



**Screen Music & Sound  
Guild of New Zealand**  
Te uepū Kaitito Whakaata

### **New Zealand Sound Editor Rates Guidelines**

This document is intended to provide guidance for audio post-production professionals and producers on what constitutes reasonable working conditions and rates of pay for New Zealand screen productions. The rates quoted are considered fair and commensurate for experienced freelance sound editors and supervisors in film and television.

#### **Key points:**

- These figures have been compiled by SMSG in close consultation with a panel of practicing New Zealand sound editors, supervisors and studio owners. They are intended to serve as **guidelines only** and represent a foundational floor that is reasonable and realistic in the New Zealand screen production environment.
- Sound editors, including SMSG members, are not obliged to refer to these guidelines when negotiating rates and conditions. Nothing in this document is intended to inhibit higher rates being sought and paid; indeed, many experienced editors and mixers already command fees well above this amount.
- Negotiated rates may vary depending on experience and reputation, but a producer wishing to make quality programmes or films to a professional standard should expect to be budgeting to these recommendations.
- Permanent staff contracts can reasonably be expected to be set differently considering the included holiday, sickness and Kiwisaver benefits, as well as their long-term nature.
- Weekly rates do not include equipment and studio rental – these are to be negotiated separately.
- These figures were compiled in 2022 and are subject to review and adjustment for inflation.

*We strongly recommend that members contact the Guild with any queries or concerns about pay and working conditions.  
We are here to support you.*

## **Sound Editor Rate Card**

(Figures quoted are in \$NZ and exclusive of GST)

These rates are usually negotiated as a weekly rate for a 40-hour week or an eight-hour day.

It is generally accepted that the normal working day is between the hours of 9am and 6pm inclusive of a 1-hour unpaid lunch break.

Reasonable working hours can fall between 9am and 7pm by negotiation. When a shift extends beyond these hours overtime rates should apply. Work conducted outside these hours (as distinct from overtime – for example, overnight shifts) should attract a penal rate of T1.25

Sound editors working as independent contractors can set their own hours within reasonable bounds.

### **For Domestic productions of any type:**

#### **Apprentice Sound Editor**

\$1000 per week  
\$25.00 per hour

#### **Assistant Sound Editor**

\$1,800 – \$2,100 per week  
\$45 – \$52.50 per hour

#### **Foley Artist**

\$2,700 – \$3,000 per week  
\$67.50 – \$75 per hour

#### **Sound Editor (including Foley Editors)**

\$2,700 – \$3,000 per week  
\$67.50 – \$75 per hour

#### **Supervising or Senior Sound Editor**

\$3,200 – \$3,600 per week  
\$80.00 – \$90 per hour

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### **Recommended Overtime Rates:**

First two hours at T1.5. All hours thereafter at T2.

6<sup>th</sup> consecutive day worked at T1.5

7<sup>th</sup> consecutive day worked at T2

Rest period: A minimum break of 10 hours must occur between shifts. Any worked hours that break this turnaround will be at T2.

Public holidays falling within the duration of the post-production schedule should be charged at T2 or T1.5 plus a day off in lieu.

### **Scheduling:**

The post-production schedule should define a specific duration and finish date for a project's completion beyond which the fee should be re-negotiated at the appropriate rate (daily or weekly).

- **Film:** A “starting” soundpost schedule for non-complex film soundtracks based on approximately 90 minutes running time, should include **minimum** 6 weeks for sound editorial/track-lay and 3 weeks for premix, final mix and deliverables. Complex recuts occurring within 10 working days of mix dates require additional editorial time and are considered overages.

More complex soundtracks or VFX-heavy films can have sound-post schedules of up to 20 weeks for track-lay and 8-12 weeks for mix – and beyond. It must be emphasised that there is no “one size fits all” schedule.

- **TV episodes** work on a running-time schedule for sound editorial. A minimum of 5 minutes and a maximum of 8.5 minutes can reasonably be expected to be completed per day, equating to a minimum 5-day sound editorial period for a standard 42-minute long “TV hour” episode.

Additional running time and/or recuts occurring within 10 days of mix are considered overages.

It should be assumed that the sound supervisor and sound editorial crew are engaged throughout the entire sound edit and mix period.

## Conditions for employment:

- **Don't work for nothing** – your time, talent and experience are valuable. A “credit” is not sufficient payment for audio post-production services. Never start work without a clear deal memo or other written document that specifies your fee and payment dates. If these are not honoured stop work and contact the Guild.
- **Working conditions** – All post-production workers are entitled to a workspace that provides adequate ventilation/temperature control, soundproofing, a suitable and comfortable chair and suitable/controllable lighting. The definition of “workspace” should mean a contained room, not open shared space or open partition.
- **Exposure to noise** – NZ Workplace Health and Safety laws state that workers (or visitors to a workplace) **must not be exposed to noise levels that are equivalent to 85 decibels averaged over 8 hours, or a peak noise level over 140 decibels.** This always applies, whether or not workers are wearing hearing protection.
- **Equipment rental** – If you are providing your own equipment, edit room and/or mix facility, these should incur a fee. This is usually negotiated as a weekly rate for editorial equipment and a daily rate for mix facilities.
- **Pre-production/Meetings** – Sound supervisors and editors should expect compensation for attending and providing input to any pre-production and pre-post production meetings, and/or discussing a production by phone call, where the total time exceeds 2 hours. After the first 2 hours, the hourly rate should then be charged.
- **Variable terms** – Every contract should specify the variable terms: Start Date, End Date, Working Conditions, Services: Working Hours, Working Week, Overtime/Extra Time, Public Holidays, Daily Turnaround.
- **Changing dates of bookings** – Sound editors should expect compensation for dates changing at short notice. SMSG suggests that when short notice changes to schedules occur, up to two days should be charged at full rate, on a sliding scale to 25% for the last booked days not worked.
- **Buy-outs** – Refuse buyouts or flat fees that make no stipulation of the total number of weekly hours expected to be worked, what hours of the day the shift(s) fall between and/or days in a row without a break to be worked.
- **Termination** – Your contract should specify that you will be paid in full if terminated unless you are ‘at fault’ in which case you must be paid up to the date of termination.
- **Media management / Editing assistants / Schedules** – Time and personnel should be appropriately budgeted and managed in order for post-production deadlines to be met.

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