



FAQs: Training with Wage Subsidy

Introduction

This document provides answers to common questions on the training with wage subsidy to upskill workers being rolled out to support businesses and employees under the Government's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, Phase II. Detailed information on the Government's business response can be found in the *Wage and Training Support Initiative Fact Sheet* available for download on the MFEM website at: <http://www.mfem.gov.ck/economic-planning/erp-phase-ii>

Training with Wage Subsidy (Training Subsidy)

What is the training subsidy?

The training subsidy is a measure intended to encourage businesses to take advantage of what may be a slow time to upskill their workers and improve their productivity so that businesses are better able to respond when the crisis is over, and the economy begins to recover.

Training can occur online, face to face, or a combination of both, and should meet a minimum of 80 hours of study over 8 weeks. The intended outcome of training is to help improve a business's potential to deliver quality service.

Why should I undertake the training subsidy instead of the wage subsidy?

The training subsidy is an opportunity that offers further support to businesses on top of the wage subsidy by encouraging employee training, with a guaranteed wage subsidy payment until 30 September 2020, regardless of whether a business improves turnover prior to that time.

Businesses that participate will be eligible for an additional business grant of \$3,000-\$10,000 once employees have completed at least 80 hours of training. Businesses can use this grant to cover essential costs, make improvements to the business, or continue with training where necessary.



How are the training subsidy payments calculated and paid?

Similar to the wage subsidy, the training subsidy is paid monthly and calculated for the number of days in that month. When applying, the employer will enter the name of the course(s), number of employees



registered, and upload proof of registration for each employee. The employer then indicates the hours worked by each employee, whether it is nil, 5-19 hours (part-time) or 20+ hours (full-time) per week during the month. For part-timers, this means a payment of \$160 per week whereas a full-timer will receive \$320 per week.

The subsidy will be paid into the employer's bank account for payroll processing to pay each employee. Banking details have to be submitted when completing the application form on the CINSF system, Te Roro.

Training can be expensive to run, how are businesses expected to pay costs if they are not generating any revenue?

Government will fully subsidise the fees of eligible courses delivered locally through the Cook Islands Tertiary Training Institute (CITTI), and the University of the South Pacific Cook Islands Campus (USP Cook Islands). A select number of "fees free" courses at these institutions are available for Semester 2 from June to December 2020 (see Appendix 2 for list of courses).

Any courses operated by providers other than these institutions will be at the cost of the employer. The business grant can be used to reimburse these expenses.

What training courses are eligible?

Courses from approved training providers (see Appendix 1); or a business in partnership with the Cook Islands Tertiary Training Institute (CITTI), will be eligible under the training subsidy if it provides a course or training opportunity that:

- Is quality assured (processes, moderation, marking, etc.)
- Has a valid course design – this must include a curriculum/ program, assessment method and include learning & achievement objectives.
- Provides an assessment and report of learner achievement
- Falls within the scope of current business activity

Courses fully delivered online from approved training providers are eligible for the training subsidy, but costs of these courses will not be subsidised. An exception is made for online certificate courses delivered by USP to the Pa Enua to support wider accessibility to this scheme.

Who are the approved training providers?

Training programs need to be quality assured and assessed. For the purpose of this subsidy, training organisations that are recognised by the Cook Islands or International Authorities as valid providers of qualifications or certifications have been pre-approved (See APPENDIX 1). This means that we have faith that the programs, assessments and certifications offered by these providers meet a suitable level of quality assurance. Choosing to enrol in learning programs from approved providers requires no further vetting, however it is the employer's responsibility to ensure the chosen courses meet expectations for time, relevance and assessment.

What is required if a business wishes to use another provider not already approved under this Training Subsidy?

We cannot identify every possible training provider. Should you wish to utilize a provider not yet approved then you will need to email the Planning & Development Division of the Ministry of Education – Anna Roumanu (PPDirector@education.gov.ck).

