



19 August 2025

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 30 June 2025, requesting information about the Mainstream Employment Programme, administered by the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry), as it applied during the period 5 April 2023 to 29 September 2023.

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.

1. Policy and Operational Guidelines

A complete copy of the Mainstream Employment Programme policy and operational guidance, including any internal documents used by MSD case managers to:

- a. assess employer eligibility,*
- b. approve subsidy applications, and*
- c. monitor employer compliance.*

Attached as Appendix 1a is the Mainstream process in place for the period requested. Further to our acknowledgement email of 30 June 2025, you will note that some information has been withheld as out of scope of your request, namely contact details.

- **Appendix 1a. Mainstream Processes 2.0 - updated March 2023.**

Attached as Appendices 1b, 1c and 1d, which are the internal processing forms used to approve subsidy applications.

- **Appendix 1b. Mainstream 1 Year Processing Form.**
- **Appendix 1c. Mainstream Internship Processing Form.**
- **Appendix 1d. Mainstream Paid Work Experience Processing Form.**

2. Standard Employer Contract

A copy of the standard Mainstream Employment Programme **employer contract template** (in force during the above period), including all terms and conditions relating to:

- a. refund obligations,
- b. approved employment entities,
- c. payroll processing responsibilities, and
- d. reporting requirements.

Attached as Appendices 2a, 2b and 2c, which are the contract templates in place for the period requested.

- **Appendix 2a. Internship Outcome Agreement Template.**
- **Appendix 2b. PWE Outcome Agreement Template.**
- **Appendix 2c. One Year Outcome Agreement Template.**

3. Definitions and Criteria

Any official definitions, criteria, or policies used by MSD to determine:

- a. who qualifies as the "employer" for the purposes of receiving wage subsidies;

This service is for people in a standard employment situation, subject to standard terms and conditions of employment in accordance with the Employment Relations Act 2000 and New Zealand employment law. A Mainstream wage subsidy does not have any implications for an employee's rights and obligations of an employment situation under New Zealand employment law, however there are specific expectations outlined in the contract pertaining to the Mainstream programme.

- b. the required relationship between the applying entity and the bank account receiving subsidies;

Mainstream wage subsidies are paid into a bank account matching the legal entity name or trading name of the employer. The bank account is verified prior to a contractual offer being made by the Ministry. The contract clearly expects the wage subsidy to be passed on to the employee. This policy was in place during the period for which information is requested.

- c. the rules or conditions governing use of third-party payroll processors or cross-entity labour deployment.

See my response to question 3a.

The Ministry does not have a specific definition or policy governing use of third-party payroll processors, such as Xero or MYOB, to manage payroll and tax.

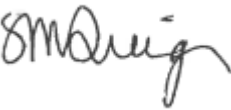
Regarding cross-entity labour deployment, this is a matter for individual employment agreements between employee and employer, and not something that MSD has specific rules or conditions around for Mainstream outside of general expectations that contracted parties behave consistently with New Zealand law.

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

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MAINSTREAM PROCESSES

Abstract

This document explains the processes of the Mainstream Wage Subsidy

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Created 1 February 2022

Revised March 2023 by Kathy Mitasa

This document contains the processes for the Mainstream Wage Subsidy. Located in this document are step by step processes, links to individual forms and external links to the templates of the forms required to complete contracts.

The Mainstream Wage Subsidy is used to help those that have had disabilities for more than six months including sensory, physical, neurodiversity, and mental health.

The Mainstream Programmes were developed to help those with disabilities gain skills that would allow participants to enter gainful employment. This would be through gaining skills during the placement along with the support provided by the Employment Service Provider. Within the programme's other assistance such as equipment, training, and transport.

Under the Mainstream Funding the Internship programme was developed to assist those with disabilities to gain work experience during their studies or enter the work force post study.

There are three current programmes available for eligible participants. Mainstream One Year Programme, Mainstream Internship and Mainstream Paid Work Experience. Each of these programmes have individual eligibility.

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1. Mainstream Internship

This is a 12-week programme that pays 100% of the employee's wages. The aim of the wage subsidy is for the participant to gain experience in their field of study and will be in a better position to enter open employment at the end of their studies.

The service is delivered by Be. Institute Charitable Trust (Be. Lab) who work with the employee and employer to find or create a role that suits the skills and capabilities of the employees in a field related to their study. Once placed into employment, Be. Lab offers on-going support to both the employer and employee during the 12-week placement period.

