



VisaHelperz
IMMIGRATION CONSULTANT

NEW ZEALAND WORK PERMIT

The Complete Master Guide to Every Work Permit Pathway

Accredited Employer Work Visa • The Green List • Skilled Migrant Category • Partner and Student Routes
• Seasonal and Special-Purpose Work

Prepared by VisaHelperz Immigration Consultant

Immigration rules change frequently. This guide is an educational roadmap — always confirm current eligibility with the Visa Helperz Team before applying.

Your Complete Guide to the New Zealand Work Visa

Every pathway, every 2026 rule change, explained step by step—from the Accredited Employer Work Visa through to residence.

THE BIG PICTURE — FIVE WAYS IN

Route	Job Offer Needed? Yes	Typical Purpose
Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV)		Main route for overseas workers
Open Work Visa	Usually no	Partner, post-study, special situations
Working Holiday	Usually no	Young people wanting temporary work/travel
Special-purpose / sector / nationality routes	Depends	Seasonal, religious, entertainment, fishing, special agreements
Residence visa that permits work	Depends	Skilled / residence pathways

PART I — THE MAIN EMPLOYMENT ROUTE: AEWV

The Accredited Employer Work Visa is the primary route for an ordinary overseas worker with a New Zealand job offer. It runs as a 3-stage process — only the third stage is yours to complete.

Stage 1 — Employer Accreditation

The NZ company must be accredited by Immigration New Zealand to employ migrants. The employer handles this — not you.

Stage 2 — Job Check

The employer gets the specific position approved: genuine job, pay, hours, occupation and recruitment requirements.

Stage 3 — Your Visa Application

You submit passport, job offer, qualifications, experience, health, character and (where required) English evidence.

Up to 5 yrs Visa duration	NZD \$1,540+ Starting fee	30 hrs/week Minimum work	Employer-tied Not fully open
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PART II — SKILLED RESIDENCE PATHWAYS

Green List — Tier 1 (Straight to Residence)

► Tier1job offer → meet qualification/registration/payrules → apply for Straight to Residence

- Applicant generally age 55 or younger
- Qualifying Tier 1 occupation with an accredited employer
- Required qualification, registration, pay, health, character & English Grants
- indefinite residence — can include partner and dependent children Can
- potentially be applied for from outside New Zealand — no 2-year wait

Green List — Tier 2 (Work to Residence)

► Tier2job → workin NZfor 24 months → Workto Residence Visa → indefinite residence

- 24 months of qualifying work in a Tier 2 occupation required
- Available to applicants aged 55 or younger who meet requirements
- Qualifying work can include time already spent on an AEVV

■ Wage-rate calculation rules change 24 August 2026.

Skilled Migrant Category (SMC)

► SkilledNZ job/offer+qualification/registration/income + required points → SMC Resident Visa

- Occupational registration, or a bachelor's degree or higher
- Sufficiently high income and skilled employment with an accredited employer
- Job must meet ANZSCO skill-level and wage-threshold requirements

Care Workforce Work to Residence

► Qualifying care job → qualifyingNZ work experience → Work to Residence

- Own list of eligible occupations, wage and work-experience requirements
- Useful when Green List / SMC don't apply

■ Wage-rate calculation rules change 24 August 2026.

Transport Work to Residence

► Qualifyingtransportjob → qualifying NZ employment → residence pathway

- Job title alone (e.g. truck driver) does not automatically qualify
- Exact occupation, wage and registration requirements matter

■ Wage-rate calculation rules change 24 August 2026.

PART III — OPEN WORK VISAS

Partner of a Worker Work Visa

➤ Partner gets eligible NZ work visa → relationship evidence → your open work visa → work in NZ

- Requires a genuine, stable partnership, generally living together
- Eligibility depends on your partner's visa, occupation, skill level, wage and sector
- Not every AEWV holder can sponsor a partner's open work visa

■ **Since 20 April 2026: eligible open work visa holders can work for an employer, be self-employed, or own/operate a business — condition depends on the visa.**

Partner of a Student Work Visa

➤ Partner studies eligible NZ qualification → you get partner work visa → you work

- Depends heavily on qualification level and field of study
- Only applies where the study programme is on an eligible list

Post Study Work Visa

➤ Study in NZ → graduate → Post Study Work Visa (up to 3 yrs) → work → possibly AEWV/residence

- Duration depends on qualification and study circumstances
- From 16 Nov 2026: extended to NZQCF Level 7 Graduate Diploma holders who also hold a bachelor's degree
- A new Short-Term Graduate Work Visa is introduced alongside this change

■ **Major eligibility update effective 16 November 2026.**

PART IV — WORKING HOLIDAY

Working Holiday Visa

➤ EnterNZ → find employer → gain experience → transition to a route like AEWV

- Typically age 18–30 (up to 35 for some nationalities)
- Nationality must have a working-holiday agreement with NZ
- Most permits allow work for up to ~12 months, varying by nationality
- Cannot be used to simply take a permanent job and stay indefinitely

PART V — SPECIFIC PURPOSE / EVENT WORK

Specific Purpose or Event Work Visa

➤ Specific NZ project/event → supporting employer/organisation → visa → perform work → leave or transition

- Covers business activities, specialist work, contracts, sports events, entertainment
- Lasts only for the period required to complete that specific work or purpose
- Not a general job-seeker visa

PART VI — SEASONAL WORK

Seasonal Work Arrangements

- Relevant to horticulture, agriculture, viticulture and seasonal harvesting
- Interim option of hiring seasonal workers via the Specific Purpose Work Visa ceased 8 December 2025
- Seasonal AEWV arrangements and employer-specific seasonal schemes now apply

■ Don't rely on an old "RSE visa" article — always check the current seasonal visa category.

