



Recognised Seasonal Employer

Information booklet -
Solomon Islands





Official name: The Solomon Islands consists of 21 major islands and over 900 smaller islands in the Pacific, part of the Melanesian Island countries.

Capital: Honiara

Languages: English and Pijin

Indigenous languages: more than 87 local dialects

Religion: Christianity

Currency: Solomon Islands dollar (SBD)

Population: over 734,000

Solomon Islands joined the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme in 2010.





What Ministry oversees the Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme in the Solomon Islands?

The Labour Mobility Unit sits under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade and operates an agent-based system of recruitment. Employers in New Zealand wishing to recruit workers from the Solomon Islands are required to engage the services of a licensed agent to conduct the recruitment activities on their behalf.

The Labour Mobility Unit provides leadership, implements the labour policy, coordinates and acts as the regulatory body for labour mobility schemes including the Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme on behalf of the Solomon Islands Government. It is also responsible for selection, approval and managing the team of recruiting agents.

More information on the role of the Labour Mobility Unit can be found here: <https://www.mfaet.gov.sb/external-trade/labour-mobility/recognised-seasonal-employer.html>

What is the role of the Solomon Islands High Commission?

- Employers can directly contact the Labour Mobility Unit or group leader on Recognised Seasonal Employer concerns and requesting Labour Mobility Unit intervention in accordance with the Labour Mobility Unit's complaints resolution policy.
- As Solomon Islands does not have a liaison officer they have an arrangement with the Office of the High Commission based in Wellington to advocate and support Solomon Islands Recognised Seasonal Employer workers concerns during deployment in New Zealand.
- The High Commission representative can provide cultural perspectives in addressing concerns and resolve any conflict.
- The High Commission representative works alongside New Zealand government officials (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and TVOM) and employers to understand the expectations of Solomon Island workers and the Solomon Islands government and vice-versa.

How do you recruit from the Solomon Islands?

Employers are encouraged to communicate directly with the Labour Mobility Unit (contact can be obtained from the Immigration New Zealand Recognised Seasonal Employer engagement partner) to understand the Labour Mobility Unit processes and timeframes before proceeding with recruitment and selection.

The Labour Mobility Unit is responsible for the administration, coordination and implementation of the labour mobility policy specific to the recruitment, selection and deployment of Recognised Seasonal Employer workers. There are three recruitment methods:

1. **Direct recruitment** – upon receiving Recognised Seasonal Employer status and Approval to Recruit, the employer may decide to visit the Solomon Islands and undertake their own recruitment (does not use the government work-ready pool or registered agents).
2. **Agent method** – an approved employer uses a registered agent from the Solomon Islands.
3. **Work-ready pool** – both employer and agent use the government of Solomon Islands work-ready pool to select workers. (Potential workers are sourced only from the Solomon Island's work-ready pool managed by the Labour Mobility Unit).

All recruiters recruiting for workers under a recognised labour mobility scheme that is overseen by the Labour Mobility Unit, must be registered with the Labour Mobility Unit. There are two categories for potential recruiters to operate:

1. Licensee or
2. Permit Holder

The Labour Mobility Unit can provide the current list of registered approved recruiters. A recruiter includes a licensee, permit holder, agent, agency, employer, employer's employee, institute, association or the Labour Mobility Unit or any other body undertaking recruitment processes on behalf of one, or several employers.

What is the recruitment timeframe?

The recruitment timeframe from when the Labour Mobility Unit is in receipt of the Approval to Recruit to when the worker is expected to board a flight is eight weeks.

What is the length of an Recognised Seasonal Employer visa and where are they assessed?

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

Visa applications are assessed and approved by the New Zealand Visa Application Centre in Honiara.

More information can be found here:

<https://visa.vfsglobal.com/slb/en/nzl/RSE>

Email: rse_southpacific@vfsglobal.com

Opening hours: Monday-Friday (8.30am to 4.30pm)

The timeframe for visa assessment is ten working days (this includes time required by the Visa Application Centre).

What is the recruitment process?

Recruiters need to register with the Labour Mobility Unit to determine whether a license of permit to recruit Solomon Island workers for labour mobility schemes managed by the Labour Mobility Unit, should be granted. *(Recruiters are not permitted to charge workers for their recruitment, selection and mobilisation).*

The licensed agent(s) is responsible for selection of Solomon Island workers based on recruitment guidelines provided by the Labour Mobility Unit. It is a requirement that prior to submitting visa applications, the full list of selected workers must be provided to the Labour Mobility Unit to carry out their screening for suitability, character checks and to ensure the recruitment is done transparently and in accordance with the established principles and guidelines.

