



29 March 2023

Tēnā koe

On 5 March 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Can you please provide a few statistics for Flexi Wage Self Employment, namely the number of yearly applications and the % of successful applicants.*

The Flexi-wage Self-Employment subsidy can be granted to people who are at risk of long-term benefit receipt and disadvantaged in the labour market, if they have a viable business plan. Self-Employment Start-Up and the Business Training and Advice Grant can be provided alongside this to help the person to meet essential business start-up costs and provide business mentoring support (including supporting them to develop a business plan).

The Flexi-wage Self-Employment subsidy is paid at a set rate of \$600 gross (GST inclusive) a week for 28 weeks. Under exceptional circumstances the subsidy may be extended to up to 52 weeks maximum. It can be pro-rated for those with part-time (or no) work obligations, but recipients must be able to support themselves from their earnings in time and not need a benefit. It can be paid to couples or groups wanting to start a business together. The purpose of the subsidy is to support people while they are establishing their business.

If needed, the Self-Employment Start-Up grant of up to \$10,000 (GST inclusive) may be accessed to meet essential business start-up costs, for example, equipment required for the business, or initial start-up stock. It cannot be used to pay for living costs or costs covered by the Business Training and Advice Grant or the Flexi-wage Self-Employment subsidy.

Please refer to **Table One** in the **Appendix** below, which shows the number of Flexi-wage (Self-Employment) contracts approved during the period 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022.

You will note that the table consists of three categories of the subsidy type:

- people receiving only the Flexi-wage Self-Employment payment
- people receiving only the Self-Employment Start-Up, and
- people who received both the Self-Employment Start-Up and the Flexi-wage Self-Employment payments.

The count of people is determined by the number of approved contracts.

You have asked for the total of yearly applications and the percentage of successful applicants.

I am unable to provide you with this information as it is held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review a substantial number of files. As such, I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Act. 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 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'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.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding Flexi-wage data, 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 or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Orr', written in a cursive style.

Aaron Orr
Director
Employment

Appendix

Table One: Number of Flexi-wage (Self-Employment) Contracts approved during the period 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022 by Flexi-Wage (Self-Employment) subsidy type

Notes:

- This is a count of contracts. A client may have more than one contract within the period.
- To protect confidentiality, the Ministry of Social Development uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data.
- These data tables have had random rounding to base three applied to all cell counts in the table.
- The impact of applying random rounding is that columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row totals.
- The published counts will never differ by more than two counts.

Flexi-Wage (Self-Employment) Subsidy Type	Number of Contracts
Start-Up Payment	15
Weekly Subsidy	60
Start-Up Payment & Weekly Subsidy	462