

# Your Guide to the Support Funds



# Introduction

Three Support Funds are available in New Zealand to assist people with disabilities or a health condition likely to last longer than six months, to gain or retain open employment:\*

-  Job Support
-  Training Support
-  Self Start

Support Funds are used to cover the "cost of disability" – additional costs that a jobseeker or student has as a direct consequence of their disability, when undertaking the same job or training as a person without a disability.

Support Funds are intended as last resort funding so assistance should be sought from other funding sources first. Support Funds can be used in conjunction with other funding **except** Mainstream funding.

The maximum Job Support funding that a person can receive in any one 52 week period is \$16,900. Training Support has a **lifetime maximum** of \$15,600. The maximum funding that any one person can receive in a 52 week period is \$16,900. This includes Job Support, Training Support, Self Start, and any other funding from the Ministry of Social Development or Work and Income, or a combination of any of these.

Specific eligibility criteria exist for each of the Funds.

Specific eligibility criteria determine whether applications are approved or declined. (see pg 5-6)

\*See definition page 7

# The Support Funds



## The Background

The training and employment Support Funds for people with disabilities were established by the government in 1994. The establishment of the Support Funds was a clear signal that government was committed to enabling people with disabilities and health conditions to take up open employment opportunities.

Workbridge administers the Funds on behalf of the Ministry of Social Development.

The eligibility criteria and funding limits are set by government, not Workbridge.

## Referrals

Anyone with a disability can refer themselves or be referred by a disability agency. A person does not need to be registered with Workbridge in order to access Support Funds.

## How to Apply

Support Funds Application forms are available from Workbridge centres, or the Workbridge website:

**[www.workbridge.co.nz](http://www.workbridge.co.nz)**

Alternatively application forms can be emailed or posted to you. Contact the Support Funds Central Processing Unit (CPU) to request an application form.

**[cpu@workbridge.co.nz](mailto:cpu@workbridge.co.nz) or freephone 0508 967 527.**

Eligibility criteria and funding limits are set by Government.

## **Workbridge's Role**

Workbridge operates a Support Funds Central Processing Unit (CPU) to provide a specialised service to users of Support Funds – this includes applicants, employers, support agencies, and other interested parties.

CPU staff are well qualified to discuss eligibility criteria with potential applicants, accept and process applications and answer any queries.

The CPU can arrange for someone from a local Workbridge centre to make contact with you if needed.

The CPU is responsible for making the approval decision. You will be advised in writing as to whether or not your application has been approved.

## **Reviewing a Decision**

If your application is not successful, and you consider that you do meet the criteria and an incorrect decision has been made, then you can appeal the decision. A Review Committee made up of three senior Workbridge managers who were not involved in the original decision, will review your application. The Review Committee can uphold the decision (which means the decision stays the same), or can overturn the decision and make a different decision (which means the decision is changed).



A Support Funds Review form is available from Workbridge centres and on the Workbridge website [www.workbridge.co.nz](http://www.workbridge.co.nz). You can also ask the CPU to send you a Review of Decision form.

**cpu@workbridge.co.nz or freephone 0508 967 527.**

Review decisions are generally made within 15 working days of the review application being received. This timeframe may be extended if additional information is requested by the Review Committee. A request to review a decision must be made within three months of the date of the decision.

**Because everyone is different ...**  
**... talk to Workbridge about assistance**  
**that may be available to you.**

# Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria used for the Support Funds are set by the Government. It is Workbridge's responsibility to ensure these criteria are met.

The following criteria are common to all three funds – Job Support, Training Support and Self Start:

## Cost of Disability

You must establish that you have **additional costs** when compared to a person without a disability undertaking **the same job or training**. The costs must be as a direct consequence of your disability or impairment.

## Age

You must be aged between 16 and under 65. In some situations applications from outside this age range will be considered, so please ask us.

## Disability

You must have a disability or medical condition that has lasted or is likely to last for at least six months. The disability must present a barrier to new or continued employment or training that cannot be overcome by the support available through the Ministry of Social Development's other services.

