



14 January 2021

Nirav Shastri

fyi-request-14130-74e226f7@requests.fyi.org.nz

File No: DOIA 2021 – 1000

Dear Nirav Shastri

Thank you for your email on 15 November 2020, requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA):

1) Going through previous FYI responses, I see that you keep posting us with weekly statistics on the allocation numbers for priority and non-priority queues. The latest data we have was for the week commencing 1 May 2020. Therefore, could I please ask you to provide CO (thereafter CO – Case Officer) allocation figures for the following weeks (separately for priority and non-priority queues):

a) Week commencing 02 Nov 2020 – Number of priority applications got CO / Number of non-priority applications got CO

b) Week commencing 09 Nov 2020 – Number of priority applications got CO / Number of non-priority applications got CO

c) Week commencing 16 Nov 2020 – Number of priority applications got CO / Number of non-priority applications got CO

d) Week commencing 23 Nov 2020 – Number of priority applications got CO / Number of non-priority applications got CO

2) What is the lodgement date for the oldest non-priority SMC/RFW application?

3) What is the total number of non-priority applications in SMC/RFW non-priority queue currently awaiting for CO allocation? Also, please provide number of applicants behind these applications.

4) Could you please provide breakdown on the number of offshore and onshore applications (applicants) awaiting for allocation in the SMC/RFW non-priority queue.

5) What is the number of priority SMC/RFW applications currently awaiting for officer allocation?

6) Do you process offshore priority SMC applications? Are these applications being prioritized over non-priority SMC/RFW onshore applications?

7) Could you please provide monthly breakdown numbers on how many non-priority SMC/RFW applications/applicants who lodged their applications last year (2019) are waiting for CO allocation:

a) May 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation

b) June 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation

c) July 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation

d) August 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation

e) September 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation

f) October 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation

g) November 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation

h) December 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation

8) When did Immigration New Zealand adopt the policy of application prioritisation and when it was first shared with broad public?

9) What is the definition of "reasonable timeframe" for the SMC/RFW applications?

10) How many Immigration Officers Working on SMC?

11) How many application allocating to CO each week?

12) for how long Immigration was closed in Christmas Period?

Our response

Immigration New Zealand (INZ) has Skilled Residence queues containing Skilled Migrant Category and Resident from Work visa applications that are pending allocation to an immigration officer for assessment. The applications are not separated by type.

1) Could I please ask you to provide CO (thereafter CO – Case Officer) allocation figures for the following weeks (separately for priority and non-priority queues):

a) Week commencing 02 Nov 2020 – Number of priority applications got CO / Number of non-priority applications got CO

During the week starting 2 November 2020, INZ allocated 16 priority and 175 non-priority applications from the Skilled Residence queue to an immigration officer for assessment.

b) Week commencing 09 Nov 2020 – Number of priority applications got CO / Number of non-priority applications got CO

During the week starting 9 November 2020, INZ allocated 67 priority and 172 non-priority applications from the Skilled Residence queue to an immigration officer for assessment.

c) Week commencing 16 Nov 2020 – Number of priority applications got CO / Number of non-priority applications got CO

During the week starting 16 November 2020, INZ allocated 68 priority and 184 non-priority applications from the Skilled Residence queue to an immigration officer for assessment.

d) Week commencing 23 Nov 2020 – Number of priority applications got CO / Number of non-priority applications got CO

During the week starting 23 November 2020, INZ allocated 40 priority and 205 non-priority applications from the Skilled Residence queue to an immigration officer for assessment.

2) What is the lodgement date for the oldest non-priority SMC/RFW application?

As of 16 December 2020, the oldest non-priority application in the Skilled Residence queue was accepted by INZ on 14 January 2019. However, this includes applications where the applicants are onshore and offshore. Second Priority is given to residence class visa applications where the applicant is offshore. As of 21 December 2020, the oldest non-priority application in the Skilled Residence queue where the applicant is onshore was accepted by INZ on 6 June 2019.

3) What is the total number of non-priority applications in SMC/RFW non-priority queue currently awaiting for CO allocation? Also, please provide number of applicants behind these applications.

Please find the information contained in Table 1.

4) Could you please provide breakdown on the number of offshore and onshore applications (applicants) awaiting for allocation in the SMC/RFW non-priority queue.

