

Pharmacy Teams Relief Fund Policy and Process

Fourth Tranche (August to December 2021)

Purpose

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a significant increase in workload for community pharmacy teams. The purpose of the Pharmacy Team Relief Fund (the Fund) is to provide targeted relief for community pharmacy teams (pharmacists / technicians) who are in need of a break due to the extra work resulting from the pandemic.

Introduction

2. The Ministry of Health (the Ministry) has provided a further fund of \$0.5 million (the Fund) for the Pharmacy Council (the Council) to administer for workload relief of over-stretched pharmacy teams.
3. The key objectives expected by the Ministry include:
 - a. Use of the funds until they run out, or until 30 December 2021, whichever comes first. Any funds left over are to be returned to the Ministry.
 - b. For the benefit of targeted pharmacy teams, especially:
 - with pharmacists and/or technicians self-isolating
 - providing services to communities with significant Māori and/or Pacific peoples patient bases
 - with early-career pharmacists
 - in remote areas
 - in high deprivation areas
4. It is acknowledged that the administration of this Fund does not necessarily fit with Council's usual business within the pharmacy sector. The Council is confident that actions taken to separate the administration of the fund from the Council's regulatory arm, will allay any concerns in the sector about the Council's role in bringing relief to over-stretched community pharmacy teams.

Eligibility Criteria

5. The Fund is primarily targeted to pharmacy teams (practising pharmacist(s) and/or technician(s)) working in independently owned or franchised community pharmacies. They will meet **one or more** of the following criteria:
 - a. Community pharmacy, particularly:
 - i. Pharmacists already (or have had to) self isolate
 - ii. With a significant Māori and/or Pacific peoples base
 - iii. In a high deprivation area
 - iv. Providing Clozapine dispensing and/or opioid substitution treatment
 - v. Remote location (estimate of how far away the next nearest pharmacy is)
 - b. Early career pharmacists (10 years or fewer since graduating)
 - c. Have experienced demonstrable causes and/or symptoms of stress since Monday 16 August 2021, particularly:
 - i. Regularly working as sole charge
 - ii. Those who have indicators of stress

Policy and Process

- iii. Worked (or working) excessive hours over a prolonged period of time
- d. The pharmacy owner/employer (the employer) has difficulty finding locum cover.

Fund Administration

6. The Fund will be administered using a high trust model requiring a declaratory statement by the employer, and evidence that those employed for relief are employed and remunerated as expected.
7. Council's Fund administration costs will be met by the Fund and are expected to be in the order of 5 percent of the Fund.

Fund Principles

8. The Council encourages pharmacists and their employers to be considerate of each other's relief needs. Barriers to receiving a benefit from the Fund have been reduced as much as possible by Council. Council expects employers to enable, as much as possible, relief provided by the Fund to benefit an employer's pharmacy team.
9. The Council trusts that the information provided in an application for pharmacy team relief is true and correct. The information provided in an application should be able to withstand scrutiny, in the event a check is made, with corresponding information being obtainable from the pharmacy.
10. Council strongly encourages employers to employ pharmacy relief team members (pharmacist(s) and/or technician(s)) at, or above, the minimum rates outlined in Section 24. Any amount above these rates is at the discretion of, and cost to the employer. The intention of the Fund is that rates are paid out in full to the pharmacy relief team members. The benefit of the fund to the employer is that relief is provided to their own pharmacy team; the benefit to a pharmacy relief team member is that they are fairly paid for their services, and their flexibility in providing those services.

Application Principles

11. Applicants may be community pharmacy owners/employers (employers) or community pharmacist employees. Pharmacist employees will make a joint application with their employers to engage relief for their own pharmacy team.
12. Once a pharmacy has a successful application to the fourth tranche, no further application for that pharmacy should be made. **If you applied and gained funding through the previous relief fund (i.e., before 30 June 2021) you may now also apply for this fund.**
13. The Council will prioritise applications based on the Fund criteria and follow a robust decision-making process.

Policy and Process

Process

Fund Application Invitation

14. Invitations to apply for relief will be sent to all practising pharmacists via email.

Application

15. An application form will be submitted either by an employer, or jointly by a pharmacist and their employer. The application will advise the Fund administrators of the type and extent of relief being sought.

16. Applications will be evaluated by:

- a. Prioritising applications according to the criteria by assessing the metrics provided by applicants, the number of criteria met, and the supporting information.
- b. Assessing the quantity of funding required for each application.
- c. Higher priority applications are expected to be successful.

17. An employer may apply to use a known pharmacist(s) and/or technician(s) for relief services. An estimate of any reimbursable accommodation and/or travel costs required by them will be advised by the employer on the application form.

18. An employer may apply for a pharmacy relief team to provide services. In this case, the Fund administrators will provide C.V.s of suggested pharmacist(s) and/or technician(s) to the employer. The employer will advise the Fund administrators of estimates of any reimbursable accommodation needs and/or travel costs for the pharmacy relief team once the employer has contacted the pharmacy relief team members about their requirements.

19. The Fund administrators will make the best endeavours to suggest pharmacy relief teams to employers, where and when requested. However, it is not possible to guarantee that pharmacy relief teams will always be available for requested dates.

