



12 DEC 2019

Dear [REDACTED]

On 4 November 2019, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *For 2018 and 2019 how many applications have been lodged for the "Flexi Wage for self-employment" benefit and*
- *For 2018 and 2019 how many applications have been approved for the "Flexi Wage for self-employment" benefit.*

The Flexi-Wage Self-Employment grant is a wage subsidy to help clients overcome financial barriers associated with moving into self-employment. It is expected that in time, the client will be able to fully support themselves from their business. The weekly rate of subsidy is determined by the client's weekly living expenses and the expected cash flow from the business. This subsidy can be given on its own or in conjunction with a Self-Employment Start-up grant which provides a lump sum payment or payments for essential business start-up costs (where a client does not have access to other commercial finance). Both the Flexi-Wage Self-Employment grant and Self-Employment Start-up grant are captured together in central data reporting on Flexi-Wage Self-Employment.

To apply for a Flexi-Wage Self-Employment grant, clients are required to prepare a business plan, and have it independently assessed. Clients often develop an application over time with the support of a Ministry Case Manager and as such, details of their application are held in individual client files. Therefore, your request for the number of applications that have been lodged for the Flexi-Wage Self-Employment grant for 2018 and 2019 is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act as substantial manual collation would be required to locate and prepare all documents within scope of your request and some information is held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

The Ministry plans to review existing employment products and services to look at whether they are fit for purpose, and easily accessible for clients who use them.

You have requested the number of applications which have been approved for the Flexi-Wage for Self-Employment in 2018 and 2019. The table shows the number of approved Flexi-Wage (Self Employment) applications. The period shown is for the period starting 1 January 2018 to the quarter ending 30 September 2019. Further, please note that the table shows a count of Flexi-Wage Self-Employment grant approvals, not individual clients.

Year Ending	Agreement – Flexi-Wage (Self Employment)
<b>31 December 2018</b>	210
<b>30 September 2019</b>	156

Further information on the Flexi-Wage Self-Employment is available at: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/flexi-wage-self-employment.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/flexi-wage-self-employment.html)

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 and any attached documents available to the wider public shortly. The Ministry will 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, 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.

Yours sincerely



Bridget Saunders  
**Team Manager Issue Resolution**