



Australian Government

# Workforce Australia

## Mutual obligations for freelancers or self-employed workers

This fact sheet provides advice to freelance or self-employed workers on the various tasks and activities that can contribute to earning points towards a monthly points requirement. If you receive certain Centrelink payments, you will have a mutual obligation requirement. If you are a Workforce Australia participant, your mutual obligation requirements are met through the Points Based Activation System (PBAS), which is referred to as your points requirement. Your points requirement includes a points target and job search requirement (if applicable). For more information please visit: [What are mutual obligations requirements](#) and [If you're a freelancer or self-employed](#).

### Examples of freelance or self-employed work

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Freelance photographer</li><li>• Freelance designer</li><li>• Writer</li><li>• Visual artist</li><li>• Musician or music industry worker</li><li>• Actor or screen industry worker</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Business owner who runs a market stall</li><li>• Tutor or instructor</li><li>• Sports coach or trainer</li><li>• Commissioned or project-based work</li><li>• Small business owners</li><li>• Other sources of irregular income</li></ul> |
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### Types of job searches that count towards your points requirement

As part of meeting your mutual obligation requirements, you may be required to apply for a variety of suitable paid work. This may include paid work that is full-time, part-time, casual, short term, project-based or long term in nature.

Job searches that count towards your monthly points requirement **include contacting a potential employer (or person) about any potential suitable paid work opportunity**, regardless of if the paid work is advertised or not.

You can earn 5 points for this type of job search, in the same way you could for handing in a resume or doing a job application online. For further information please refer to the Workforce Australia website: [If you must apply for jobs](#)

### Job search examples

- Applying for a grant.
- Contacting the owner of a local venue for a music gig.
- Submitting an application or portfolio for a creative arts project.
- Approaching a publisher with a new manuscript to publish.
- Contacting a potential client who has posted an ad for some one-off web design work.
- Submitting a detailed submission for new project work
- An application to complete commissioned work
- First time submitting a registration with companies such as Uber, MadPaws and Fiverr to receive freelance work
- Submitting an application to run a stall at a market
- Approaching a curator to discuss a paid art exhibition opportunity
- Applying to operate a food truck at a festival or events

## Activities that count as an interview

Interviews include activities that you need to do to get paid work. For example, auditioning for a role in a paid local production would be considered 'attending an interview', and you can earn 25 points towards your points target. This is because an audition has a similar purpose to a job interview. You're meeting with an employer to show them you can do the role.

### Interview examples

- An audition for a local paid production.
- Auditioning for a paid position in a local band.
- Meeting with a publisher to discuss your new manuscript.
- Working or meeting with a client to develop or secure a commissioned artwork.
- Having a zoom meeting with a potential client for your small business to discuss the services you offer.
- Subsequent work on a proposal where a participant was required to answer more in-depth questions on a proposal, where it could be considered similar to a subsequent interview
- A presentation to a client or committee/board
- Meeting with a curator as a result of a successful arts application submission

## Starting a job and how to report your work

If you are **offered and accept any suitable paid work, you can earn 50 points** towards your points target for your reporting period. This includes contract work and non-ongoing opportunities.

For more information please refer to the Workforce Australia website: [Accept job offers](#)

### Examples of starting a new job

- Commencing a new project based paid work opportunity with a new client
- Receiving paid freelance work for the first time through companies such as Uber, MadPaws, Fiverr
- Commencing an ongoing music gig at a venue
- Commenced working on a new theatre production
- Commenced a new self-employment trade or other small business
- Commencing work on an ongoing basis as a photographer for a new studio
- Consultancy work for a new firm or organisation

Depending on how you're paid, you may need to calculate how many points are counted towards your points target under the **sufficient work test**. If your hourly rate of pay:

- is **at or above legal minimum wage**: You can report the total hours you worked. Check the award rate for your industry using the [Fair Work Ombudsman's Pay Calculator \(www.calculate.fairwork.gov.au/FindYourAward\)](http://www.calculate.fairwork.gov.au/FindYourAward).
- works out to be **below minimum wage**: You can only report the equivalent hours you worked based on your income according to the national minimum wage. See the example below.

Administrative tasks required to be completed by freelance or self-employed workers for the purposes of generating an income may count as paid work for the purposes of mutual obligation requirements under the sufficient work test, depending on how you are paid. Administrative tasks may include managing a social media account, negotiating a new contract for paid work or updating a website.

