

Changes to temporary work visas – what you need to know

In July, the Government launched the Accredited Employer Work Visa, a new temporary work visa that puts New Zealanders first in line for jobs while ensuring businesses can get the skills and workers they need.

The Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV) provides a new approach to hiring skilled migrant workers where genuine skills or labour shortages exist which cannot be filled by New Zealanders. For most roles, employers pay the market rate, pay at least the median wage (currently \$27.76 an hour) and advertise the job to New Zealanders first.

The Government's aim is to support local employment opportunities, and ensure employers are offering attractive wages to New Zealanders before they look to bring in migrant workers to fill higher-skilled roles.

The Government has also made it easier for employers to attract and hire high-skilled migrants by introducing a faster, streamlined application process and three new residence categories for roles on the Green List, those which are highly-skilled in hard-to-fill occupations, or those which are paid twice the median wage.

The first step in the AEWV process is for an employer to apply to become accredited. The type of accreditation an employer needs depends on the number of migrants they want to employ and the nature of their business.

All employers need to meet minimum accreditation requirements, and there are some specific, additional requirements for franchisee employers and employers who want to place their AEWV holders with controlling third parties. For most employers, accreditation is a simple and relatively low-touch assessment. The estimated processing timeframe for a standard or high-volume accreditation application and a job check application is 10 working days, assuming Immigration New Zealand has been provided with all the information needed to make a decision.

Once an employer is accredited, they can apply for a job check. This step confirms the terms and conditions of the job, the pay rate, the minimum hours and, in most cases, that it has been advertised to New Zealanders first. Employers looking to fill roles on the Green List or paid twice the median wage are offered a faster application process as they don't need to provide proof of advertising for their job check. The job check can include multiple vacancies where the job is the same, for example six machinists in a factory.

An approved job check opens the way for accredited employers to ask a migrant worker to apply for a work visa associated with that job. Employers can now:

- give migrant workers more certainty about the specific role they're coming to New Zealand for
- take the lead with the application process, allowing for a more streamlined visa application for migrant workers.

The AEWV process also ensures that employers who have recently breached immigration requirements or employment standards can't hire migrants, protecting migrant workers from risk of exploitation. Those who do become accredited are required to take steps to help their migrant workers settle in New Zealand.

Work visa applications are estimated to take 20 working days to process, if no further information from the migrant worker is required to make a decision.

Businesses that employ migrant workers on other visa types, like working holiday visas or student visas, don't need to become accredited and don't need to meet the median wage threshold. All existing visas remain valid until their expiry date.

Employers can start their application for employer accreditation or a job check on Immigration New Zealand's website today.

To find out more details, visit immigration.govt.nz/accredited-employer

Information correct as at August 2022.