1. Completed application received into the Mainstream Inbox.
 - This should be received at least 21 days before the intended start date. The Mainstream team will send an acknowledgement email advising the provider when they should likely get an update.
 - This must include the following,
 - Completed [Application Form](#)
 - Job Description
 - Completed CV
2. Create a new folder in Objective (with relevant sub-folders) and save the above documents into the "Application" folder
 - This should be named with the Employer's Legal name with the applicant's name and the contract type in brackets
 - e.g., Fake Company Limited – Joe Bloggs (Internship) - NATO-23-XXXX
3. Confirm eligibility
 - Internship eligibility
 - Applicant must be in the final two years of study (the study must align with the New Zealand Qualifications Framework), or have finished full-time study in the last 12 months.
 - Applicant must be registered with Disability Support Service at an education provider.
 - The applicant cannot be receiving weekly compensation or vocational rehabilitation from ACC or another organisation.
4. Complete wage calculations based on the Application Form (page 5)
 - [Internship](#)
 - Hourly rate multiplied by weekly hours to be worked multiplied by number of weeks – note internship duration may vary and can be between 4-12 weeks
5. Complete [Application Processing Form](#) using information from the Application Form and the NZBN website

6. Create a contract in Conquest
 - Check if the employer already has an existing provider record in Conquest
 - If yes - create a contract record with the relevant details and amount to generate a contract number
 - If no – create a new record and send a request for an RDA ID to Out of scope
7. Complete the [LBF Template \(Light Blue Form\)](#) and save this in the "Contract" folder
 - As part of this process, you must also complete the below,
 - Risk Assessment
 - Add in an Objective link to the Processing Form
 - Pull an APEX report detailing other current funding
8. Email the Objective link to the LBF to the Out of scope inbox for National Contracts Manager approval.
9. If LBF is approved, email the Provider to confirm the application has been approved to progress to a contract.
10. Complete the [Internship Contract Template](#) and save this in the "Contract" folder
 - Send the contract to a colleague for peer review
 - Once completed, finalise any changes and convert the Word version into PDF format and sign the letter and initial the contract pages – all versions to be saved on file
 - Send the final contract and letter to the Employer for signing. Allow for a 1-week timeframe, otherwise will need to delay the employment start date. If not received within a reasonable timeframe, advise the Employer the offer is withdrawn and they will need to re-apply.
11. Once the contract has been signed by the Employer, send this and the LBF to the Out of scope inbox for National Contracts Manager approval.
12. Once counter-signed,
 - Email the Employer,
 1. A counter-signed copy of the contract
 2. Personalise the [reporting template](#) as per contract details
 3. Request the initial invoice for the participants wages
 4. If this is a new Employer, also need to request a bank deposit slip to confirm the bank account details
 - Execute the contract in Conquest including the below,
 1. Create activities by fiscal year
 2. Implement forecast amounts

3. Process the initial wage subsidy payment using the [Conquest Payment Form](#) (see Conquest Guide and [Invoicing Tips](#) for further information)

13. Once the placement has been completed

You should receive the following within two months of the contract end date.

- A completed Internship Report
- Payment Summary confirming hours

14. A reconciliation should be calculated and completed.

Calculate the total hours worked

- Hours multiplied by contracted hourly rate
- We only pay the agreed contracted amount
- If the participant has worked more hours or receives a wage increase, the employer will need to pay this amount
- The total amount should be deducted from the first payment.
- The remaining amount should be the final 20% of the contracted total.
- If the participant has worked less hours than agreed and this is less than the initial 80% paid, the employer is required to refund this amount.
- The total amount remaining must be communicated to the employer.
- The invoice or refund should be received within 2 months of the contract end date.

2. Mainstream Paid Work Experience

This is a 16-week programme that pays 100% of the employee's wage. The aim of the wage subsidy is for the participant to gain the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to retain or gain sustainable employment on merit during or at the end of the placement.

The service is delivered by Be. Institute Charitable Trust (Be. Lab) who work with the employee and employer to find or create a role that suits the skills and capabilities of the employees in an industry that the employee has not worked in before. Once placed into employment, Be. Lab offers on-going support to both the employer and employee during the 16-week placement period.