### Sufficient work test examples

#### Example 1

A local community centre commissioned Lillian to produce a painting. They paid her \$400 and it took her 25 hours to complete the painting over a month. This means Lillian earned \$16 per hour ( $\$400 \div 25$  hours).

This works out to be **below the national minimum wage** of \$21.38 per hour. This means Lillian needs to use the 'sufficient work test' to work out **how many hours of work she can report** to meet her Points Target. Paid work is worth 5 points per 5 hours and is rounded up to the nearest 5-hour mark.

Using the national minimum wage, Lillian's equivalent hours of work is 18.7 hours for the reporting period ( $\$400 \div \$21.38 = 18.7$  hours). She can round this up and **report 20 hours of work in the reporting period**. This earns her 20 points towards her points target.

#### Example 2

Jonathan is a freelance photographer and completed photography work for a wedding. Jonathan was paid \$8000 for the work. Administrative task related the wedding included:

- Managing social media account – 2 hours
- Updating and maintaining website content – 1 hour
- Meeting with the prospective couple – 5 hours
- Wedding day – 6 hours
- Photo editing and retouching – 15 hours
- Invoicing and payments – 1 hour
- Updating portfolio – 3 hours

Jonathan worked a total of 33 hours, which included administrative tasks for the purposes of generating new work as well as work for his current client. This mean Jonathan earned \$242.42 per hour ( $\$8000 \div 33$  hours) which is **above the national minimum wage**. Jonathon can report the hours he worked towards his Points Target. Paid work is worth 5 points per 5 hours and is rounded up to the nearest 5-hour mark. Jonathan can round up his hours to 35 hours.

An appointment with your provider (if you have one) should not interfere with undertaking paid work. This includes irregular or freelance work.

You can [update your Calendar](#) using the Workforce Australia app or website to show your availability. Your provider can see this, so they know about any prior commitments you have before booking an appointment. If you can't go to the appointment, you must call your provider straight away to reschedule. Contact the National Customer Service Line on 1800 805 260 or at [NationalCustomerServiceLine@dewr.gov.au](mailto:NationalCustomerServiceLine@dewr.gov.au) if you need more help.

For online participants where assistance is needed, please contact the Digital Services Contact Centre on 1800 314 677 or by email at [digitalservices@dewr.gov.au](mailto:digitalservices@dewr.gov.au).

#### Example

Sayed sees an ad seeking a digital web content creator to create a website. It's for a start-up company. He contacts the person advertising the project. **This counts as a job search effort and Sayed earns 5 points.**

The person says they would like to meet with Sayed via a video or phone call. Sayed meets with them to discuss his previous experience in web content creation and show some of his previous work. **This counts as an interview and Sayed earns 25 points.**

Sayed is successful at winning the project at the end of the video call. **He accepts the work and earns 50 points.**

Overall, Sayed **earned 80 points** through getting this work. 5 points (job search) + 25 points (interview) + 50 points (accepting a paid job).

If the work took Sayed 20 hours to complete over his reporting period and he earned \$500 from it, **he could report an extra 20 points** (5 points for every 5 hours of paid work rounded up). This is because his hourly rate is \$25 per hour ( $\$500 \div 20$  hours = \$25 per hour), which is above the minimum wage.

## Counting voluntary work towards your points target

Voluntary work is another way you can meet your requirements. Participants undertaking voluntary work as part of their mutual obligation requirements can only volunteer at eligible volunteer work host organisations. Eligible volunteer work host organisations are not-for-profit organisations, government agencies or not-for-profit arms of for-profit organisations. Voluntary work can count for:

- 15 points per week for up to 15 hours and 20 points per week for over 15 hours, if it's sourced through your provider
- 5 points for 5 hours, up to a maximum of 10 points per Points Reporting Period, if you source the work yourself.

For more information on voluntary , please refer to the Workforce Australia website: [Volunteer in the community](#)

You can also find out more about the points values for different activities on the [How to earn points](#).

### Voluntary work examples

- Volunteering at a community organisation that is hosting an art exhibition.
- Build shelving for an office of a local charity which is a registered voluntary organisation.
- Leading tours for visitors at a local attraction on behalf of a local historical society.