In doing so, businesses are to provide;

- Name of the institute with relevant contact details (email, website)
- Summary of course information – course or program details and assessment information

Ministry of Education will then use this information to conduct a preliminary assessment of the institute in ensuring providers meet a level of quality assurance. During this process, businesses may be required to provide additional information.

If an application is successful, the provider, or the specific course, may be added to the approved list for the duration of this subsidy.

Can Businesses deliver their own training in house?

Some businesses may want to utilise expertise of their own staff to deliver training. To ensure quality assurance, businesses must partner with CITTI, through the Business Partnerships Model, who will have responsibility for the quality control of delivery and assessment.

What is the Business Partnership Model?

Business Partnerships caters for upskilling, non-accredited, short courses that is relevant to the needs of business. Business Partnerships allow industry to engage their employees in customized training that is specific to workplace needs, delivered by qualified tutors onsite at the workplace or utilizing CITTI facilities. For more information about the Business Partnership model, please contact CITTI - Ovaia Liew (ovaia.liew@citti.edu.ck)

What if I want to deliver my own program in house or one offered through a different qualifications provider that isn't CITTI?

You must still partner with CITTI who will vet yours or the third-party providers program and ensure quality. For more information on third-party programs, please contact CITTI – Akaiti Maoate (Director@citti.edu.ck).

When do I need to start my course?

Enrolment in the courses targeted under the training subsidy must take place before 31 July and before the July training subsidy is paid. It is your responsibility to ensure training meets the minimum time expectations.

Can the 10 hours weekly (over 8 weeks minimum) be spread out between different courses and platforms?

Yes. You must enrol in all programs before the 31 July and show collectively that they meet the minimum training hours required.

All courses, even short courses, must be approved and follow the course design criteria that has been set out by the Training Subsidy Scheme; it must include curriculum/ program, assessment (processes, moderation etc.), learning and achievement objectives.

Compliance will be assessed throughout the course duration and employee progress will be checked by RMD.

Can the minimum hours be allocated over a span of a few weeks rather than the full 8 weeks?

Yes, as long as the training is from an approved training provider or business partnered with CITTI. This time designated by businesses allows flexibility to determine the best hours for delivery to take place for your employees.

How many employees must a business enrol in training to be eligible for the training subsidy scheme?

Businesses should enrol at least 75% of their employees to participate in the training subsidy, with completion certificates provided for at least 75% of those enrolled to be eligible for the business grant.

How will compliance be assessed?

The Cook Islands Government will assess compliance through a range of measures:

- Communication with course operators on attendance
- Checking of certificates on course completion
- Assessment of PAYE and CINSF declarations
- Formal audit undertaken by the Cook Islands Audit Office

For further information, contact

Natalie Cooke, Director
Economic Planning Division
Ministry of Finance and Economic Management
PO Box 120, Avarua, Rarotonga, Cook Islands

Telephone: +682 29511 ext. 8314
Email: MFEM.Economics@cookislands.gov.ck
Website: www.mfem.gov.ck

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Appendix 1 - Approved Training Providers

All approved providers, as listed below, are recognised under this Training Subsidy for the duration of 7 months (1 June – 30 December 2020). Recognition does not entitle to the provider to private tertiary education status under the Education Act 2012.

Approved providers include;

- Cook Islands Tertiary Training Institute (CITTI)
- University of the South Pacific, Cook Islands Campus (USP Cook Islands)
- Red Cross First Aid Courses
- Cook Islands Boat Masters
- Forklift and Crane Operator Licensing
- PADI certified courses
- Any New Zealand based University or Polytechnic delivering online courses
- Any approved provider recognised under the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA)
- Any training provider with authorised programs for examination offered by Pearson Vue (e.g. Microsoft, Chartered Accountants etc).
- Any automotive, electrical and marine manufacturer with training and assessment opportunities (e.g. Honda, Nissan, Toyota, Yamaha, Futijzu)
- International Monetary Fund
- American Hotels and Lodging Educational Institute
- EHL Hospitality Management School
- Typsy