

Immigration Q&A

Overview

New Zealand has been actively seeking to attract talent from around the world in the aftermath of COVID-19 lockdowns to help address the skills shortages and drive economic growth. However, despite its stunning landscape and welcoming culture, the country is facing increasing difficulty in attracting and retaining skilled workers, particularly in white collar industries such as legal, finance, and IT.

Georgia Hawley, Legal Recruitment Consultant at Robert Walters, recently sat down with Arno Nothnagel, NZ Director at Absolute Immigration, to understand more about the struggle NZ companies are facing in attracting talent. In this article, we will explore the current state of immigration in New Zealand and examine the different pathways for international candidates to get a visa and companies to become accredited, assisting the country to bridge the employment shortage with international talent.

1. As a country, what is the biggest problem we are facing in relation to immigration?

Our biggest hurdle is attracting skilled migrants to NZ. We have seen an increase in competition globally for the same skilled migrants, and with other countries providing more favourable pathways and much better salaries, the talent pool left for NZ to target is smaller than ever.

2. What are other countries doing in comparison to NZ on immigration matters?

The two main countries we compete with are Canada and Australia. Canada has a very favourable immigration policy and is hoping to attract 1.2 million migrants over the next 4 years. They also have favourable policies for family which is an attractive proposition. Australia on the other hand offers better salaries (in most industries), and a vast range of different visa categories which provides both employers and migrants with options. Their government is actively working on attracting migrants, and NZ needs to do the same.

3. How much has immigration regulations changed since COVID-19? Is it easier or harder to get candidates into NZ?

We've had 74 changes in policy in 2022, and 15 so far in 2023 which is outside the norm if comparing to 2019 (pre-Covid).

Since our borders opened, we have had quite a few favourable policy changes and the new accredited employer scheme seems to be working well for most employers and candidates. However, it does seem harder to get people candidates into NZ compared with pre-Covid, but it is likely that this is due to the increased competition for skills and not due to the immigration settings.

4. What can companies be doing to attract international talent?

It is important for employers to get their brand out there and showcase their business as an employer of choice, separating themselves from competitors. Make it easy for foreign workers researching your business to see you offer an excellent workplace environment, work-life balance, and challenging and satisfying workload.

Depending on which geographic regions you are targeting for workers, illustrate how your company and local area can fulfil their wish lists for their new role, and you are aware and sensitive to your target workforce's culture and priorities.

Often workers are looking beyond your company to what their quality of life will be if they move to New Zealand. Some look for a safer place to raise a family than their home country, while others may value religious freedom, open spaces, and nature, or even the opportunity to earn a higher wage to send home to family. Whatever their priorities, it's worthwhile for your company to demonstrate it can fulfil their requirements.

5. What is the pathway for a company to become accredited and sponsor an international candidate?

Getting accredited is an easy and straightforward process for most companies. There are three key steps to becoming accredited which opens the door to recruiting on the AEWV visa:

- a. Complete the employer accreditation application. There are different types of employer accreditation depending on the business structure and the fee will depend on the type of accreditation required. Immigration NZ estimates most application will be completed within 10 working days.

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- b. Once accredited, the company must apply for a job check with Immigration NZ which ensure there are no suitable New Zealanders in the market.
- c. Once the job check is approved, the candidate may apply for an AEWV visa with their experience and qualifications matching the needs outlined in the job check. This process will usually be completed within 20 working days and Immigration NZ will provide the candidate with a job token to include in the visa application. Once the visa is approved, the candidate can accept the role.

In terms of costs to the company, there are a few options depending on the business structure, but most companies will have a choice of standard or high-volume accreditation if they are not a franchise or labour hire firm. Standard accreditation costs \$740 and high-volume is \$1,220. Additional costs would be incurred if you engage an immigration adviser/lawyer to assist with the process.

6. What are the costs associated with getting a visa for a candidate to work in NZ?

The fixed costs for a candidate would be the Immigration NZ fee, medical examination, police clearance, and a professional fee if they engage an immigration adviser or lawyer. Fees for family are additional.

Sample below:

Service/Visa	Absolute Immigration Professional Fee	Immigration NZ Department Fee	Medicals & Police clearances
1 x Accredited employer work visa	\$2,250	\$750 for main applicant	Varies depending on country of origin. Medical in NZ is approx. \$250.
1 x Partnership work visa		\$700 for partner	
1 x student visa or visitor visa		\$395 for children over 5	Police checks range from \$10-\$100 in most countries
		\$211 for children under 5	

7. Where are most immigrants coming from?

Across the different industries, most immigrants are coming from India, South Africa, Philippines, United Kingdom, Sri Lanka and China. With professions such as legal which require candidates from a common law jurisdiction, there is a narrower pool of candidates who can seek employment in NZ.

8. What industries benefit from the new regulations? Which industries are worse off?

The accredited employer work visa scheme is working well for most industries, but the lack of residence pathways especially for trade occupations means that these industries will start to struggle to attract staff. The healthcare industry has benefited greatly from the new policies as there is a clear residence pathway for most of the occupations in the industry.

Further changes proposed under the Skilled migrant category will affect the trade occupations greatly, with a lack of residence pathways being the biggest obstacle.

Disclaimer

* All advice and costs are an indication from Arno Nothnagel/Absolute Immigration only and should not be taken as final form this document. Please ensure to speak to the professionals when considering relocating.

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