1. Completed application received into the Mainstream Inbox.
 - This should be received at least 21 days before the intended start date. The Mainstream team will send an acknowledgement email advising the provider when they should likely get an update.
 - This must include the following,
 - Completed [Application Form](#)
 - Job Description
 - Completed CV
 - [Provider Support Plan](#)
2. Create a new folder in Objective (with relevant sub-folders) and save the above documents into the "Application" folder
 - This should be named with the Employer's Legal name with the applicant's name and the contract type in brackets
 - e.g., Fake Company Limited – Joe Bloggs (PWE) - NATO-23-XXXXX
3. Confirm eligibility
 - Paid Work Experience eligibility
 - Applicant must be looking for work in an industry they haven't worked in before.
 - Applicant cannot have completed tertiary study within the last two years (e.g., a bachelor's degree)
 - Applicant must be currently receiving a main benefit (e.g., Supported Living Payment or Jobseeker Support)
 - If the client is not receiving a main benefit, the Provider should contact MSD to check if they are at risk prior to application submission or even before the applicant signs up with the Provider
 - Applicant must not be receiving weekly compensation or vocational rehabilitation from ACC or another organisation.
4. Complete wage calculations based on the Application Form (page 5)
 - [PWE](#)
 - Hourly rate multiplied by weekly hours to be worked multiplied by 16 weeks

5. Complete [Application Processing Form](#) using information from the Application Form and the NZBN website
6. Create a contract in Conquest
 - Check if the employer already has an existing provider record in Conquest
 - If yes - create a contract record with the relevant details and amount to generate a contract number
 - If no – create a new record and send a request for an RDA ID to [redacted]
7. Complete the [LBF Template \(Light Blue Form\)](#) and save this in the "Contract" folder

As part of this process, you must also complete the below,

 - Risk Assessment
 - Add in an Objective link to the Processing Form
 - Pull an APEX report detailing other current funding
8. Email the Objective link to the LBF to the [redacted] inbox for National Contracts Manager approval.
9. If LBF is approved, email the Provider to confirm the application has been approved to progress to a contract.
10. Complete the [PWE Contract Template](#) and save this in the "Contract" folder
 - Send the contract to a colleague for peer review
 - Once completed, finalise any changes and convert the Word version into PDF format and sign the letter and initial the contract pages – all versions to be saved on file
 - Send the final contract and letter to the Employer for signing. Allow for a 1-week timeframe, otherwise will need to delay the employment start date. If not received within a reasonable timeframe, advise the Employer the offer is withdrawn and they will need to re-apply.
11. Once the contract has been signed by the Employer, send this and the LBF to the [redacted] inbox for National Contracts Manager approval.
12. Once counter-signed,
 - Email the Employer,
 5. A counter-signed copy of the contract
 6. Personalise the [reporting template](#) as per contract details
 7. Request the initial invoice for the participants wages
 8. If this is a new Employer, also need to request a bank deposit slip to confirm the bank account details
 - Execute the contract in Conquest including the below,
 1. Create activities by fiscal year

2. Implement forecast amounts
3. Process the initial wage subsidy payment using the [Conquest Payment Form](#) (see Conquest Guide and [Invoicing Tips](#) for further information)

13. Once the placement has been completed

You should receive the following within two months of the contract end date.

- A completed PWE Report
- Payment Summary confirming hours

14. A reconciliation should be calculated and completed.

Calculate the total hours worked

- Hours multiplied by contracted hourly rate
- We only pay the agreed contracted amount
- If the participant has worked more hours or receives a wage increase, the employer will need to pay this amount
- The total amount should be deducted from the first payment.
- The remaining amount should be the final 20% of the contracted total.
- If the participant has worked less hours than agreed and this is less than the initial 80% paid, the employer is required to refund this amount.
- The total amount remaining must be communicated to the employer.
- The invoice or refund should be received within 2 months of the contract end date.

3. Mainstream Employment

This is a 52-week programme that pays 80% of the employee's wages during the first 6 months and then 50% in the remaining 6 months. The aim of the wage subsidy is for the participant to gain the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to retain or gain sustainable employment on merit during or at the end of the placement.

The service is delivered by Employment Service (ES) providers who work with the employee and employer to find or create a role that suits the skills and capabilities of the employees. Once placed into employment, ES providers offer on-going support to both the employer and employee during the 52-week placement period.

