



15 FEB 2021

On 30 November 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *The number of Special Needs Grant applications for food that have been declined in 2020.*

The Ministry provides hardship assistance to help people pay for essential items or services they need urgently. Hardship assistance includes Special Needs Grants (SNGs) which provide non-taxable, one-off recoverable or non-recoverable financial assistance to people to meet immediate needs, such as food.

A person does not have to be getting a benefit to qualify for an SNG, but they must meet an income and asset test. More information about SNGs for food is available on Work and Income's website at: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/urgent-costs/food.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/urgent-costs/food.html).

A request for hardship assistance for food can be declined if a client does not meet the eligibility qualifications and will depend on the client's individual circumstances. As such, decisions to approve Special Needs Grants can be discretionary (and are considered on a case by case basis).

To qualify for a Special Needs Grant for food, the applicant must:

- meet an income and cash asset test
- have an emergency or essential need
- not be able to meet the need from their own resources or through other sources
- have met any hardship obligations that have been applied to them
- be a New Zealand citizen or Permanent resident, and
- generally, be ordinarily resident in New Zealand.

Please find **Table One** attached which shows the number of Special Needs Grant applications processed and how many of these were declined and granted per month, from January 2020 to December 2020.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter available to the wider public. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal

do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted, and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding the number of Special Needs Grant applications for food that have been declined in 2020, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

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Bridget Saunders

**Manager**

**Issue Resolution, Service Delivery**

**Table One: The number of declines, grants, and total applications for Special Needs Grants for food in the period 01 January 2020 to 31 December 2020.**

<b>Month</b>	<b>Applications Declined</b>	<b>Percentage Declined (%)</b>	<b>Applications Granted</b>	<b>Percentage Granted (%)</b>	<b>Total Number of Applications Processed (Declines + Grants)</b>
<b>January 2020</b>	3,881	3.5	107,774	96.5	<b>111,655</b>
<b>February 2020</b>	2,902	3.1	90,964	96.9	<b>93,866</b>
<b>March 2020</b>	3,693	3.2	112,290	96.8	<b>115,983</b>
<b>April 2020</b>	5,925	2.1	278,292	97.9	<b>284,217</b>
<b>May 2020</b>	4,822	3.0	158,020	97.0	<b>162,842</b>
<b>June 2020</b>	3,802	2.8	130,335	97.2	<b>134,137</b>
<b>July 2020</b>	4,462	3.2	136,842	96.8	<b>141,304</b>
<b>August 2020</b>	7,789	7.0	103,342	93.0	<b>111,131</b>
<b>September 2020</b>	6,902	8.2	77,338	91.8	<b>84,240</b>
<b>October 2020</b>	6,552	6.0	103,475	94.0	<b>110,027</b>
<b>November 2020</b>	5,645	4.7	113,717	95.3	<b>119,362</b>
<b>December 2020</b>	8,387	5.6	141,811	94.4	<b>150,198</b>

**Notes:**

- This table contains the count of applications processed, granted and declined; not clients.
- A client may be granted or declined more than one application in a month.
- Applications processed is the sum of both grants and declines.