



27 January 2023

Utkarsh

fyi-request-21423-06a56ed5@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: DOIA 2223-1306

Dear Utkarsh,

Thank you for your email of 14 December 2022 to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following:

"Dear Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, Dear Immigration New Zealand (INZ),

I am writing to request information regarding the Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) Visa for which the draw happened on 11 Nov 2022.

- 1. How many case officers (COs) are currently processing SMC applications or are available to process SMC applications?*
- 2. INZ Operational Manual sections SR1.1. b states that STR is part of the general skilled migrant residency stream. Does that mean that operationally, the INZ COs who are tasked with processing STR applications are also processing the tail end of the Skilled Migrant Category and Residence from Work (RFW) queue, the last of which was allocated recently to COs? If so, how many applications total in the Skilled Migrant Category (both the new STR and old SMC/RFW) are currently allocated to a CO but have not yet been decided upon (i.e., are under assessment)?*
- 3. What is the average time frame for the allocation of case officer for SMC, RFW and STR.*
- 4. INZ Operational Manual sections SR1.1.c states that STR applications are prioritised above "other skilled residence applications". Can you confirm that "other skilled residence applications" in this context refers specifically to SMC and RFW applications?
If so, can you explain operationally what form this prioritisation takes? Is the prioritisation done at the level of allocation of applications to COs, or within the work of the COs (i.e., the CO is expected to process all STR applications they have been allocated before working on SMC/RFW applications)?*
- 5. EOI draw for SMC was done on 11 Nov 2022 for applications at 160 points. Can you provide the number of applications lodged, waiting in queue for SMC allocation (the website provides information up to 12 September 2022), as well as the number of total people represented by these applications (i.e., including partners/dependent children), by week of lodgement, since the opening of this category? And for each of those weeks of applications lodged, can you break the number of applications down by the current status of those applications using whatever categories INZ attaches to applications (such as: Issued ITA, waiting on documents, awaiting allocation, allocated/under assessment, approved, or rejected) as on the date of your response.*
- 6. What is the procedure undertaken by INZ if the CO leaves his/her job midway assessing an application. Is INZ call centre informed about the same? Is it communicated to the client?*

7. Are there separate teams/Case offices for processing the SMC applications being

8. Does the region affect the processing of SMC application e.g. Will a person filing application from Wellington, expected to get a case officer sooner than a person applying from Auckland.
Are the applications processed at the location of filing in New Zealand?

Our Response

Question 1. How many case officers (COs) are currently processing SMC applications or are available to process SMC applications?

Response: As of 17 January 2023, there are 30 immigration officers (IOs) processing Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) visa applications.

Question 2. INZ Operational Manual sections SR1.1. b states that STR is part of the general skilled migrant residency stream. Does that mean that operationally, the INZ COs who are tasked with processing STR applications are also processing the tail end of the Skilled Migrant Category and Residence from Work (RFW) queue, the last of which was allocated recently to COs? If so, how many applications total in the Skilled Migrant Category (both the new STR and old SMC/RFW) are currently allocated to a CO but have not yet been decided upon (i.e., are under assessment)?

Response: IOs have caseloads comprising of a range of application categories depending on their skills and business needs. Applications can be at all different stages of assessment and may or may not be actionable by an IO. An example of when an application is unable to be actioned is when we are waiting for third party checks and/or information from the applicant.

Please refer to the attached Appendix, table one for the number of applications for Residence from Work (RFW), Straight to Residence (STR) and SMC visa applications allocated to a case officer currently awaiting a decision, as at 11 January 2023.

Question 3. What is the average time frame for the allocation of case officer for SMC, RFW and STR?

Response: STR applications are generally allocated within 24 hours of being accepted for processing. SMC and RFW applications are allocated in line with A16.1 of the Immigration New Zealand Operational Manual and the allocation time depends on how many are received and the workload of IOs.

The allocation timeframes for SMC and RFW applications are not held in a reportable format. In order to obtain this information for you would require us to manually check and record the allocation timeframe of individual applications to calculate an average. As we are unable to provide the exact data requested, we are refusing this part of your request under section 18(f) of the Act, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collusion.

Question 4. INZ Operational Manual sections SR1.1.c states that STR applications are prioritised above "other skilled residence applications". Can you confirm that "other skilled residence applications" in this context refers specifically to SMC and RFW applications? If so, can you explain operationally what form this prioritisation takes? Is the prioritisation done at the level of allocation of applications to COs, or within the work of the COs (i.e., the CO is expected to process all STR applications they have been allocated before working on SMC/RFW applications)?

Response: Prioritisation relates to allocation order as informed by the General Instructions in the INZ Operational Manual. Applications of the same type are processed in lodgement date order. These

instructions do not prevent the visa processing office from prioritising and processing any visa application when the individual circumstances warrant it. Other skilled residence relates to SMC and residence from work visa applications.

Prioritisation only relates to allocation order to an Immigration Officer. Once allocated to an Immigration Officer all applications are progressed in standard timeframes and there is no further prioritisation within a caseload.

Question 5. EOI draw for SMC was done on 11 Nov 2022 for applications at 160 points. Can you provide the number of applications lodged, waiting in queue for SMC allocation (the website provides information up to 12 September 2022), as well as the number of total people represented by these applications (i.e., including partners/dependent children), by week of lodgement, since the opening of this category? And for each of those weeks of applications lodged, can you break the number of applications down by the current status of those applications using whatever categories INZ attaches to applications (such as: Issued ITA, waiting on documents, awaiting allocation, allocated/under assessment, approved, or rejected) as on the date of your response.

Response: Please refer to the attached Appendix, table two for the number of applications for RFW, STR and SMC visa applications lodged since 11 November 2022. These applications are currently awaiting allocation and hence further breakdown is not applicable.

Question 6. What is the procedure undertaken by INZ if the CO leaves his/her job midway assessing an application? Is INZ call centre informed about the same? Is it communicated to the client?

Response: Applications are re-allocated to another IO if an IO departs. The Immigration Contact Centre can access systems to identify where any application is currently allocated, and this will be communicated to the client.

Questions 7 and 8. Are there separate teams/Case offices for processing the SMC applications being? Does the region affect the processing of SMC application e.g. Will a person filing application from Wellington, expected to get a case officer sooner than a person applying from Auckland? Are the applications processed at the location of filing in New Zealand?

Response: All SMC applications are processed in one office and are allocated to IOs in line with A16.1 of the INZ Operational Manual. The region from where the application is made does not affect the visa application process.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request or this response, or if you require any further assistance, please contact inzoias@mbie.govt.nz

Yours sincerely



Nicola Hogg
General Manager, Border and Visa Operations
Immigration New Zealand