Registration

Registration of licenses and permits to recruit from the Solomon Islands is on an annual basis for the period 1 September to 31 August. This process is undertaken by the Labour Mobility Unit.

Pre-screening process for workers

The pre-screening process does not charge workers to participate. However, to be eligible for consideration, workers must meet the following pre-requisites:

1. Understand and promote Solomon Islands *here to work* attributes (hardworking, honest and reliable, fit and healthy, friendly and approachable, proactive and adoptable).
2. Valid Solomon Islands passport
3. Valid Police clearance
4. Must be aged between 21-45 years of age
5. Medical examination clearance

Step 1: Workers satisfy Labour Mobility Unit pre-screening requirements or, recruiters have.

Step 2: Compilation of database.

Step 3: Minister/Governor/ward member approves database.

Step 4: Recruitment Referral Hub organises mandatory documents.

Step 5: Labour Mobility Unit completes interviews and fitness testing for work-ready pool eligibility.

Step 6: Recruitment Referral Hub to complete candidate profiles and send all necessary documents to the Labour Mobility Unit. Affiliated costs to obtain required documents are paid by the worker.

Documents compiled by the Recruitment Referral Hub for the Labour Mobility Unit

- National identification birth certificate
- Passport and two passport photos of new candidate
- Police clearance (visa)
- Visa panel medical.

Mobilisation process

Step 1: Recognised Seasonal Employer Agreement to Recruit received and acknowledged by Head of the Labour Mobility Unit.

Step 2: Labour Mobility Unit officer is assigned the Agreement to Recruit request and contacts the Recognised Seasonal Employer.

Step 3: Labour Mobility Unit arranges a virtual meeting with the employer.

Step 4: Labour Mobility Unit uploads candidate profiles to Dropbox, these are based on attributes requested by the employer and emails the link to the employer to access.

Step 5: Employer either in person or via profiles finalises candidates and informs the Labour Mobility Unit.

Step 6: Labour Mobility Unit books panel medical on behalf of candidate.

Step 7: Candidate completes visa application form and signs offer of employment and deduction form.

Step 8: Labour Mobility Unit uploads complete and signed documents to Dropbox and emails the link to the employer to access.

Step 9: Labour Mobility Unit lodge visa applications and all mandatory documentation with the New Zealand Visa Application Centre in Port Moresby. The timeframe for visa assessment is ten working days on receipt of the Visa Application Centre receiving the visa application.

Step 10: Successful candidates are to undergo a two-day pre-departure briefing. A presentation is provided by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, it provides general information about New Zealand rules and regulations.

Step 11: Employers email flight details and itinerary to the Labour Mobility Unit.

Step 12: Labour Mobility Unit ensures workers are in receipt of all documentation before departure.

Step 13: Worker departs and Labour Mobility unit emails the employer to confirm departure.

Note: Re step 6: worker must have funds to cover panel doctor costs, or they will not be eligible to progress application.



Recruitment and worker eligibility

The Solomon Islands promotes the following attributes expected of workers:

- Hardworking
- Honest and reliable
- Fit and healthy
- Friendly and approachable
- Proactive and adoptable.

Workers must meet the following prerequisites:

- Hold a current Solomon Islands passport
- Have a valid Police clearance report
- Aged between 21-45 years
- Be able to pass a medical examination
- Physically fit and healthy.



Labour Mobility Unit designs a worker preparedness programme before workers are deployed.

Employment

- Understanding contract terms and conditions
- Deductions
- Worker and family bank accounts
- Worker and family goals
- Punctuality
- Following instructions
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Negotiation
- Dealing with conflict in the workplace
- Work Health and Safety.

General

- Nutrition
- Water and sanitation
- Family planning
- Menstrual hygiene
- Gender based violence
- Financial literacy.

What flights can be booked for workers?

Flights to and from the Solomon Islands include:

- Solomon Airways direct flights Auckland to Honiara (and vice versa)
- Air New Zealand direct flights from Auckland to Honiara (and vice versa)
- Flights via Australia
- Flights via Fiji

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 Recognised Seasonal Employer status:

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

The Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme is complex and to be able to support workers from diverse backgrounds, experiences and beliefs requires patience and understanding.

Workers may wish to participate/attend the following ceremonies:

- Church
- Funerals
- Weddings
- Independence Day – July
- Solomon Islands Aelan Pijin (language week).

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 in the Solomon Islands and New Zealand.
- Employers should take the 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 they are shy, fearful, 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 the 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 – use High Commission representatives to support content.

