



22 November 2024

Tēnā koe

### **Official Information Act request**

Thank you for your email of 5 October 2024, requesting information about the Flexi-Wage scheme.

On 21 and 23 October 2024, we contacted you to clarify the type(s) of Flexi-wage you were seeking information about. We did not receive a response from you.

In our 23 October 2024 email, we informed you that if we did not receive a reply from you, we would interpret your request as seeking the Flexi-Wage Self-Employment type as we inferred this to be the relevant Flexi-Wage type in the context of your request. Please contact us if you are seeking information on any other Flexi-Wage type(s).<sup>1</sup>

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision on each part of your request set out below.

***Question 1 Number of Flexi-Wage Recipients: The total number of individuals who have received Flexi-Wage assistance over the past 12 months.***

Between 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, a total of 465 Flexi-Wage (Self Employment) subsidy contracts were granted.

***Question 2 Demographic Breakdown: Please provide a detailed breakdown of the recipients by: Region, Age, Gender and Ethnicity***

Please see **Appendix One, Tables One to Four**, which provides the following tables:

- **Table One:** Number of Flexi-Wage (Self Employment) subsidy contracts granted between 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, by region
- **Table Two:** Number of Flexi-Wage (Self Employment) subsidy contracts granted between 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, by age group
- **Table Three:** Number of Flexi-Wage (Self Employment) subsidy contracts granted between 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, by gender

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<sup>1</sup> The other Flexi-wage types are the *Flexi-Wage Subsidy* (with subtypes: *Employers, Job seekers & Self-employed*), the *Flexi-Wage Project in the Community*, or the *Flexi-Wage for 65+ year old clients*.

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- **Table Four:** Number of Flexi-Wage (Self Employment) subsidy contracts granted between 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, by Total Response Ethnicity.

***Question 3 Business Types: Information on the types of businesses or self-employment ventures these recipients started, and how those businesses align with the criteria for Flexi-Wage selection.***

Please see **Appendix One, Table Five**, which provides the number of Flexi-Wage (Self-Employment) Contracts approved during the period 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, by Australia and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification 2006 industry level.

In order to provide you with information about how each granted contract aligns with the criteria for Flexi-Wage Self-Employment applications, 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 requests 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.

***Question 4 Selection Criteria: The specific reasons or factors that were considered when selecting these recipients for Flexi-Wage assistance, including any prioritisation of candidates based on need or potential.***

There are no specific or individualised selection-based criteria when assessing Flexi-Wage Self Employment applications. Where we identify that someone is interested in starting their own business, we assess their eligibility against the criteria and discuss their business proposal prior to advancing to a formal application where appropriate. Each Flexi-Wage Self Employment application is assessed individually and independently of other applications. All information, including but not limited to, verification of eligibility is taken into consideration throughout the application process. Please see the attached **Appendix Two** providing the criteria for assessing a Flexi-Wage Self Employment application.

***Question 5 Qualifications: Details on the qualifications or skills these recipients held prior to receiving Flexi-Wage assistance, including education levels, certifications, or industry experience.***

This information is not systematically recorded as part of the processing of a Flexi-Wage Self Employment application. The relevance of education, certification or industry experience is a case-by-case consideration depending on the particular Flexi-Wage Self Employment application. Any qualification or skill information that may be held would be stored on individual client files. In order to provide you with any information in scope, 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.

**Question 6 Previous Benefit Duration: The length of time recipients were on a benefit before they qualified for Flexi-Wage assistance, broken down into categories such as: Less than 6 months, 6 months to 1 year, Over 1 year**

Please see **Appendix One, Table Six** providing the number of Flexi-Wage (Self Employment) subsidy contracts granted between 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, by continuous duration on benefits.

**Question 7 Long-Term Benefit Dependence and continued disadvantage: Information on how recipients were identified as being at risk of long-term benefit dependence and the criteria used to assess this risk**

This information is publicly available on the Work and Income Map page at the following links:


- Deciding if a client is disadvantaged in the labour market:  
[www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/employment-and-training/specific-employment-related-assistance/flexi-wage-subsidy/deciding-if-a-client-is-disadvantaged-in-the-labour-market.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/employment-and-training/specific-employment-related-assistance/flexi-wage-subsidy/deciding-if-a-client-is-disadvantaged-in-the-labour-market.html)
- Deciding if a client is at risk of long-term benefit receipt:  
[www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/employment-and-training/specific-employment-related-assistance/flexi-wage-subsidy/deciding-if-a-client-is-at-risk-of-long-term-benefit-receipt.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/employment-and-training/specific-employment-related-assistance/flexi-wage-subsidy/deciding-if-a-client-is-at-risk-of-long-term-benefit-receipt.html)

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

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 my decision on your request, 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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Magnus O'Neill  
**General Manager**  
**Ministerial and Executive Services**

## **Appendix Two:** Ministry of Social Development criteria for assessing a Flexi-Wage Self Employment type application

### Client eligibility criteria

- be aged 18 years or older and not qualified to get New Zealand Superannuation in their own right
- meet the Flexi-wage residency criteria
- not be insolvent
- be unemployed
- be at risk of long-term benefit receipt, and
- be disadvantaged in the labour market.

### Employment eligibility criteria

- permanent (i.e., on-going), and
- 30 hours or more per week for people with full-time work obligations, or
- 15 hours or more per week for people with part-time work obligations or a deferral from work obligations (if they can work 15 hours or more). They must be able to fully support themselves from their business without a main benefit.

### Business eligibility criteria

- be based and operating in New Zealand
- be viable
- not be an inappropriate business or an unsuitable industry
- not be a business previously operated by the applicant and
- not be a business currently operated by an applicant (except in specific circumstances).

### Viable

This means the business has high chance of long-term survival and the ability to sustain profits over a long period of time. To decide whether a business is viable you might consider:

- how strong the business plan is
- demand for the product or service the client wants to provide
- level of competition within the market
- information from the independent vetting agent
- any other relevant information about the client that indicates whether they are likely to be successful in running the business.