



BRIEFING

Update to the Group Allocation criteria and timeline for the next group allocation package

Date:	14 May 2021	Priority:	Medium
Security classification:		Tracking number:	2021-3639

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Chris Hipkins Minister for COVID-19 Response	Agree to the updated group allocation criteria and approval process Refer this briefing to members of the Border Exceptions Ministerial Group	21 May 2021

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)				
Name	Position	Telephone		1st contact
Privacy of natural persons	Manager, Allocation and Supply	Privacy of natural persons		✓
	Senior Advisor, Allocation and Supply			

The following departments/agencies have been consulted

Minister's office to complete:

Approved

Declined

Noted

Needs change

Seen

Overtaken by Events

See Minister's Notes

Withdrawn

Comments



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Purpose

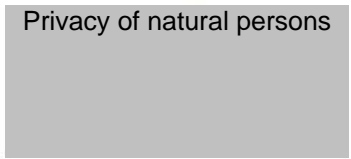
To seek your approval for updating the MIQ group allocation criteria so it continues to be fit for purpose.

Recommended action

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment recommends that you:

- a **Note** you agreed in February to a process and criteria for determining MIQ group allocations [2021-1728 refers]. *Noted*
- b **Note** that officials have reviewed and updated the group allocations process and criteria to ensure they remain fit for purpose. *Noted*
- c **Agree** to the new proposed criteria for group allocations in this briefing. Agree / Disagree
- d **Note** that once finalised, MBIE will publish the groups criteria and a list of previously agreed group allocations on the MBIE website as is required in the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Managed Isolation and Quarantine) Order 2020. *Noted*
- e **Note** due to peaks in demand, the group allocation 'cap' of 400-500 rooms is temporarily exceeded a number of times in the June-October period, but the average number of rooms used by group allocations over the period remains under the cap. *Noted*
- f **Refer** this briefing to other members of the Border Exceptions Ministerial Group. Agree / Disagree
- g **Agree** that this briefing be proactively released with any appropriate withholdings under the Official Information Act 1993 Agree / Disagree

Privacy of natural persons



Manager, Allocation and Supply
MIQ Policy, MBIE
14 / 05 / 2021

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

28 / 5 / 2021

Background

1. You agreed to a process and criteria for determining group MIQ allocations in February 2021 [2021-1728 refers]. This process was put in place to manage the large volume of requests MBIE and ministers received for the manual allocation of MIQ vouchers to groups.
2. The group allocation criteria have been used by officials to provide advice to ministers on group allocation requests. However, there have been occasions where groups had good grounds for being allocated space, but did not meet the strict group allocation criteria. For example, the workers arriving for the Construction Sector Accord MIQ allocation will not arrive “as a single unit”, which is currently a requirement.
3. The COVID-19 Public Health Response (Isolation and Quarantine) Order 2020 was amended in April 2021 to increase the transparency of the allocation process. Criteria for all offline allocations (that is, allocations unable to be booked via the Managed Isolation Allocation System) must be published online.
4. We consider it timely to revise the group allocation criteria prior to the next package of group allocation requests being considered by Border Ministers in July and before the criteria are published online.

Changes to criteria and process

5. Officials have reviewed the group allocations process and criteria to ensure they remain fit for purpose. This has included seeking feedback from agencies who have applied for group allocations.
6. Officials propose the criteria for group allocations are changed as follows.

Current Criteria	Proposed Criteria
<p>Mandatory criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports implementation of a government priority • Entry is time sensitive and must be on specific date or period • Group must complete isolation as single unit <p>Plus at least one of the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group has additional needs (e.g. training, linguistic) that require specific resources or wrap around services • Size/scale of the group means manual allocation is more efficient for MIQ 	<p>Mandatory criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group has a sponsoring agency • Group needs more than 20 rooms • Group’s entry is time sensitive OR the reason they need to leave New Zealand is time sensitive and they need certainty of return before departing • Group needs to enter as a single unit OR there is no reasonable alternative pathway for them • Group is a Government priority