20. Notification of successful or unsuccessful applications will be sent to applicants via email.

21. Successful applications are those who meet sufficient criteria, and are allocated funds, for relief. If the funds are required for pharmacy teams with a higher need, we will advise you that your application has been unsuccessful.

Reimbursement Agreement

22. The Council will offer a Reimbursement Agreement to employers whose applications are successful. The Reimbursement Agreement will include the name(s), dates and hours relief teams will work, accommodation allowances claimable, as well as the maximum travel costs the Fund will reimburse. Once the agreement is signed and returned to the Fund administrators, the employer may make arrangements for relief with the pharmacist(s) and/or technician(s).

23. The employer will provide the pharmacist(s) and/or technician(s) with an employment/services contract. The contract will include the hourly pay rate, and any

Policy and Process

accommodation compensation and/or travel costs to be paid/covered by the employer.

24. The maximum rates the Fund will reimburse to the employer on presentation of a valid tax invoice (with a copy of relief team member's employment/services contract, and supporting invoices / receipts where necessary):
 - a. For a pharmacist providing relief, \$55.00 per hour (plus GST)
 - b. For a technician providing relief, \$27.00 per hour (plus GST)
 - c. For accommodation and food, either for a relief pharmacist or technician, a flat rate of \$200/person/night allowance (inclusive of GST)
 - d. For distances over 20km each way, to and from, the pharmacy, \$0.79/kilometre in a private car (as per IRD rates)
 - e. For extensive travel, as agreed by the Fund administrators, reimbursement will be made to the employer on presentation of a valid tax invoice with supporting receipts.
25. These are the minimum rates the employer should include in the employment/services contract offered to relief pharmacist(s) or technicians. Any amount above these rates is at the discretion of, and cost to, the employer.
26. In the event an employment/services contract states lower pay rates than those outlined in Section 24 the lower amount will be reimbursed to the employer. The Fund is for the benefit of over-stretched pharmacy relief teams, not pharmacy businesses. Council expects employers to ensure that the amount reimbursed is paid in full to relief pharmacy team members (Note however, an employer can pay the employee more but will only be reimbursed the maximum. The employer will need to pay the difference).
27. Once the pharmacy employer has received pharmacy team relief services, they will send the following to Council with their request for reimbursement:
 - a. an itemised tax invoice (including copies of relief team members' payroll records),
 - b. a bank account deposit form confirming the bank account for payment
 - c. copy of the employment/services contract(s), signed by both parties,
 - d. copy of any travel related tax invoices / receipts, (accommodation is paid at a flat rate; no receipts are required)
 - e. a short summary (2-3 sentences) of how the relief services were used, for example, general tasks and which pharmacy team role(s) benefitted from the relief (this is a requirement as it forms part of Council's reporting obligations to the Ministry of Health; the information will be shared in aggregate and no identifying details will be shared with the Ministry).

Council will then reimburse the employer from the Fund as soon as possible - expected within 7 days of the tax invoice and supporting evidence being received. (Claim documents received after Wednesday 15 December 2021, maybe paid out in January 2022.)

Policy and Process

Pharmacist or Technician Providing Services

28. The Fund administrators will seek offers to provide pharmacy services from pharmacists and technicians via email.
29. Pharmacists providing services will have the following:
 - a. Registered, with a current practising certificate
 - b. At least 3 years' community pharmacy experience
 - c. Extra services training beneficial
30. Technicians will have the following:
 - a. New Zealand Certificate in Pharmacy – Pharmacy Technician, level 5 or above
 - b. At least 2 years' experience in community pharmacy work
31. Where an employer has requested that the Fund administrators suggest pharmacist(s) and/or technician(s) to provide pharmacy relief services, the Fund administrator will endeavour to team up a pharmacist and technician, as a pharmacy relief team, to provide services to the employer. These will mostly be allocated according to location.
32. Once the employer, and the pharmacy relief team, have mutually accepted the assignment of services, the employer will provide the pharmacy relief team members with employment/services contracts. Minimum expected pay rates and reimbursable accommodation allowance/travel costs are outlined in Section 24.
33. Other terms and conditions of the employment/services contract are a matter entirely between the employer and any pharmacist or technician who is offered the contract. Neither Council, nor the Fund administrators, will be involved in any way, or make any comment or judgement on the contents of employment/service contracts offered.

Accommodation and travel

34. General expectations are that accommodation could be required where more than an hour and a half's travel would be incurred each way, for providing pharmacy relief services to a pharmacy. Where the Fund administrators agree, a flat-rate accommodation and food allowance of \$200.00 per person, per night will be reimbursed to the employer.
35. If a pharmacist/technician is required to travel more than 20km each way to the pharmacy receiving relief, the employer is able to claim mileage at the IRD rate of \$0.79/kilometre on their behalf.
36. Estimated costs of significant travel such as flights and/or rental cars will be provided by the employer to the Fund administrators; reimbursement will be made to the employer when the invoice and required documents are presented with copies of supporting travel tax invoices / receipts. The Council expects this need will be minimal.
37. The Council expects the full benefits of allowances and travel compensation to be passed on to the relief pharmacist or technician.