



# **Request for Information (RFI)**

## **Cochlear Implant Services**

**RFI released:**

**04 July 2025**

**Deadline for Questions:**

**21 July 2025**

**Deadline for Responses:**

**12pm 01 August 2025**

**Reference ID: 31988574**

Disability Support Services  
Ministry of Social Development  
[Disability Support Services](#)  
56 The Terrace, Wellington  
New Zealand

## The information we require

This RFI is issued by Disability Support Services (DSS), Ministry of Social Development referred to below as “the Buyer” or “we” or “us” or “DSS”.

DSS is seeking information from qualified providers of cochlear implant (CI) services in New Zealand. The services include, for example, assessment, prioritisation, surgery, device hardware, habilitation/rehabilitation and associated follow-up services across the recipient's lifetime.

Responses to this RFI will be used to assess current service models, market capacity/capabilities and innovations to inform potential future procurement approaches and support strategic planning for cochlear implant services.

This RFI is issued solely for information-gathering and planning purposes and does not constitute a commitment to procure any services.

## What we need

Cochlear implants are critical for people with severe to profound hearing loss who derive limited benefit from hearing aids. The New Zealand Government funds cochlear implant services to improve communication abilities and quality of life.

As demand increases and technology evolves, DSS is reviewing service delivery and funding models to ensure equitable, timely and sustainable access across the country. DSS is exploring how service delivery can be enhanced to ensure high-quality outcomes and optimal use of public funds.

Through this RFI, we aim to:

- Understand the current cochlear implant service landscape in New Zealand.
- Identify potential innovations in service delivery and workforce development.
- Assess provider capacity, quality assurance systems, and ability to deliver value for money for some or all components of the service.
- Inform future procurement processes with a focus on high-quality, equitable, culturally responsive and cost-effective lifelong care that is person and whānau centred, clinically integrated and sustainably delivered.

## What we don't want

We are not at this stage requesting quotes or proposals. We are seeking to improve our knowledge on matters such as: what is available in the market and what suppliers are active in this area.

## Why should you respond?

This RFI is your opportunity to help shape the future of cochlear implant services in New Zealand. By responding, your organisation can:

- Influence service design and funding priorities before formal procurement begins.
- Showcase your strengths, innovations, and value-for-money models.

- Inform DSS about your service and its capacity to contribute to cochlear implant services provision in New Zealand.
- Strengthen your partnership with government agencies committed to improving equity and access.
- Contribute to a nationally consistent, high-quality, person and whānau centred service that supports people with severe to profound hearing loss across their lifespan.

## A bit about us

DSS funds and oversees a range of support services for disabled people with long-term physical, intellectual, or sensory impairments to enable these people to live as independently as possible. We are responsible for providing essential disability support to around 50,000 disabled people and their whānau, as well as environmental supports, including equipment and modification services, for approximately 100,000 New Zealanders.

Our immediate priorities are to stabilise and strengthen our operations, while planning for a sustainable disability support system for the future.

## SECTION 1: Key Information

### 1.1 Context

This Request for Information (RFI) seeks information that will help us determine our requirements for the cochlear implant service contract opportunity.

Following this RFI, DSS will decide on what procurement process it will follow.

### 1.2 Our timeline (NZ Standard)

Deadline for Questions from respondents:	3pm 21 July 2025
Deadline for DSS to answer questions:	3pm 24 July 2025
<b>Deadline for responses</b>	<b>12pm 01 August 2025</b>

### 1.3 How to contact us

Contact us via email or the Government Electronic Tenders Service (GETS) [www.gets.govt.nz](http://www.gets.govt.nz) or email: [dss\\_commissioning@msd.govt.nz](mailto:dss_commissioning@msd.govt.nz)

### 1.4 Developing and submitting your information

- This is not a tender process.
- Take time to read and understand the RFI. In particular, understand our requirements. These are in Section 2 of this document.
- If you have questions, ask before the Deadline for Questions (see 1.2 above).
- Submit your response before the Deadline for Responses using the Response Form provided.