- If workers are all from different regions/provinces, 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.
- Discuss with workers their preference to work on Sunday's. Understanding workers' religious affiliation is strongly encouraged as for many workers this is their source of strength and motivation.
- Avoid making assumptions when workers do not reply immediately.
- Don't put down a team leader or someone of high status (chief) in front of the team. This may damage hierarchy status.
- Avoid derogatory words or gestures as this is a sign of disrespect and suggest the employer does not value their contribution to their business. There is a difference between being assertive and being disrespectful.
- Take the time to ensure workers understand company work values and practices.
- Never house men and women in the same accommodation or have them sharing bathroom facilities. Be sensitive to cultural appropriation of the different 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 the severity of the case, reach out to the following people for support:
 - Immigration New Zealand Recognised Seasonal Employer engagement partners
 - High Commission representative
 - Labour Mobility Unit
- Depending on the matter, reach out to a family member of the worker.
- Be patient and respectful when explaining things to the workers. What an employer sees as normal, may appear foreign for workers.



Other considerations

- Staying in touch with families at home in the Solomon Islands is important as is staying in touch with Solomon Islands workers around New Zealand.
- There are many cultural differences in traditions and customs in the Solomon Islands particularly around kinship and clan ties.
- Be careful when selecting leaders from different districts/provinces – discuss amongst the workers your reasons for selecting.
- Dress appropriately and research the customs and relations between men and women from the villages/regions you recruit from.
- Do not encourage shared living arrangements between men and women. This is not common practice back in the Solomon Islands.
- Consider where workers can access traditional food. Staples include root vegetables like taro and cassava, fresh seafood and fruit such as coconuts and pineapple.
- Barter and alternative forms of currency such as shell money are still practiced. Workers may require support to manage their money appropriately.

Note: Many of the workers are recruited from rural or outer villages. They will not have been exposed to things they will see/or have access to in New Zealand. Many of the men would not be expected to cook, clean or make their own beds as this is the responsibility of others back home.

Process for employers when a worker dies while in New Zealand

1. Handle the situation with care and sensitivity particularly around family members of the deceased worker.
2. Reach out to Pacific High Commission representatives to understand cultural protocols and government requirements.
3. The definition of family member extends more than their immediate family.
4. You may come across involvement of a church pastor or chief of the village or family who 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 sit with the wider family.
6. Communication to other teams to refrain from sharing information about the deceased on social media until the family has been informed.
7. Depending on cause of death, the employer, will need to be aware of insurance and ACC policies and the support available for the deceased worker's family.
8. During the entire process keep the Labour Mobility Unit/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 of each country and what the families of the deceased want 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:

Step 1: Report the death

Employer to inform:

- 1.1 The next-of-kin immediately. 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 requirements.
- 1.3 Medical insurance providers and arrange for a pre-approved insurance quote for body repatriation to country of origin or New Zealand burial.

Depending on the country's protocols inform:

- **The Labour Mobility Unit** – they will require information including the name of the deceased, date/place/cause of death etc. This will assist them with their briefing to the respective Minister(s).
- **The Office of the High Commission** – RSE workers are non-citizens of New Zealand and therefore it is important the Heads of Mission are informed of the passing of one of their citizens. They will also provide support around government protocols, translation and /or cultural advice.

Note: Protocols and processes will vary, and remedial intervention will be necessary depending on circumstances surrounding the death. 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 deceased worker's benefits and entitlements.

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

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

Step 4: Payroll and benefits

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 representatives/spokesperson of the deceased to obtain advice.

Note: Employers may witness customs and practices that are not aligned to beliefs/customs.

Step 6: Transportation

The employer in conjunction with the insurance provider is to facilitate travel arrangements for one family member from the Solomon Islands to accompany the deceased worker.

Note: The employer may choose to travel with the deceased worker and family. The selected official may also accompany the worker back home.



What do you need to do before visiting the Solomon Islands?

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

Things to note:

1. Gifts are sometimes exchanged at meetings
2. Dress respectfully when meeting with officials and visiting provinces or families of workers.
3. 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.
4. Inform the Labour Mobility Unit of your visit including your agenda/itinerary.
5. Driving is on the left-hand side.

Useful words/phrases to enhance communication with Solomon Island workers

Hello/Hi – Halo

Good morning – Mone

Goodbye – Gutbae

Have a nice day – Naes de fo iu

Please – Plis

Thank you – Tagio

Extended family or clan – laen

Yes – yes or ya ba

No – no or nomoa



Scan the QR code for more words.



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