



Wage Subsidy Reinstatement

August 2021

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Overview

With the recent community transmission of COVID-19 in parts of New Zealand, and the subsequent border closure, the Cook Islands Government is reinstating the Wage Subsidy. This support has the aim of supporting the continuing employment of staff in the private sector.

The following document outlines the financial support provided via the Wage Subsidy Reinstatement at the minimum wage for a 40-hour week for employers affected by COVID-19, for the period from 23 August 2021 to 30 September 2021.

The changes made to the Wage Subsidy Reinstatement Fact Sheet will come into effect from on 23 August 2021.

Estimated total cost

The estimated total cost of the reinstatement of the Wage Subsidy initiative is \$6 million for the months of August through to September 2021.

Wage subsidy

Objective

The wage subsidy measure is designed to ensure that employers keep their staff on the payroll and to keep business going as best as possible under the current circumstances.

About the wage subsidy

An employee wage subsidy based on the minimum wage for a 40-hour week will be made available to eligible businesses:

- \$320 per week for a full-time employee working 20 hours per week or more;
- \$160 per week for a part-time employee working between 5 and 19 hours per week.

The wage subsidy reinstatement payments will be made monthly, with support commencing on 23 August 2021 payable up to 30 September 2021. Total payments will be based on the number of staff employed by your business, and their hours worked, at the time of each application.

The wage subsidy reinstatement for the month of August will be calculated at fifty percent of the wage subsidy amount businesses received in May 2021 to reflect the timing of the border closure. September will be calculated based on a full month.

If an employee has more than one employer they will be eligible for a maximum of one full-time and one part-time wage subsidy.

Who can access the wage subsidy?

August Wage Subsidy

If you employed staff in July and have filed your July CINSF declaration and you received a wage subsidy in either May or June 2021 you will automatically be paid an August wage subsidy based on the number of staff included in your July CINSF declaration.

September Wage Subsidy

If you employed staff during August 2021 you will be able to apply for a September wage subsidy once you have submitted your August CINSF declaration. If you received a wage subsidy, or a training subsidy, in September or December 2020 you will automatically receive a September 2021 wage subsidy based on the number of employees in your August 2021 CINSF declaration.

If you did not receive a September or December 2020 wage subsidy, RMD will conduct an assessment of your eligibility to receive a September 2021 wage subsidy based on a 30% reduction in revenue for September 2021 compared to September 2019.

Applications for September wage subsidies will be available from 13 September 2021 unless an update is announced.

Who is eligible?

To qualify for this measure:

- Your business must be registered with the Revenue Management Division (Revenue Management) of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management and CINSF, and operating in the Cook Islands.
- Your business must have at least one employee receiving the wage subsidy
- Your employees must be legally working and present in the Cook Islands.
- If your business received the wage subsidy in either of the month of May 2021 or June 2021 you are eligible to apply for the wage subsidy reinstatement for August.
- If your business received the wage subsidy in September or December 2020 you are automatically eligible to apply for the month of September 2021. If your business did not receive the wage subsidy in September or December 2020, you can still apply for the wage subsidy for September 2021 – provided you can demonstrate a reduction in revenue of 30% compared to September 2019 and meet the criteria listed above.
- If you were not operating during the same period of 2019, or your business has been substantially restructured, your income will be compared with the last full calendar month of operation, in which the border was open
- VAT returns must be submitted monthly prior to payment.
- Your business must have paid its PAYE payments for the months of June and July, and for each month immediately prior to the payment month, should the subsidy be further extended.
- Your business must have paid its CINSF employer and employee contributions for each month prior to subsidy payment month.
- Your company directors will be able receive the wage subsidy at the full-time rate if they had not previously been treated as employees. For this to occur, they must be added as an employee and your 2019 income tax return must be filed with RMD showing the payment of director's fees.
- Business partnerships are eligible for the wage subsidy at the part time rate but only if partnership income is the primary source of income for the partners. Your 2019 income tax returns for the partnership and partners must be filed with RMD so we can confirm that partnership income is the primary source of income.
- All businesses are required to submit their 2020 PAYE reconciliation to be eligible to receive the wage subsidy from August 2021.
- Sole traders are not eligible for wage subsidy support, unless they are also employing staff.

How to apply

The application process for this measure is as follows:

- The employer must login to their CINSF account and apply for the wage subsidy online, providing all necessary information as instructed.
- Once verified, payment will be made directly to the employer's account.
- The employer must deduct PAYE and CINSF contributions and transfer net payments to employees.
- The employer must submit a declaration of CINSF contributions through their CINSF account before the next payment is released. If additional employees have been taken on during the month, these should be added. Payment of contributions must also be made.
- The employer must submit PAYE declarations, and make payment to CINSF and RMD before the next payment is released.

Employers are required to continue to pay their staff, at or above the minimum wage. If your employees are earning more than the minimum wage, you can continue to pay them at their normal wage rate, this payment is not required in addition, but is to ensure that you have the funds available to pay your workers.

You will be required to declare the number of employees still requiring the wage subsidy to allow for adjustments in future payments. If you have added new staff, your wage subsidy will increase accordingly. If you have workers that have been redeployed to other employers, you are not required to submit a request for the wage subsidy on their behalf, they will be paid via their new employer.

All applications for the wage subsidy will be assessed by Revenue Management. If you have queries please contact them by email at tax.info@cookislands.gov.ck and enter "Wage Subsidy Reinstatement" in the subject line. If you are unable to send an email, Revenue Management can be contacted on +682 29365.

For further information contact

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