



Recognised Seasonal Employer

Information booklet - Fiji



F I J I



Official name: Fiji is an island that lies on the border between Melanesian and Polynesian regions in the Southern Pacific Ocean. It consists of 322 islands.

Capital: Suva (located on the island of Viti Levu)

Languages: iTaukei, Hindi, Rotuman and English

Religion: Christianity, Hinduism, Islam

Currency: Fijian dollar (FJD)

Population: 926,276

Fiji joined the Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme in 2015.





What is the Labour Mobility Unit?

The Labour Mobility Unit is known as the National Employment Centre, which sits under the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Workplace Relations. The Ministry facilitates employment opportunities for the citizens of Fiji. It manages labour mobility programmes including the Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme (RSE). The Labour Mobility Unit oversees policy and RSE operational work.

What is the role of the Fiji High Commission?

The Fiji High Commission in Wellington provides in-country support to workers.

- Fiji uses their commission to advocate for and support workers with concerns while employed in New Zealand.
- They can also provide support and cultural perspectives to employers.

Who do I talk to before I recruit RSE workers?

Before recruiting from Fiji contact:

- Immigration New Zealand's RSE engagement partner, they will connect you directly to the Labour Mobility Unit or
- Pacific representatives who have information about their country's recruitment processes and will connect you with the Labour Mobility Unit.

There are two recruitment options for employers:

- 1. Direct recruitment:** Employers are encouraged to connect directly with the Labour Mobility Unit to understand recruitment policies and expectations of the Fijian government.
- 2. Use of referrals:** Employers use a list referred to by their RSE workers.



What is the recruitment timeframe?

From when the Labour Mobility Unit is in receipt of the Agreement to Recruit to when the worker is expected to board the flight is usually around six to eight weeks.

What is the length of an RSE visa and where are they assessed?

Fijian workers are deployed to New Zealand for seven months in an 11-month period.

Visa applications are assessed and approved by the Immigration New Zealand office in Fiji.

Recruitment process

Pre-selection

All interested candidates need to register with the National Employment Centre.

To register candidates must provide the following:

- Certified birth certificate
- One full-length body photo
- Updated Curriculum Vitae
- Two character references
- Driver licence (if any)
- Valid Fiji passport TIN letter or joint FNP/FRCS card
- Educational qualification(s)/academic transcript(s).

Often there are periods where registration is on hold at the discretion of the National Employment Centre.

Recruitment – selection – departure

Step 1: Employer receives Agreement to Recruit approval and decides to recruit from Fiji.

Step 2: Employer emails the following documents to the Labour Mobility Unit to commence recruitment:

- Immigration New Zealand Agreement to Recruit
- List of returning workers and/or new workers (confirm selection through profiles from work-ready pool or referrals)
- Contracts to be read, agreed and signed by the worker
- Deduction form to be read, agreed and signed by the worker
- Employer confirmations of travel arrangements

Step 3: Labour Mobility Unit contacts selected workers to complete and submit the following documents:

- National Employment Centre medical/fitness (new workers only who are not from the work-ready pool, this will be organised by the National Employment Centre)
- Police clearance application with a validity of 12 months
- Valid passport (must have 12 months' validity by date of travel)
- Two passport photos
- Birth certificate
- Visa application – filled in by worker with the assistance of the Labour Mobility Unit.

Step 4: Labour Mobility Unit validates the character of selected candidates through police clearance results before finalising. Any worker who has an adverse police record will not be eligible to participate in the RSE scheme. Worker accepts the offer of employment and signs the contract and visa application.

Step 5: Visa lodgment- Labour Mobility Unit collates and completes all documents and submits to Immigration New Zealand:

- Signed worker visa application
- Signed worker employment contract and deduction form
- Valid passport and one passport photo
- Police clearance (visa) INZ1185 – only if worker has spent a combined 24 months or more in New Zealand
- Complete panel medical examination (visa requirement).

Step 6: Labour Mobility Unit provides the employer with visa fee payment details. Employer to deposit the visa fee into VFS Global account (Visa Application Centre in Fiji) and provides the Labour Mobility Unit with the remittance of deposit for verification by VFS Global.

Step 7: Immigration New Zealand approves visa:

- Approved – Labour Mobility Unit informs worker and employer. Labour Mobility Unit to send employer copies of visa approvals.
- More information required- Labour Mobility Unit contacts worker to rectify information and advise the employer.
- Decline – Labour Mobility Unit informs worker and employer.

