
Unincorporated business tax	4% of monthly supplies above set limits for sole traders and partnerships
VAT	17% standard; 10% on accommodation, restaurants and commercial rentals; registration above EC$150,000 a year (EC$96,000 for professional services)
Stamp duty	6% to 10% on land transfers by value and location, usually paid by the seller; 2% on share transfers
Property tax	Annual, 0.2% to 0.3% of market value
Customs	Duty under the CARICOM Common External Tariff, plus a 6% customs service charge

Individuals	
Personal income tax	None; abolished in 1980
Housing and Social Development Levy	Employee nil up to EC$520 a week, then statutory tiered rates; employer 3%

Withholding tax (non-residents)	Rate*
Dividends	15%
Interest and royalties	15%
Management and technical fees	15%
Branch remittances	15%

*Domestic rates. The federation has a small treaty network, including the CARICOM double taxation agreement, which may reduce these rates.

Recent changes

The corporate rate has been fixed at 25%, down from 33%, since 1 January 2024. In 2025 the levy-free wage rose to EC$520 a week. From April 2026 solar and other alternative energy equipment is free of VAT, import duty and the customs service charge until 31 December 2026, and approved retailers may charge 5% VAT on announced discount days.

PEOPLE

06 Employing people

Employment law is protective but predictable. Employers must register with the Social Security Board, pay contributions and the levy monthly, and observe minimum standards on wages, leave and termination.

Minimum standards

- **Minimum wage:** EC$12.50 an hour (EC$500 for a 40-hour week) from 1 July 2025
- **Hours:** overtime above 40 hours a week at time and a half; double time on rest days and public holidays
- **Vacation:** 14 working days' paid leave after a year's service
- **Sickness:** Social Security sickness benefit for qualifying contributors
- **Maternity:** 13 weeks' leave after 150 days' service, with Social Security maternity benefit
- **Notice:** from one week to ten weeks by service; up to three months for monthly-paid staff
- **Severance:** after a year's service, two to four weeks' pay per year by length of service, capped at 52 weeks

Statutory payroll contributions

Contribution	Employee	Employer
Income tax (PAYE)	None	—
Social Security	5%	5%
Employment injury	—	1%
Severance Payment Fund	—	1%
Housing and Social Development Levy	Tiered	3%

Social Security applies to earnings up to EC$6,500 a month. Contributions and the levy are paid monthly to the Social Security Board.

Bringing in foreign staff

Work permits

Foreign nationals need a work permit, applied for before arrival, through the Department of Labour. Conditions or security may be attached.

CARICOM and OECS nationals

OECS nationals may work freely under the Revised Treaty of Basseterre. Qualified CARICOM nationals in approved categories may work under a CARICOM Skills Certificate.

Citizenship by investment

Investors who obtain citizenship through the Citizenship by Investment Programme may live and work in the federation without a permit.

HR essentials from day one

Give every employee written terms of employment, keep accurate time, pay and leave records, register each employee with the Social Security Board, and adopt a staff handbook covering conduct, grievances, data protection and health and safety. Most disputes we see start with missing paperwork, not bad intentions.

MONEY AND ASSETS

07 Banking, currency and property

Banking and finance

Commercial banks, credit unions, insurers and money services businesses are supervised by the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank and the Financial Services Regulatory Commission.

- **Fixed currency:** the EC dollar has been pegged at XCD 2.70 to US$1 since 1976
- **Payments:** trade payments and profit remittances are routine through banks; some capital transactions may need approval
- **US dollar accounts** are widely available
- **Capital markets:** the Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange in Basseterre lists regional equities and government securities
- **Compliance:** expect thorough anti-money laundering and know-your-customer checks

Financial reporting

Companies prepare financial statements under International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and file them with their corporate tax returns.

Land and property

Foreign nationals and foreign-owned companies need an Alien Landholding Licence to hold land, unless the purchase is an approved citizenship by investment property. Careful title searches matter.

Typical costs on a property purchase	
Alien Landholding Licence	10% of the property value (minimum EC$750), paid by the foreign buyer
Stamp duty	6% to 10% by value and location, usually paid by the seller; higher in some development areas
Legal fees	Agreed with the attorneys for each party
Property tax	Annual, 0.2% to 0.3% of market value

Before you build

Development needs planning and building approval from the physical planning authority on the relevant island, and larger coastal or sensitive projects may need an environmental assessment.

