

IEC Code

How to Obtain, Maintain & Leverage Your Import Export Code from DGFT


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01 What Is an IEC Code?

The Import Export Code (IEC) is a 10-digit unique identification number issued by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), under India's Ministry of Commerce & Industry. It is the primary licence required to conduct any export or import activity from India — no business can legally send goods abroad or receive commercial imports without one.

Think of the IEC as your business's passport for international trade — permanent, PAN-linked, and the foundational credential for all DGFT-related incentives and compliance.

IEC is the Foundation of Indian Trade Compliance

 Without a valid IEC, customs authorities cannot clear shipments, banks cannot process foreign currency (FOREX) remittances, and DGFT incentives like RoDTEP and Duty Drawback cannot be claimed.



02 Who Needs an IEC?



Almost every commercial entity engaged in import or export requires an IEC:

- Proprietorships and Partnership Firms
- Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs)
- Private and Public Limited Companies
- Trusts, HUFs, and Societies
- Government Undertakings (certain categories)

Exemptions: Personal-use imports, certain government departments, and notified charitable organisations. For any commercial transaction, the IEC is non-negotiable.

03 Why IEC Is Mandatory — Four Critical Use Cases

	Customs Clearance	Port authorities require IEC on the Shipping Bill or Bill of Entry before any shipment is cleared.
	FOREX Remittances	Banks require IEC to process any outward or inward foreign currency payments for trade transactions.

	Export Incentives	RoDTEP, Duty Drawback, and EPCG scheme benefits are linked to the IEC. No IEC = no incentives.
	Regulatory Linkage	IEC ties together your GST, PAN, AD Bank account — forming the compliance backbone of your entire trade operation.

04 Step-by-Step: IEC Registration Process

Processing is completed within 2–3 working days after submission — often within hours. Follow every step exactly to avoid rejection.

Step 1 — Prepare Your Documents

Gather all required documents before starting. Missing or mismatched documents are the most common cause of rejection.

Document	Purpose
PAN Card of the business entity	Primary identifier on the IEC
GST Registration Certificate	Business address and entity verification
Certificate of Incorporation / Partnership Deed / Udyam	Legal existence proof
Cancelled cheque OR Bank Certificate (on letterhead)	Bank account verification
Passport-size photograph of authorised applicant/director	Identity verification
Aadhaar Card or Voter ID of authorised signatory	Address and identity proof
Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) or Aadhaar OTP	For signing the online application

Step 2 — Register on the DGFT Portal

Navigate to dgft.gov.in and create a business user account. Use the company's official email ID and mobile number — these become your permanent communication channels for all DGFT correspondence.

Step 3 — Complete the ANF 2A Application Form

Fill in all fields carefully. Key fields requiring special attention:

- Legal name of the entity — must exactly match the PAN card
- Registered address — must match the GST Registration Certificate
- Nature of concern / entity type
- Bank account details — account number, IFSC code, branch name
- PAN number — must be the company/firm PAN, not an individual's



Most Common Rejection Cause

The name on the PAN card and the name typed into the ANF 2A form must match exactly — even a minor spelling variation, extra space, or punctuation difference triggers automatic rejection by the DGFT system.

Step 4 — Pay the Government Application Fee

The fee is ₹500, payable through the DGFT portal via net banking, debit/credit card, or UPI.






Step 5 — Submit and Authenticate

Authenticate and submit the application digitally using either a Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) or Aadhaar-based OTP. Aadhaar OTP is the simpler option for most applicants.

Step 6 — Track and Download Your IEC Certificate

Once submitted, you will receive an email notification upon approval. Log back into the DGFT portal to download your IEC Certificate in PDF format.

05 Post-Registration: What You Must Know

 Annual Update (Mandatory)	DGFT requires you to update or confirm your IEC details every year between April and June, even if nothing has changed. Failure results in deactivation.
 IEC Has No Expiry	The IEC is permanent — it does not expire as long as it remains active through annual updates.
 Multiple Branch Codes	If you operate from multiple locations, you can add branch codes under the same IEC — no need for separate registrations.
 Modifications Are Free	Changes to address, bank account, directors, or other details can be made on the DGFT portal at no charge.
 One IEC Per PAN	A business entity can hold only one IEC against its PAN, regardless of the number of products or sectors traded.

06 Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Using a personal savings account instead of a current business account for bank details
- Entering an individual's PAN instead of the company or firm's PAN
- Providing a bank account not linked to the GST-registered address
- Skipping the annual update, leading to deactivation at a critical shipment moment
- Not updating IEC when directors change or the registered address changes

**IRASHA Assistance**

IRASHA can guide your exporter onboarding through the IEC registration process as part of our verified supplier programme — ensuring your partners are fully compliant before the first shipment.