Please find the information contained in Table 1.

	Number of applications	Number of applicants
Onshore	12,206	26,387
Offshore	1,655	4,597
Total	13,861	30,984

5) *What is the number of priority SMC/RFW applications currently awaiting for officer allocation?*

As of 16 December 2020, there were 48 Skilled Residence priority applications that were awaiting allocation to an immigration officer. There were 138 applicants involved in these applications.

6) *Do you process offshore priority SMC applications? Are these applications being prioritized over non-priority SMC/RFW onshore applications?*

Immigration Instructions A16.1 sets out the order of visa processing for both residence and temporary entry class visa applications. As stated above, Second Priority is given to residence class visa applications where the applicant is offshore. The Immigration Act 2009 means that in general, INZ cannot currently grant visas to applicants who are offshore unless they have been granted an exception to the border restrictions. More information on this can be found on the INZ website: <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/documents/visa-paks/19-june-2020-offshore-visa-processing-during-border-closure.pdf>

7) *Could you please provide monthly breakdown numbers on how many non-priority SMC/RFW applications/applicants who lodged their applications last year (2019) are waiting for CO allocation:*

a) May 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation

b) June 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation

c) July 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation

d) August 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation

e) September 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation

f) October 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation

g) November 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation

h) December 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation

Please find the information contained in Table 2. Note the numbers include both onshore and offshore applicants.

Table 2: Applications and applicants in Skilled Residence non-priority queue, by month accepted as at 17 December 2020

Month of application acceptance	Number of applications	Number of applicants
May 2019	86	253
June 2019	91	244
July 2019	802	1,657
August 2019	813	1,705
September 2019	725	1,461
October 2019	767	1,605
November 2019	916	1,988
December 2019	905	1,993

8) *When did Immigration New Zealand adopt the policy of application prioritisation and when it was first shared with broad public?*

On 24 February 2020, an amendment circular was issued to reflect the general instruction made by the Deputy Chief Executive of Immigration for changes to the order and manner of processing residence class visa applications. This general instruction gave priority to Skilled Migrant Category applications (with job offers) and Residence from Work Category applications where the principal applicant has current occupational registration and this registration is required by immigration instructions, or is paid twice the median wage or higher. The amendment circular can be found on the INZ website:

<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/documents/amendment-circulars/amendment-circular-2020-04.pdf>

This information was shared with the public very shortly after, on the following page:

<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/media-centre/news-notifications/how-we-prioritise-resident-visa-applications>

9) *What is the definition of "reasonable timeframe" for the SMC/RFW applications?*

This information you have requested is not considered official information under the OIA. However, I can advise that the New Zealand Residence Program (NZRP) Planning Range sets the upper and lower number for residence visa approvals. The last NZRP ran from 1 July 2018 until 31 December 2019 and included a Planning Range of 50,000 to 60,000 residence approvals.

The Government is currently reviewing its approach to the NZRP and is considering replacing the planning range with a more targeted approach that focuses on management of specific residence visa types. In the meantime, INZ will continue to process applications at same volume and with the same level of resourcing as the previous NZRP allowed for, this does have an impact on the number of applications that can be allocated and the timeliness of application processing. The INZ website remains the best place for up-to-date information on processing timeframes:

<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/new-zealand-visas/waiting-for-a-visa/how-long-it-takes-to-process-your-visa-application>

10) How many Immigration Officers Working on SMC?

As of 14 December 2020, there were 70 immigration officers who assess Skilled Residence applications.

11) How many application allocating to CO each week?

Allocations of applications to immigration officers occur weekly and the number of applications that are allocated is dependent upon processing capacity. As stated above, INZ continues to process applications at the same volume and with the same level of resourcing as the previous NZRP allowed for.

12) for how long Immigration was closed in Christmas Period?

The Manukau office observed three statutory public holidays over the Christmas and New Year period. It is noted that December to January is traditionally a period of high leave for staff. INZ encourages and supports all staff to maintain their health and safety in the workplace by making use of their annual leave entitlements under the Holidays Act 2003.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request or this response, please contact Chung Man Charmaine Ho, Business Advisor, Operations Support, Immigration New Zealand at Charmaine.Ho@mbie.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely



Nicola Hogg
General Manager - Border and Visa Operations
Immigration New Zealand
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment