

Changes to temporary work visas – what you need to know

From 4 July 2022, the Government is changing temporary work visas so New Zealanders are first in line for jobs, while still ensuring regions and businesses can get the skills and workers they need.

The Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV) provides a new approach to hiring skilled migrant workers. Employers who have become accredited with Immigration New Zealand can hire migrant workers on the new visa where no New Zealanders are available to do a job, and a genuine skill or labour shortage exists.

For most roles, employers need to pay the market rate, pay at least the median wage 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 migrants. The policy will also help ensure that migrants being recruited into New Zealand on an AEWV are mostly filling higher-skilled roles.

The process to hire a migrant worker on an AEWV involves three checks with Immigration New Zealand. First, the employer applies to become an accredited employer.

The type of accreditation an employer needs depends on the number of migrants they want to employ on the new visa, 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 will be a simple and relatively low-touch assessment, and Immigration New Zealand will work to process applications quickly. The estimated processing timeframe for a standard or high-volume accreditation application, and the job check application, is 10 working days.

Once an employer is accredited, they apply for a job check. This 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. 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 employers to request migrant workers to apply for an AEWV associated with that job. The AEWV process provides migrant workers with:

- confidence that the employer has approval to hire a migrant worker for the job they are applying for
- more certainty about the role they're coming to New Zealand for
- a more streamlined visa application process.

The AEWV policy helps to combat migrant exploitation by ensuring that employers who have recently breached immigration requirements or employment standards can't hire migrants. Those who do become accredited are required to take steps to help their migrant workers settle in New Zealand.

Businesses employing migrants who hold a current temporary work visa don't need to become accredited until they want to hire someone on the new AEWV. 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 apply for accreditation on the Immigration New Zealand website from 23 May 2022, using the enhanced Immigration Online system. Job check applications open on 20 June 2022, and the new visa opens to online applications for migrant workers on 4 July 2022. Employers who do not plan to hire migrant workers on AEWVs in July do not need to apply for accreditation immediately. Employers should wait to apply until they plan to start using their accreditation.

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

Information correct as at May 2022.