Key changes in proposed criteria

Proposed criteria	Current criteria	Rationale for change
Group has a sponsoring agency		Groups are already required to have a sponsoring agency – this helps to support

		prioritisation within sectors [2021-1728 refers]. The proposed criteria now reflects this requirement.
Group needs more than 20 rooms	At least one of the following factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size/scale of the group means manual allocation is more efficient for MIQ • Group has additional needs (e.g. training, linguistic) that require specific resources or wrap around services 	The inclusion of a specific minimum room count provides greater clarity to interested groups. While groups with additional needs will likely remain key users of group allocations, removing this as an alternative to minimum size requirements will support efficiency and provides more flexibility for ministers' allocation decisions.
Group's entry is time sensitive OR <u>the reason they need to leave New Zealand is time sensitive and they need certainty of return before departing</u>	Entry is time sensitive and must be on specific date or period	Some groups support Government priorities through participation in overseas events and require certainty of timely return – for example, New Zealand's participation in Expo 2020, or New Zealand sports teams playing overseas.
Group needs to enter as a single unit OR <u>there is no reasonable alternative pathway for them</u>	Group must complete isolation as single unit	Some groups that support Government priorities have required the efficiency and certainty of group allocations without necessarily arriving as single unit – for example, travellers to the Winter Games

Providing more clarity around the 'Government priority' criterion

7. To provide more clarity around the requirement that groups are 'Government priorities', officials propose to use the following criteria, which have been adapted from criteria agreed to as grounds for allowing name changes [2021-2771 refers]:

<p>To be considered a Government priority, groups must meet one of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National interest: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The returnees are usually based in New Zealand and are returning from representing New Zealand at an international event or activity of national interest; or
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- The persons who are visiting New Zealand are essential to holding an event or activity considered to be in the national interest
- Economic impact:
 - The group is travelling to support delivery of a major investment (> \$100m) and/or a priority in the Major Events portfolio
 - The purpose for which the group is travelling is expected to generate significant economic or employment activity
- National security or obligations under international law or international relations:
 - The purpose for which the group is travelling is considered essential for New Zealand's national security, obligations under international law or international relations.

Changes to application process

8. Group allocation requests were presented in thematic packages to the Border Exceptions Ministerial Group for the first time at its meeting on 19 April. These packages presented a number of alternative ways of using all group allocation spaces over a given time period.
9. This approach allows Ministers to evaluate requests in relation to each other and make decisions on how all rooms within the group allocation should be assigned at one time.
10. The packages approach will continue to be used going forward. MBIE has asked agencies to submit Expressions of Interests for future group allocation from **17 May to 11 June**. Officials will not consider any 'late submissions' after this deadline unless approved by you. Similar to the budget process, these strict deadlines are required to give officials sufficient time to assess applications and develop package options for ministers to consider.
11. Expressions of Interest are for the period **November 2021-March 2022**. Ministers will consider packages of these requests at the Border Exceptions Ministerial Group in July. You may wish to update your colleagues on this timeline as there continues to be strong interest in additional group allocations.

Group allocation cap

12. Ministers made decisions in April on how to allocate spaces for groups from June to October which included increasing the number of spaces in the group allocation to 500 for July-September, 450 for October and 400 on an ongoing basis [2021-3123 refers].
13. However, due to a number of last-minute changes, such as an increase to the size of the refugee group allocation, and changes to the entry dates of some groups, the cap will be temporarily exceeded on a number of occasions. A graph representing the use of the group allocation is attached in Annex One.
14. These peaks in demand can be managed operationally. When averaged across the June-October period, group allocations remain within the 400-500 room limit.

Next steps

15. If you agree to the new proposed criteria, officials will communicate them to agencies to support the upcoming group allocation EOI process for the November 2021-March 2022 period. We hope to release an updated EOI form on 17 May incorporating the new criteria.
16. The agreed criteria and a list of previous agreed group allocation decisions will be added to the MBIE website as required by the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Isolation and Quarantine) Order 2020.

Annexes

17. Annex One: Group allocation as at 10 May 2021