### 1.5 Address for submitting your response

Submit your response through GETS: [www.gets.govt.nz](http://www.gets.govt.nz)

### 1.6 Later changes to the RFI or RFI process

- After publishing the RFI, if we need to change anything or provide additional information we will let all respondents know by placing a notice on GETS at [www.gets.govt.nz](http://www.gets.govt.nz).
- If you downloaded the RFI from GETS you will automatically receive notifications of any changes through GETS.

## SECTION 2: Our requirements

### 2.1 Background

This request relates to the provision of cochlear implant (CI) services in New Zealand.

DSS is seeking information from the market to inform the future procurement of a comprehensive, nationally delivered cochlear implant service. This service is for children and adults with severe to profound hearing loss in both ears who meet clinical and funding eligibility. The current Disability Support Services Tier Two Service Specification - DSSC107 Cochlear Implant Services linked here for your reference: [Disability Support Services Tier Two Service Specification - DSSC107 Cochlear Implant Services](#) (with some minor changes to reflect change in funders).

A total of 166 implants are funded (120 implants for adults and 46 implants for children) per year.

As this is a service that supports the person for their whole life, the total number of people in New Zealand who are supported by the cochlear implant programme as of 30 June 2024 is 2155.

DSS welcomes creative, future-focused, and equity-enhancing approaches.

### 2.2 Key outcomes

This RFI relates to the possible purchase of cochlear implant services. The following principles are being used to guide the approach to this activity:

- Ease of access: Disabled people, their family and whānau have local access to cochlear implants and local ongoing support services.
- Evidence based decisions: The design of the ongoing services will reflect the current market and contribute to stabilising disability support services by engaging the market to inform decisions, promoting efficiency gains and increase transparency.
- Equitable referrals: Promoting equity, consistency, and fairness through an agreed national model for referrals, is culturally responsive, and delivers transparency through regular engagements, consistent performance measures.
- Stabilisation: Through long term contractual arrangements, we can stabilise the process and quality of service for the person at the centre and stabilise funding commitments for DSS.

Through this RFI we are looking to:

- Undertake market research and horizon scanning to understand what other delivery models exist.
- Understand emerging market trends, what other suppliers are in the market, their size and experience and explore general interest in this space.
- Understand how we might be able to expand CI access through improved outreach and awareness with a focus on increasing uptake by different population groups.
- Explore innovative funding approaches.

## 2.3 Scope

We are seeking information about the following areas in relation to cochlear implant services. Respondents are welcome to provide information on what is relevant to them. This could be one or multiple areas below. Please respond using the questions in the response template.

### 1. Assessment Services

- Audiological, medical and psychological assessment to determine suitability.
- Use of Clinical Priority Access Criteria (CPAC) and nationally approved Clinical Protocols.

### 2. Surgery and ENT Services

- Pre-operative diagnostic (CT/X-ray), ENT assessment, cochlear implant surgery.
- Coordination of hospital stay and post-operative care.

### 3. Audiology Services

- Speech-processor fitting (switch-on), programming, verification and validation.
- Ongoing device management and trouble-shooting.

### 4. Rehabilitation Services (Adults)

- Person-centred support to restore listening and communication ability.
- Linkages to employment, social and community participation.

### 5. Habilitation Services (Children)

- Development of receptive and expressive language in collaboration with whānau, educators and early intervention services.
- Home, clinic and school based outreach service delivery.

### 6. Hardware provision and ongoing management

- Procurement of cochlear implants (devices) using best practice and cost-effective methods.
- Management of repairs, spare parts, batteries (for children) and speech processor replacements.

### 7. Accessibility and Equity

- Services that are geographically accessible, with outreach capability for rural and underserved populations.
- Ideas or information about how the service can work in partnership to improve engagement, trust and outcomes for tāngata whaikaha Māori and Deaf people including Turi Māori.
- Delivery practices that are culturally responsive, particularly for the Deaf community including Turi Māori and population groups with high needs.

### 8. General innovation

- Training approaches that improve clinical, cultural and disability responsiveness.
- Service innovations (e.g. telehealth, digital rehabilitation).

