



5 March 2026

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 21 November 2025, requesting information about a breakdown of Flexi-wage for self-employment (FWSE) applications from 1 July 2022 to 31 October 2025, and any reports about performance of FWSE programmes.

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 separately below.

Please refer to the attached **Appendix One** which provides the following tables:

- **Table One:** Number of Flexi-wage contracts approved in the financial years ending 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26 (partial up to December 2025)
- **Table Two:** Number of Flexi-wage (Self Employment) subsidies approved in the financial years ending 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26 (partial up to December 2025)
- **Table Three:** Minimum and Maximum Flexi-wage subsidy (Start up and weekly subsidy) commitment amounts approved for self employment in the financial years ending 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26 (partial up to December 2025).

Please note that the payment rate for Flexi-wage for self-employment is a flat rate of \$16,800, any variation from this rate is caused by administrative activity (such as splitting the payment between a couple, or an extension payment), which affects how the payment is represented in our reporting system but does not affect the initial amount granted. As a result of this type of activity, any average or median payment rates are not a measure of the median and average amounts received. Therefore, the part of your request that asks for the average and median of the one-off Self-Employment Startup Payment amounts awarded and the ongoing wage subsidy amounts awarded (weekly or total over the subsidy period) is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this information does not exist.

The part of your request that asks for the total number of FWSE applications received, the number of FWSE applications declined, and the approval rate is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, as substantial manual collation would be required to collate this information. Where held, this information would only be contained within individual client files, which would each require manual review to

respond to your request. 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.

You have asked for a breakdown of the main reasons that FWSE applications are declined. The main reason that a FWSE application is declined is because the application does not meet the eligibility criteria.

To qualify for FWSE, a client must meet the following 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

To qualify for FWSE the employment must be:

- 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.

Note the hours requirement also applies to clients not getting a main benefit. The work obligations are based on what their obligations would be if they were getting a main benefit.

Business eligibility criteria

To qualify for FWSE the business must:

- 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 client, and

You have requested the total funding allocated and total funding paid out specifically for the FWSE strand (separately from the general Flexi-Wage for employees). Please refer to **Appendix Two** which provides the Flexi-wage annual total budget and the annual component spent on FWSE, by financial year.

Please note that the budget figures supplied are for the full Flexi-wage budget, this has been done because there is no specific budget allocated for FWSE. FWSE is managed as a component within the Flexi-wage budget. As such, the part of your

request that asks for the total funding allocated to FWSE is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this document does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

You have asked for any internal reports, evaluations, or briefing documents produced since 1 January 2023 that contain updated statistics or performance data on the FWSE programme.

We have interpreted internal as seeking information that was not addressed to our portfolio Ministers (as Ministers are external to the Ministry). If you are seeking any external information that may have been provided to our portfolio Ministers, please get in touch and we will consider your request.

Otherwise, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this document does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

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.

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 or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

pp.



Anna Graham
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services

Appendix Two: Flexi-wage annual total budget and the annual component spent on Flexi-wage self-employment (FWSE), by financial year.

- FY2022/23: \$13.926m spent on FWSE against \$115.232m Budget for Flexi-wage (Total)
- FY2023/24: \$10.150m spent on FWSE against \$60.339m Budget for Flexi-wage (Total)
- FY2024/25: \$8.505m spent on FWSE against \$46.774m Budget for Flexi-wage (Total)
- FY2025/26 (to Jan 26): \$4.084m spent on FWSE against \$28.923m Budget for Flexi-wage (Total).

Notes:

1. Budget figures supplied are for the full Flexi-wage budget, this has been done because there is no specific budget allocated for FWSE, it is managed as a component within the Flexi-wage budget (FWSE budget figures given in the detailed table are estimates and frequently overspent).
 2. The budget figures for period 2022 – 2025 contain Flexi-wage expansion funding, hence the significantly higher budget values.
 3. The budget for 2025/26 is given year-to-January, the budget for the full year is \$49.011m – but this figure is not comparable to the year-to-date spend.
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