## Residency

You must be currently living in New Zealand, and be either a New Zealand citizen or a permanent resident.

Support Funds assistance may be ongoing.



## **Ministry of Health**

You are not eligible for Support Funds when your vocational services (employment-focussed services) and/or disability costs (for example personal care, hearing aids, orthotics, wheelchairs, vehicle adaptations etc) are provided through the Ministry of Health.

## **ACC**

You are generally not eligible for Support Funds where your vocational services or disability costs are the result of an accident, and/or are the responsibility of ACC. Generally but not exclusively, you will not be eligible if you are in receipt of Earnings Related Compensation (ERC).

## **Individualised Funding**

Support Funds are for an individual only. Support Funds cannot be paid to a third party or to an organisation to distribute on behalf of an individual.

## **Other Funding**

Other funding sources need to be investigated (eg. trusts, Ministry of Health, lottery grants etc) before Support Funds assistance can be provided. Workbridge and Work and Income are just two of the organisations which may be able to provide information on other funding sources.

Other funding sources need to be investigated before Support Fund assistance can be provided.

# Job Support

## What is it?

Where a person meets all eligibility criteria shown on pages 5 and 6, Job Support can assist a person with a disability to move into work or to stay in their job. It is also available for people who are in self employment. More than one category of assistance can be included on a single application.

There is an expectation that each person will eventually move off Job Support into unsubsidised employment.

## Open Employment Criteria

### Employees working for an employer

- **The job must be in open employment.** This means anyone may apply for the job and the position is not reserved for a person with a disability.
- There must be an employment contract in place that sets out the employee's conditions of employment including pay rate and hours worked as defined in the Employment Relations Act 2000.
- The employee must be paid the minimum wage or more, or at a rate the same as someone else without a disability doing the same sort of job.
- The minimum wage for each hour worked criteria also applies where the employee is paid a piece-rate or commission.

### People in self employment

- The net returns of the business must be received by the self-employed owner of the business.

The Job Support funding limit for each individual is \$16,900 in any 12 month period. The \$16,900 limit is inclusive of any other Work and Income grants and subsidies e.g. Skills Investment subsidy; Modification Grants etc.

- The business owner must work a minimum of 20 hours per week in their business.
- The business owner must receive a wage or salary that a person without a disability would receive if they were doing the same job. The minimum wage criteria applies if the job would normally attract an entry wage.
- The business cannot be a hobby type business.

### **People in group co-operatives**

- People with disabilities must be in control and be the primary decision makers of the business. The business cannot be controlled by a support agency.
- The net returns must be distributed to co-operative members.

## **Other Information**

### **Job retention**

Job Support can also be made available to people already in employment who are worried about keeping their jobs because of the onset of a disability, or because an existing condition has changed.

### **Job Support and work-related training**

If the training is essential for current employment, assistance for disability-related costs may be provided through Job Support.

## **Mainstream Employment Programme**

The Mainstream programme is a government-funded programme to place people with disabilities into two year job placements. Participants in the Mainstream programme **are not eligible for Job Support Funds assistance.**

The Mainstream programme has an equivalent support scheme called "Cost of Disability in Employment" (CODE), available to assist participants.

For more information, or to contact the Mainstream programme, visit the Ministry of Social Development website:

**[www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/disability-services/mainstream/index.html](http://www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/disability-services/mainstream/index.html)**

## **The Public (State) Sector**

Job Support Funds are available to people employed in the State Sector. Applications will only be considered once the respective State Sector employer has met their statutory 'good employer' obligations under or based on the provisions of the State Sector Act 1988.

## **Workplaces receiving any form of government funding**

Applications from people in workplaces that receive funding from any other government source to provide work opportunities will generally not be eligible for Support Funds assistance. Applications are accepted and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Note:** See page 14 for examples of assistance available.

## What is it?

Where a person meets all eligibility criteria shown on pages 5 and 6, Training Support can assist a person with a disability to participate in:

- training and education
- an unpaid work trial that is expected to lead to employment with the employer hosting the trial
- work experience.