- Potential models that might strengthen integration between health, education and disability support systems to reduce service fragmentation especially at key transition points.
- Potential digital platforms or mobile apps to support rehabilitation, progress tracking, follow up appointments and user self-management.
- Examples of design or partnership models with disabled people, families and communities to shape services.

## SECTION 3: RFI Terms

Respondents must review the RFI and any referenced materials, submit their response using the provided RFI Response Form, and ensure all requested information is included. They must identify and address any risks and clearly state assumptions or dependencies that may affect obligations or pricing.

Questions must be submitted before the deadline, with any commercially sensitive content clearly marked, and may be withdrawn at any time. Confidentiality must be maintained by both parties, subject to legal obligations such as the [Official Information Act 1982](#) and the [Privacy Act 2020](#).

Respondents bear their own costs and retain intellectual property in their responses. Submission of a response does not create a contract, but certain obligations, including confidentiality and accuracy, are binding. The Buyer may amend or cancel the RFI and is not liable for any loss incurred during the process, except in cases of confidentiality breaches or IP infringement.

## Definitions

In relation to the RFI the following words and expressions have the meanings described below.

Buyer	The government agency that has issued the RFI with the intent of obtaining information.
Confidential Information	<p>Confidential Information of a party (Provider) means information acquired by the other party (Recipient) from the Provider in connection with the RFI process, where that information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. is by its nature confidential</li> <li>b. is marked at the time of disclosure to the Recipient as 'confidential', 'in confidence', 'restricted', 'sensitive', 'secret' or 'top secret', and/or</li> <li>c. the Recipient knows, or ought to know, is confidential to the Provider or a third party who supplied it to the Provider.</li> </ul> <p>However, this does not include information that is publicly available through no fault of the Recipient, or that the Recipient acquired entirely independently of the Provider.</p>
Conflict of Interest	<p>A Conflict of Interest arises if personal or business interests, relationships or obligations of the Respondent or any of its personnel do, could, or could be perceived to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. conflict with the Respondent's obligations to the Buyer under the RFI or in the provision of the goods or services, and/or</li> <li>b. call into question the independence, objectivity or impartiality of any person involved in the RFI process on behalf of the Buyer.</li> </ul> <p>A Conflict of Interest may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. actual: where the conflict currently exists</li> <li>d. potential: where the conflict is about to happen or could happen, or</li> <li>e. perceived: where other people may reasonably think that a person is compromised.</li> </ul>



Buyer	The government agency that has issued the RFI with the intent of obtaining information.
Deadline for Answers	The deadline for the Buyer to respond to questions submitted by a Respondent stated in Section 1.2 of the RFI.
Deadline for Responses	The deadline for delivering or submitting Responses to the Buyer as stated in Section 1 of the RFI.
Deadline for Questions	The deadline for submitting questions to the Buyer as stated in Section 1 of the RFI.
GETS	Government Electronic Tenders Service available at <a href="http://www.gets.govt.nz">www.gets.govt.nz</a> .
Intellectual Property	All industrial and intellectual property rights whether conferred by statute, at common law or in equity, including (but not limited to) copyright, trademarks, designs and patents.
Point of Contact	The Buyer and each Respondent are required to appoint a Point of Contact. This is the channel to be used for all communications during the RFI process. The Buyer's Point of Contact is identified in Section 1 of the RFI. The Respondent's Point of Contact is identified in its Response.
Respondent	A person, company or organisation that submits a Response in response to the RFI. The term Respondent includes each member of any consortium.
Response	The response a Respondent submits in reply to the RFI. It comprises the Response Form and all other information submitted by a Respondent.
Response Form	The form and declaration prescribed by the Buyer and used by a Respondent to respond to the RFI, duly completed and submitted by a Respondent as part of the Response.
RFI	Means the Request for Information.
RFI-Terms	Means the RFI Terms as set out in Section 3 of the RFI.

For more definitions visit: [Definitions | New Zealand Government Procurement](#).