Step 8: Pre-departure orientation

Labour Mobility Unit conducts pre-departure orientation- presentation provided by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment in New Zealand.

Step 9: Worker departs for New Zealand and Labour Mobility Unit informs employer.

Post-deployment

On returning, Labour Mobility Unit holds debriefing sessions and may hold worker performance review and decides:

- If the worker can return the next year to work
- Whether to stand-down worker (inform RSE on rationale).

What flights can be booked for workers?

Flights from Fiji to New Zealand include:

- Air New Zealand direct flights from Nadi to Auckland
- Fiji Airways direct flights from Nadi to Auckland, Wellington or Christchurch.

You can reach out and ask RSE Travel for advice.

Pastoral care

What does good pastoral care look like?

Immigration New Zealand provides information for employers on pastoral care as part of the Agreement to Recruit application process and maintaining RSE status:

<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/assets/inz/documents/employer-resources/rse-employer-pastoral-care-guide.pdf>

The RSE scheme is complex and to be able to support workers from diverse backgrounds, experiences and beliefs requires a village- there are ways for employers to increase their cultural awareness. A common view shared by Pacific workers is the definition of 'family' which includes one's wider family group, such as extended family and community.

Workers may wish to participate/attend the following ceremonies:

- Church
- Funerals
- Weddings
- Bula Festival- July
- Constitution Day- September
- Independence Day- October
- Diwali- October.

There will be workers who have a sense of responsibility to attend certain ceremonies/or church depending on their status in their family and/or village.

Practical advice for closer collaboration with workers

- Be patient and understanding when communicating with workers and their families.
- Be polite and communicate in a courteous manner when addressing the older workers.
- Employers should take time to listen and explore all avenues to provide the worker with support to be comfortable to engage.
- A no answer does NOT mean they are guilty or rude. It can mean that they do not understand, do not know how to respond, or speaking up can be seen as disrespectful.
- Family (immediate/extended) is important to workers - be understanding of when family want to visit workers. Put in place visiting rules but avoid prohibiting workers from seeing family.
- Have a good induction programme (not rushed) when welcoming and/or inducting new and/or returning workers around the rules and expectations in the orchards, accommodation, and behaviour in public/community. Clearly demonstrate the 'how' in basic English and in their language.
- Use signs in both English and their language of how to operate a washing machine, microwave, clean their room, wash their dishes, put out the rubbish etc.
- Hold leadership trainings and encourage country liaison officers/Pacific representatives to support content.
- If workers are all from different villages, treat them all the same.
- Reach out to High Commission representatives to provide support on mitigating serious incidents.
- Champion performers by working with team leaders to ensure information is disseminated accurately and behavioural concerns are managed and addressed appropriately.
- Respect their faith and try to join in whenever there is a blessing (i.e. before eating) or a group prayer.
- Ensure workers have time to attend church/seek spiritual guidance.



- Avoid making assumptions when workers do not reply immediately.
- Don't belittle a team leader or someone of high status (chief) in front of the team. Shaming workers in front of their peers is not appropriate, especially if they are someone with a chief title or of high status in their village or family.
- Do not use derogatory words or gestures as this is a sign of disrespect and suggests the employer does not value the workers' contribution to their business. There is a difference between being assertive and being disrespectful.
- Take the time to ensure workers understand your work values and practices.
- Never house men and women in the same accommodation or have them sharing the same bathroom facilities. Be sensitive and aware of cultural differences within regions and/or provinces.



Addressing issues amongst workers

- Build trust that you are there to help resolve the matter.
- Reach out to the team leader (if the team leader is not involved) for support and language barriers.
- Depending on severity of case, reach out to the following people for support:
 - » Immigration New Zealand RSE engagement partners
 - » High Commission RSE representatives
 - » Village/district representatives
- Depending on the matter, reach out to a family member of the worker.
- Be patient and respectful when explaining things to the worker(s). What an employer sees as normal, may appear foreign for workers.

Other considerations

- Staying in touch with family back home is important especially if workers are in isolated areas or regions not easily accessed by local families/diaspora.
- Be mindful of selecting leaders from different districts/provinces – discuss amongst the workers the reason for selecting leaders and possibly allowing them to have a say.
- Dress appropriately and research the customs and relations between men and women from the villages/regions you recruit from.
- Kava is the national drink of Fiji.
- Fijians tend to eat together and will always wait for someone to say grace before a meal.