Any use of the Training Support Fund can only be approved if it forms part of a vocational plan to gain open employment.

Training Support may be used:

- for a support person to assist a student to continue with a training course
- to contribute to transport costs for a person to attend a training opportunity or work experience. Training Support can only pay transport costs not covered by the Work and Income Disability Allowance or Ministry of Health transport assistance funding
- to pay for special equipment not covered by other funding sources.

In today's study environment there is an expectation by tertiary/study providers that students will have a basic laptop/notebook/tablet etc. Therefore these items are considered a study cost not a cost of disability. However each application is considered on a case by case basis.

Training Support Funds can only be used for training opportunities that are linked to the NZQA framework, or involve other educational institutions approved by the Ministry of Social Development.

The Training Support funding lifetime limit for each individual is \$15,600.

## Training Support for People Already in Employment

### **When disability-related training costs are paid through Training Support**

Training Support can be used by applicants who are already in paid employment.

When a person is in work and wishes to undertake study that is not essential to their employment, then the disability-related training costs maybe paid through Training Support. An example of this is where an applicant is studying to change jobs within the same organisation or to follow a different career path.

### **When disability-related training costs are paid through Job Support**

If the training is essential for current employment, assistance can be provided for disability-related costs through Job Support. An example of this is an applicant who works as a store-person and requires assistance from an interpreter to obtain a forklift certificate.

Please ask us if you are unsure which Support Fund to apply to.

### **Vocational Plan**

The Training Support application form asks you to note what other steps you need to take to achieve your employment outcome. The aim of the vocational plan is for you to have an identified, timelined, planned individual programme, which is aimed towards future employment options.

**Note:** See page 14 for examples of assistance available.



## What is it?

Self Start is a fund created to assist people with disabilities to set up their own business ventures. The aim of this programme is to assist with any **additional disability-related costs** of becoming self employed.

Self Start is based on:

- opportunity
- priority for people with high support needs
- individualised funding
- returns of the business going to the individual.

Only applications which are consistent with realistic and reasonable outcomes for the individual will be approved.

Funds available under this programme are not subject to means testing, but every effort is made to ensure that allocations are fair and based on need.

Self Start funding has a lifetime limit of \$5,200 per individual. It is not available to supplement business income.

## 20 Hours Personal Effort and Minimum Wage

In addition to the eligibility criteria set out on pages 5 and 6, an applicant for Self Start will need to:

- put 20 hours of personal effort into running the business each week, and
- the business owner must receive a wage or salary that a person without a disability would receive if they were doing the same job. The minimum wage criteria applies if the job would normally attract an entry wage.

## Business plan

Each Self Start application must be accompanied by a business plan, cash flow projection and feasibility study that will be considered by a professional vetting agent. Workbridge selects the vetting agent taking account of the following:

- marketing skills
- interest in providing this type of service
- understanding of issues associated with people with disabilities starting their own business.

The vetting agent recommends whether the business is viable through consideration of the:

- main issues in the business plan
- strengths and weaknesses of the plan
- applicant's skill level to run the business
- applicant's ability to adapt to change
- applicant's ability to market the goods and services produced.

**Note:** See page 14 for examples of assistance available.

# Categories of Assistance



Available for:

Job Support

Training Support

Self Start

- **Assessments**

If you are applying for equipment, a support person, job coach or productivity allowance, you may need to have an assessment by a person who understands your disability and can make recommendations about the assistance you require. In some cases if you are applying for assistance with transport, we may ask you to have an assessment.

Workbridge will discuss the need for an assessment and make the arrangements. The cost of your assessment will be met from your available Support Funds.

The assessment is usually carried out in the workplace. You will have the opportunity to have some input into this process.

Job Support

- **Awareness training** – To provide information to staff in a workplace about the most appropriate and effective way to fully integrate a disabled new employee into the workplace.