GROWTH LEVERS

08 Incentives, trade and customs

Incentives are granted mainly for approved projects, alongside the citizenship by investment programme and preferential access to regional and international markets.

Key incentive regimes

Regime	What it offers
Fiscal incentives	Income tax holidays and import duty relief for approved enterprises, mainly in manufacturing and export
Tourism concessions	Duty and tax relief for approved hotel and tourism developments
Citizenship by investment	Citizenship for a Sustainable Island State Contribution of at least US$250,000, approved real estate of US$325,000, or a private home of US$600,000, subject to due diligence
Alternative energy	No VAT, import duty or customs service charge on solar and similar equipment until 31 December 2026

Eligibility and conditions apply to each regime, and concessions on Nevis involve the Nevis Island Administration. We can assess which incentives fit your project and prepare the applications.

Market access

- **CARICOM Single Market and Economy:** duty-free trade in qualifying goods across member states, with a Common External Tariff on imports
- **OECS Economic Union:** a single financial space and free movement of OECS nationals
- **CARIFORUM–EU and CARIFORUM–UK Economic Partnership Agreements:** preferential access to Europe
- **Caribbean Basin Initiative:** duty-free access to the United States for many products

Customs

The Customs and Excise Department handles imports and exports through its electronic declaration system. Duty is charged on the customs value at tariff rates, plus the 6% customs service charge and VAT, with excise tax on some products.

COMPLIANCE

09 Regulators and compliance calendar

Who regulates what

Body	Role
Registrars of Companies	Company and business name registration and annual returns
Nevis Financial Services Department	Nevis corporations, LLCs, trusts and registered agents
Inland Revenue Department	Corporate income tax, VAT, withholding tax and stamp duty
Customs and Excise Department	Imports, exports and duties
Eastern Caribbean Central Bank	Banks and the EC dollar
Financial Services Regulatory Commission	Insurance, money services and other non-bank financial services
Financial Intelligence Unit	Anti-money laundering reporting
Social Security Board	Contributions, the levy and benefits
Department of Labour	Work permits and labour standards
Citizenship by Investment Unit	Citizenship by investment applications

Key filing dates

When	What
15th of each month	VAT return and payment for the previous month
Each month	Social Security, severance fund and levy contributions to the Social Security Board
15 March, 15 June, 15 September, 15 December	Corporate income tax instalments
15 April	Corporate income tax return with financial statements, and final payment (calendar year-end)
Each year	Annual return to the Registrar; annual fees for Nevis corporations and LLCs

Dates shown are for a company with a December year-end. Late filing and payment attract penalties and interest of 1% a month.

Anti-money laundering

Financial institutions, registered agents and designated non-financial businesses, including real estate dealers, must meet obligations under the Proceeds of Crime Act and report to the Financial Intelligence Unit.

ACTION PLAN

10 Your first 90 days: checklist

Use this checklist to track the essential steps from decision to first trading day.

Days 1–30: establish

- [ ] Agree business plan, structure and ownership
- [ ] Choose the island of registration
- [ ] Check and reserve the company name
- [ ] Gather KYC documents for directors and owners
- [ ] Appoint an attorney or registered agent
- [ ] File incorporation documents with the Registrar
- [ ] Record beneficial ownership information
- [ ] Apply to open business bank accounts

Days 31–60: register and license

- [ ] Register with the Inland Revenue Department
- [ ] Register for VAT if above the threshold
- [ ] Register with the Social Security Board
- [ ] Apply for sector licences and planning approvals
- [ ] Apply for work permits for foreign staff
- [ ] Apply for an Alien Landholding Licence
- [ ] Assess eligibility for incentives

Days 61–90: operate

- [ ] Set up the accounting system and chart of accounts
- [ ] Set up payroll and contributions
- [ ] Issue written employment terms
- [ ] Build the tax and filing calendar
- [ ] Put AML and data protection policies in place
- [ ] Agree year-end and audit arrangements

Ongoing

- [ ] Monthly VAT, Social Security and levy filings
- [ ] Quarterly corporate tax instalments
- [ ] Annual tax return and financial statements
- [ ] Annual return to the Registrar
- [ ] Renew licences and permits on time

YOUR PARTNER

11 How Dawgen Global helps

One Dawgen Global team supports you through our Caribbean Service Desk, managed from our headquarters in Kingston.

Market entry and structuring

Choice of vehicle and island, structuring, feasibility studies and business plans.

Incorporation and corporate secretarial

Company formation, statutory registers, annual returns and beneficial ownership records.