Note: Many of the workers are recruited from rural or outer villages. They may not have been exposed to many of the things they will see or have access to in New Zealand.

What you do when an RSE worker dies while working in New Zealand

1. Handle the situation with care and sensitivity, particularly around family members of the deceased worker.
2. Reach out to the Fiji High Commission representatives to gain an understanding of cultural protocols and government requirements.
3. The definition of family member extends to more than their immediate family.
4. You may come across a situation where a church pastor or chief of the village or family has the blessing from the next-of-kin to speak on behalf of the family of the deceased worker.
5. You may come across a situation where the next-of-kin may not always have the say when it comes to organising the repatriation of the deceased worker- the decision can rest with the wider family.
6. Communicate to other teams to refrain from sharing information about the deceased on social media until the family have been informed.
7. Depending on the cause of death, as employers, you need to be aware of the insurance and ACC policies and the the support available for the deceased worker's family.
8. During the entire process keep the Labour Mobility Unit/country liaison officer, High Commission and family updated if you are in direct contact with the next-of-kin or family representative.

Note: The process will vary depending on government protocols, cultural practices, and repatriation requirements and what the family of the deceased would like to do. The next-of-kin and/or immediate family of the deceased (either in New Zealand or overseas) are the decision makers.

Key steps to aid employers with what to do:

Step 1: Report the death

Employer to inform:

- 1.1 The next-of-kin immediately to ascertain what the family would like to do with the body of their loved one.
- 1.2 The Immigration New Zealand RSE engagement partner on visa and pastoral care requirements.

Depending on country protocols inform:

- Employment Services Unit who will require information including name of deceased, date/place/cause of death. This will assist the Labour Mobility Unit with a brief to the respective Minister(s).
- The Office of the High Commission – RSE workers are non-citizens of New Zealand and therefore it is important Heads of Mission are informed of the passing of one of their citizens.
- Labour Mobility Unit will provide guidance around government protocols and/or cultural advice.

Note: Protocols and processes will vary across the nine countries and remedial intervention will be necessary depending on circumstances surrounding the death. It is important you reach out to the right people for guidance.

Step 2: Engage a funeral director

Liaise with the funeral director to progress and discuss requirements.

Step 3: Documentation

The following documentation is required to facilitate clearance for the body to be repatriated home and to process the worker's benefits and entitlements.

- 3.1 Death certificate to confirm cause of death
- 3.2 Obtain clearance from respective government organisations (Ministry of Health, New Zealand Customs Service and Immigration New Zealand).

Note: Employer will need to liaise with Labour Mobility Unit/Fiji High Commission regarding the documents required to clear repatriation.

Step 4: Payroll and benefits

- 4.1 Employer initiates the process for final payments and necessary paperwork.

Step 5: Facilitate family/funeral service

There may be customary practices requested before repatriation of the deceased worker. The employer is encouraged to work with the High Commission representative and/or family spokesperson of the deceased to obtain advice.

Note: Employers may witness the custom of giving from other workers, family, friends and communities. Not all employers will accept this custom as it is not a familiar practice BUT it is customary in many Pacific countries and employers are encouraged not to judge and accept this and pay all funds to the family.

Step 6: Transportation

The employer should facilitate travel arrangements for one family member from Fiji to accompany the deceased worker. This is covered by insurance.

Note: The employer may choose to travel with the deceased worker and family. It may vary from country to country. The country liaison officer or selected official will also accompany the worker back home.



Part of Fiji's culture is the consumption of kava and it is encouraged, to make them feel at home. However, this should only be for certain occasions and not something that is done daily.

What do you need to know before visiting Fiji?

Employers are encouraged to visit the country and homes of their workers.
Things to note:

1. Gifts are sometimes exchanged at meetings.
2. Take something with you whenever you visit someone at their home.
Food or souvenirs from New Zealand are often appreciated gifts,
e.g. New Zealand chocolate.
3. Dress respectfully and modestly when meeting with officials and visiting
villages or families of workers, i.e. cover shoulders and knees.
4. Inform the Labour Mobility Unit of your visit to Fiji and your agenda.
5. Driving is on the right-hand side.

Useful words to enhance communication with Fijian workers

Hello/Hi – Bula

Welcome – Ni Matavinaka mai

Goodbye – Moce

Please – Kerekere

Thank you – Vinaka

Family – Matavuvale

Yes – Io

No – Sega



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