Job Support

Training Support

Self Start

- **Equipment** – Disability-related workplace equipment can include office furniture designed or adapted for your disability, and adaptive software for accessibility. The equipment remains the property of the applicant. Support Funds does not pay for consumables or repairs. In some cases, a part-payment towards the cost of equipment may be required.

Job Support  
Training Support  
Self Start

- **Interpreter services** – Access to a qualified New Zealand Sign Language interpreter for Deaf and hearing impaired people.

Job Support

- **Job coach** – A job coach provides intensive short-term job coaching at the commencement of employment, or where the job description has changed and new or different skills are required.

Job Support

- **Productivity allowance** – A wage subsidy to assist the employer while the employee gains skills and establishes the types of supports available to any employee starting a new job. The subsidy recognises the additional support the disabled person requires over and above the support that would be offered to any other employee. Like other new employees, disabled people increase their productivity the longer they are in the job.

See additional information about productivity allowances on pages 16, 17 and 18.

- **Special induction training after placement into work** – For additional disability-related induction training e.g. a blind new employee requires orientation training so they can find their way around the workplace.

Job Support  
Self Start

- **Support person** – A person to assist an employee to carry out daily work tasks, for example components of a job that cannot be managed because of a disability.



Job Support  
Training Support  
Self Start

Job Support  
Training Support  
Self Start

Job Support  
Self Start

- **Transport** – To pay for transport for people who have mobility difficulties where public transport is not accessible. The standard costs of travel for the same journey will be deducted from any approval.
- **Workplace modification** – Used to pay for a modification to a workplace when it is established that the modification is required to enable a person to gain or retain employment. It is primarily used for furniture and fittings which can be taken with the employee when they leave. In some cases, a contribution towards the cost of modifications may be required.

**Note:** For furniture and fittings that cannot be moved, ask us about Modification Grant funding.

**Note:** Please refer to the *MSD Job Support Fund Operational Policy Guidelines* available on the Workbridge website [www.workbridge.co.nz](http://www.workbridge.co.nz) for more detailed information in relation to the categories of assistance available through Job Support.

The Job Support scheme is very flexible so please ask if you would like us to consider assistance not listed.

## **Additional Information about Productivity Allowance, Job Coach and Support Person**

### **Productivity Allowance**

If a productivity allowance follows on from a Work and Income wage subsidy the total amount paid in a 52 week period cannot exceed \$16,900 for Job Support, Training Support and Work and Income subsidy.

A productivity allowance is only considered after all other support services have been provided.

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

The subsidy is paid to assist the employer while the employee gains skills and establishes the types of supports available to any employee starting a new job.

- The subsidy recognises the additional support the disabled person requires over and above the support that would be offered to any other employee.
- The outcome of the subsidy is the creation of an inclusive and sustainable employment environment for the disabled person.
- The job can be full-time or part-time but must be:
  1. open employment (i.e. anyone could apply for the job)
  2. meet minimum terms and conditions of employment (such as minimum wage and an employment contract),
  3. not receiving government funding for the same activity (e.g. another Work and Income subsidy)
- There is an expectation that the disabled person will go on to gain or retain unsubsidised employment in the business.
- Employers cannot rely on a productivity allowance for the viability of their business.



- A person's employment cannot be dependent on the provision of a productivity allowance.
- All Productivity Allowances have a 'fade out' plan whereby the subsidy reduces 5% every six months.

### **Why do all productivity allowances have a fading plan?**

Fade out plans are put in place to ensure a continuous flow of funds are available for other disabled people entering the workforce or new jobs. The subsidy is at its highest when the disabled employee will require the most assistance and support, but fades as the person becomes more established in their job.

### **Job Coaches and Support People**

Job coaches and support people are independent contractors, contracted by the Job Support recipient. Job coaches and support people are not employees of Workbridge. If Workbridge finds a job coach or support person to assist a particular Job Support recipient, Workbridge is acting as the agent for the Job Support recipient, but is not itself contracting with the job coach or support person.

**ALL ENQUIRIES ABOUT SUPPORT FUNDS  
PLEASE CONTACT**

**SUPPORT FUNDS  
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