1. Completed application received into the Mainstream Inbox.
 - This should be received at least 21 days before the intended start date. The Mainstream team will send an acknowledgement email advising the provider when they should likely get an update.
 - This must include the following,
 - Completed [Application Form](#)
 - Job Description
 - Completed CV
 - [Client Support plan](#)
 - [Employer Placement plan](#)
 - Quotes for any training, equipment and/or transport costs
2. Create a new folder in Objective (with relevant sub-folders) and save the above documents into the "Application" folder
 - This should be named with the Employer's Legal name with the applicant's name and the contract type in brackets
 - e.g., Fake Company Limited – Joe Bloggs (One Year) - NATO-23-XXXXX
3. Confirm eligibility
 - One Year eligibility
 - Applicant has a disability or health condition (including a mental health condition or neurodiversity) that:
 - you need extra financial support for, and
 - significantly affects your ability to find work
 - have had this disability or health condition for at least six months, and
 - Applicant must be currently receiving a main benefit (e.g., Supported Living Payment or Jobseeker Support)
 - If the client is not receiving a main benefit, the Provider should contact MSD to check if they are at risk prior to application submission or even before the applicant signs up with the Provider
 - Applicant must not be receiving weekly compensation or vocational rehabilitation from ACC or another organisation.
 - Not already in paid employment in the 6 months working 15 hours or more
 - Not already received Mainstream before

4. Complete wage calculations based on the Application Form (page 6)
 - [One Year](#)
 - Hourly rate multiplied by weekly hours to be worked each quarter x 13 weeks
5. Complete [Application Processing Form](#) using information from the Application Form and the NZBN website
6. Create a contract in Conquest
 - Check if the employer already has an existing provider record in Conquest
 - If yes - create a contract record with the relevant details and amount to generate a contract number
 - If no – create a new record and send a request for an RDA ID to Out of scope
7. Complete the [LBF Template \(Light Blue Form\)](#) and save this in the "Contract" folder
 - As part of this process, you must also complete the below,
 - Risk Assessment
 - Add in an Objective link to the Processing Form
 - Pull an APEX report detailing other current funding
8. Email the Objective link to the LBF to the Out of scope inbox for National Contracts Manager approval.
9. If LBF is approved, email the Provider to confirm the application has been approved to progress to a contract.
10. Complete the [One Year Contract Template](#) and save this in the "Contract" folder
 - Send the contract to a colleague for peer review
 - Once completed, finalise any changes and convert the Word version into PDF format and sign the letter and initial the contract pages – all versions to be saved on file
 - Send the final contract and letter to the Employer for signing. Allow for a 1-week timeframe, otherwise will need to delay the employment start date. If not received within a reasonable timeframe, advise the Employer the offer is withdrawn and they will need to re-apply.
11. Once the contract has been signed by the Employer, send this and the LBF to the Out of scope inbox for National Contracts Manager approval.
12. Once counter-signed,
 - Email the Employer,
 9. A counter-signed copy of the contract
 10. Personalise the [reporting template](#) as per contract details
 11. Request the initial invoice for the participants wages

12.If this is a new Employer, also need to request a bank deposit slip to confirm the bank account details

- Execute the contract in Conquest including the below,
 1. Create activities by fiscal year
 2. Implement forecast amounts
 3. Process the initial wage subsidy payment using the [Conquest Payment Form](#) (see Conquest Guide and [Invoicing Tips](#) for further information)

13.Once the placement has been completed

You should receive the following at the beginning of each quarter

- A completed One Year Quarterly Report for the previous quarter
- Payment Summary confirming hours actually worked during the previous quarter
- Payment examples,
 - Contracted for 30 hours per week
 - Participant actually working 30 hours per week during the first quarter, then will pay for 30 hours per week in the second quarter.
 - Participant actually worked 20 hours per week during the first quarter, then will pay for 20 hours per week in the second quarter. At the end of the second quarter, can reconcile total hours worked during first and second quarter and pay any difference owing.
 - Participant actually worked 40 hours per week during the first quarter, however, can only pay for 30 hours per week as per contract.

14.A reconciliation should be calculated and completed.

Calculate the total hours worked

- Hours multiplied by contracted hourly rate
- We only pay up to the agreed contracted amount
- If the participant has worked more hours or receives a wage increase, the employer will need to pay this amount
- If the participant has worked less hours than agreed and this is less than the payments made to date, the employer is required to refund this amount.
- The total amount remaining must be communicated to the employer.
- The invoice or refund should be received within 2 months of the contract end date.