Tax advisory and compliance

Registrations, planning, VAT, withholding tax, returns and tax audits, through our Caribbean Tax Service Desk.

Accounting and payroll outsourcing

Bookkeeping, management accounts, payroll and a Virtual CFO.

Audit and assurance

Statutory audits, reviews and special-purpose reporting for lenders and parent companies.

HR, immigration and legal support

Employment contracts, HR policies, work permits and legal process support, with our panel of attorneys.

Risk and compliance

AML programmes, data protection compliance, internal audit and governance.

Technology and cyber

Systems selection, digital transformation, cybersecurity and AI governance.

Incentive applications

Incentive and landholding licence applications.

Start with a conversation

Tell us your plans, and we will set out the steps, timeline and costs. Some regulated services are performed by affiliated firms; we will advise you of the arrangements when you make a request. Fees are tailored to each client's circumstances and set out in an engagement letter. Email **stkitts@dawgen.com** or **info@dawgen.global**, or call (876) 926-5210.

Talk to the Saint Kitts and Nevis Caribbean Service Desk

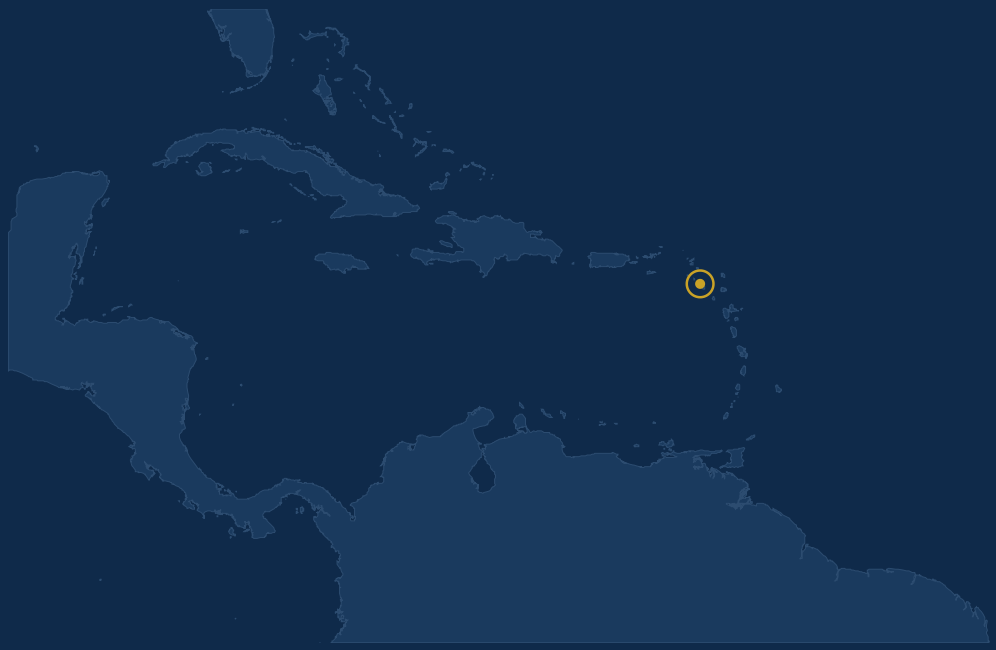
Contact

stkitts@dawgen.com

Dawgen Global, Dawgen Towers
47-49 Trinidad Terrace, Kingston 5, Jamaica
(876) 926-5210 · (876) 630-2011
(876) 929-3670 · (876) 929-3870
US toll free 855-354-2447
info@dawgen.global · dawgen.global

Key official sources

- Inland Revenue Department (sknird.com)
- Financial Services Regulatory Commission (fsrc.kn)
- Nevis Financial Services Regulation and Supervision Department (nevisfsrc.com)
- St Kitts Investment Promotion Agency (investstkitts.kn)
- Social Security Board (socialsecurity.kn)
- Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (eccb-centralbank.org)
- Citizenship by Investment Unit (ciu.gov.kn)
- St Kitts and Nevis Information Service (sknis.gov.kn)



This publication contains general information only, current to October 2026, and is not professional advice. Tax rates, thresholds and procedures change frequently, and some rules differ between Saint Kitts and Nevis; confirm the current position with Dawgen Global or the relevant authority before acting. Some regulated services are performed by affiliated firms; we will advise you of the arrangements when you make a request.
© 2026 Dawgen Global Caribbean Limited. All rights reserved. Maps: Dawgen Global.