PART VII — SPECIAL OCCUPATION / INDUSTRY VISAS

Religious Worker Work Visa

- For qualifying religious workers with a qualifying religious organisation
- Requires sponsorship/support and relevant experience or qualifications where required

Entertainers Work Visa

- For performers, production personnel and entertainment professionals
- May require support from the relevant NZ entertainment union/guild/professional association

Fishing Crew Work Visa

- For overseas crew on qualifying fishing vessels
- Specialised route with separate procedures and employer approvals — distinct from an ordinary AEWV

Domestic Staff of a Diplomat

- For qualifying domestic staff employed by diplomatic, consular or official personnel
- Highly specialised and subject to specific conditions

PART VIII — SPECIAL NATIONALITY AGREEMENTS

Country-Specific Work Instructions

- China Special Work Instructions & China Skilled Workers
- Philippines, Vietnam & Indonesia Special Work Instructions
- Republic of Korea Special Work Instructions
- Japan and Thailand-related special categories
- Niche categories also exist, e.g. interpreters from Japan, Thai chefs, primary-sector trainees

Not general visas available to everyone — eligibility depends on nationality and occupation. Check the nationality-specific route before assuming AEWV is the only option.

PART IX — HUMANITARIAN / PROTECTION-RELATED WORK VISAS

Migrant Exploitation Protection Work Visa & Related Categories

- Forelign migrants who have experienced exploitation and need work rights while addressing their situation
- Special work rights also exist connected to refugee/protection claims, family violence and trafficking victims
- These are protection mechanisms, not ordinary migration routes for a first overseas job

PART X — BUSINESS / SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Entrepreneur Work Visa

- Historic requirements: NZD\$100,000 investment, business plan, 120 points, English, fit-and-proper checks
- Limited exceptions historically existed for innovative science/ICT businesses

■ **Currently closed to new applications. Existing holders may be able to renew — confirm the category has reopened before preparing a new application.**

PART XI — RESIDENCE VISAS THAT PERMIT WORK

- **Skilled Migrant Category Resident Visa** — qualifying skilled job/offer + points → residence
- **Straight to Residence Visa** — Tier 1 Green List → residence
- **Work to Residence Visa** — Tier 2 Green List → 24 months → residence
- **Care Workforce Work to Residence** — qualifying care employment → qualifying period → residence
- **Transport Work to Residence** — qualifying transport employment → qualifying period → residence

KEY 2026 RULE CHANGES

Date	Change
8 Dec 2025	Interim seasonal route via Specific Purpose Work Visa ceased.
20 Apr 2026	New employment-condition framework for open work visa holders (work / self-employ / own a business, depending on visa).
24 Aug 2026	Wage-rate calculation changes for Green List Tier 2, Care Workforce and Transport work-to-residence routes.
16 Nov 2026	Post Study Work Visa eligibility expands to Level 7 Graduate Diploma + bachelor's degree holders; new Short-Term Graduate Work Visa introduced.
Ongoing	Entrepreneur Work Visa remains closed to new applications.

WHICH ROUTE IS BEST FOR YOU?

1	Green List Tier 1 Exceptionally attractive — can lead directly to residence, no wait.
2	AEWV + Green List Tier 2 Excellent if Tier 2 and prepared for the required NZ work period.
3	AEWV + Skilled Migrant Category Good for skilled workers outside the Green List who meet SMC requirements.
4	Care / Transport Residence Pathways Very useful within the relevant sector agreements.
5	Post Study Work Visa Excellent for genuine NZ study with post-study work rights.
6	Partner Work Visa Potentially excellent if your partner already holds eligible NZ status.
7	Working Holiday Good for eligible young nationals wanting temporary work & travel.
8	Specific / Special Visas Excellent only if your circumstances specifically fit them.

PRACTICAL CHECKLIST — YOUR STEP-BY-STEP AEWV APPLICATION

- 1 Identify your occupation — job title, actual duties, skill level, whether registration is required.
- 2 Check the Green List — Tier 1, Tier 2, or not listed.
- 3 Check NZ occupational registration requirements (healthcare, teaching, engineering, trades, etc.).
- 4 Find an accredited employer — confirm AEWV accreditation directly.
- 5 Obtain a genuine job offer meeting immigration and employment requirements.
- 6 Employer completes accreditation and Job Check on their side.
- 7 Receive your application link/information from the employer.
- 8 Prepare documents: passport, photo, job offer, qualifications, references, registration, police & health/English evidence.
- 9 Apply online and pay the relevant fee.
- 10 Immigration New Zealand assessment — employment, qualifications, experience, health & character checks.
- 11 Visa granted — receive your eVisa and travel subject to conditions.
- 12 Start NZ employment per the employer, occupation, location and hours specified.
- 13 Transition toward residence if eligible (Green List, SMC, or a sector pathway).

This guide summarises Immigration New Zealand's published work and residence visa rules, including changes scheduled through 2026, and is provided for general informational purposes only. It is not immigration advice. Requirements, fees and pathways change — always confirm current details directly with Immigration New Zealand at immigration.govt.nz or speak with the VisaHelperz Team before making any decisions.