Mainstream One Year Employment - APPLICATION PROCESSING FORM

Client Name:	XXXXX XXXXX	Client Number:	XXXXX
Legal Name of Business:	(as per NZBN website)	Job Title:	XXXXX
Company Registered Number:	XXXXXX	NZBN number:	XXXXXX
Company Registered Address:	XXXXX		
Date Received:	XX/XX/20XX	Date acknowledged:	XX/XX/20XX
Application complete:	Yes/No	Proposed start date:	XX/XX/20XX

ELIGIBILITY

Does the client meet the eligibility criteria?	Yes
Does the employer meet the eligibility criteria?	Yes
Does the proposed role meet the eligibility criteria?	Yes
Notes: Age: XX Benefit: XXXXX Disability/Health Condition: XXXXXX	

ASSESSMENT AGAINST PRIORITY CRITERIA

	KM	YG	JO
Level of qualification – People who have higher qualifications			
Formal qualification achieved – Those who have recently completed a tertiary qualification within the last 2 years			
Role related to qualifications – the proposed role is directly related to formal qualifications			
Previous work history – People with less paid work history/experience			
Employer Placement Plan (EPP) – Employment Placement Plan that clearly shows how the role will give the participant skills and experience to retain employment.			
Opportunities for future employment – The role is likely to be maintained at the end of the placement or there is a clear plan that shows how the placement will provide a pathway into alternative paid employment using the skills and knowledge gained			
(Must score 9/18 or 50% to be eligible for Mainstream) Average	XX/18		
Assessor initials	KM	YG	JO
Percentage	XX%		

Comments including any other rationale for recommendation: Training - Equipment -	
Estimated Total Cost of Placement (to be negotiated & finalised)	\$ X,XXX.XX

RECOMMENDATION

☒ Proceed to negotiation of placement	☐ Decline – reason:
Recommended by:	Advisor Name Date: XX/XX/20XX

Mainstream Internship - APPLICATION PROCESSING FORM			
Client Name:	Xxxxx XXXXX	Client Number:	Xxxxx
Legal Name of Business:	(as per NZBN website)	Job Title:	Xxxxx
Company Registered Number:	Xxxxx	NZBN number:	Xxxxx
Registered Address:	Xxxxx		
Date Received:	XX/XX/20XX	Date acknowledged:	XX/XX/20XX
Application complete:	Yes/No	Proposed start date:	XX/XX/20XX
ELIGIBILITY			
Does the client meet the eligibility criteria?		Yes	
Does the employer meet the eligibility criteria?		Yes	
Does the proposed role meet the eligibility criteria?		Yes	
Notes: Age: XX Registered with disability support at: XXXXX Currently Studying: XXXXX Disability/Health Condition: XXXXX			
ASSESSMENT AGAINST PRIORITY CRITERIA			
XX hours per week x 12 weeks @ \$XX.XX per hour = \$X,XXX.XX + GST			
Comments including any other rationale for recommendation:			
Estimated Total Cost of Placement (to be negotiated & finalised)			\$ X,XXX.XX
RECOMMENDATION			
☒ Proceed to negotiation of placement		☐ Decline – reason:	
Recommended by:	Advisor Name	Date:	XX/XX/20XX

Mainstream Paid Work Experience - APPLICATION PROCESSING FORM

Client Name:	XXXXX XXXXX	Client Number:	XXXXX
Legal Name of Business:	(as per NZBN website)	Job Title:	XXXXX
Company Registered Number:	XXXXX	NZBN number:	XXXXX
Company Registered Address:	XXXXX		
Date Received:	XX/XX/20XX	Date acknowledged:	XX/XX/20XX
Application complete:	Yes/No	Proposed start date:	XX/XX/20XX
ELIGIBILITY			
Does the client meet the eligibility criteria?			Yes
Does the employer meet the eligibility criteria?			Yes
Does the proposed role meet the eligibility criteria?			Yes
Notes: Age: XX Benefit: XXXXX Disability/Health Condition: XXXXXX			
ASSESSMENT AGAINST PRIORITY CRITERIA			
XX hours per week x 12 weeks @ \$XX.XX per hour = \$X,XXX.XX + GST			
Estimated Total Cost of Placement (to be negotiated & finalised)			\$ XX,XXX.XX
RECOMMENDATION			
☒ Proceed to negotiation of placement		☐ Decline – reason:	
Recommended by:	Advisor Name	Date:	XX/XX/20XX