

Health Workforce Scholarship Program (HWSP) Guidelines

Application Information April 2018

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1. Program Description

The Health Workforce Scholarship Program (HSWP) is part of the Australian Government Department of Health's Health Workforce Program Guidelines.

The objective of the HSWP is to improve access to the services needed in rural and remote areas (defined as locations categorised as Modified Monash Model (MMM 3 – 7) by supporting an increase in skills, capacity and/or scope of practice of privately employed health professionals in the fields of medicine, nursing and allied health, in order to target services to rural and remote areas where they are most needed.

HSWP funding will improve access to service in rural and remote communities in response to identified local needs. Payments made to health professionals must be directly related to training and up-skilling health professionals who will provide service to rural and remote areas and be justified against the perceived workforce benefit of the training.

The HSWP is managed nationally by the Rural Workforce Agency Network and locally in Victoria by the Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited (RWAV).

2. Program Scope

The HSWP will provide:

- Scholarships to postgraduate rural health professionals undertaking further study in the field of medicine, nursing or allied health;
- Bursary or support payments to rural professionals in the field of medicine, nursing or allied health participating in development and upskilling courses; and
- Scholarship payments of up to \$10,000 per year for up to two years will be available to support participants for fulltime studies.

One-off bursary payments will be available to cover the cost of training or course fees and/or to cover or contribute toward training related expenses such as accommodation and transport, where appropriate.

All scholarship agreements must be entered into and funds allocated prior to 30 June 2020. All course and bursary activity will need to be completed by 31 December 2020.

3. Definitions

Post-graduate: refers to applicants who have finished their medical/health undergraduate degree and are recognised by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency as health professionals able to provide services to the consumer.

Health professional: refers to the applicants who are recognised as health professionals able to provide services to the consumer as identified by the jurisdictional Health Workforce Needs Assessment.

Exceptional circumstances: refers to any circumstances beyond the control of the participant, which were not reasonably foreseeable by that participant at the time they entered into the contract and which prevent that participant from meeting their Return of Service Obligation (ROSO). ROSO refers to the commitment a participant makes to the Australian Government when accepting public money to build their capacity to provide services.

4. Eligibility

a. Locations

Victorian rural and remote areas classified by the MMM 3-7 are eligible for the HWSP. The MMM locator is found at <http://www.doctorconnect.gov.au/locator>.

b. Scholars

Health professionals in the fields of medicine, nursing or allied health (including Aboriginal Health Workers) who provide regular ongoing services in MMM 3-7 rural and remote communities are eligible to apply.

Health professionals in the fields of medicine, nursing or allied health (including Aboriginal Health Workers) who intend to provide services to MMM 3-7 rural or remote communities are also eligible to apply if they can demonstrate they will be supplying those services by providing a service agreement or employment agreement at the time the application is submitted.

Health professionals employed solely by the State Health Department are not eligible to apply, including all health professionals working in a public hospital or community health service.

Health professionals may only access funding once each financial year.

c. Scholarship and Bursary Types

HWSP scholarships will be available to post-graduate health professional applicants who are undertaking or planning to undertake further study in the field of medicine, nursing or allied health that meet the priority needs of the HWSP.

Scholarships of up to \$10,000 per year can be provided for up to two years of study. Scholarships must be directly related to training and upskilling health professionals who will provide services to rural and remote areas. Scholarship values will be determined against the perceived workforce benefit of the training.

HWSP bursaries are one-off payments that cover the cost of training or course fees and/or cover or partially cover training related expenses such as accommodation and transport where appropriate.

Bursaries must directly relate to training and upskilling health professionals who are or will be providing, or who are planning to provide (with evidence), services to rural and remote areas. Bursary values will be determined against the perceived workforce benefit of the training.

Courses and activities do not need to be accredited but will be assessed by RWAV for relevance, community need and the likelihood to meet the identified learning need.

Scholarships and bursaries will not be available for:

- Retrospective costs;
- Overseas expenses;
- Study funded by other sources; and/or
- Activities for which other Commonwealth, State, Territory or Local Government bodies have primary responsibility. This includes training for health professionals working solely in a public hospital.

5. Process

a. Priorities

RWAV identifies local health workforce and/or skills/capacity needs through an annual Health Workforce Needs Analysis (HWNA) in collaboration with a local Health Workforce Stakeholder Group (HWSG). The HWNA will assist RWAV in determining health workforce priorities and form the basis for determining the allocation of scholarships and bursaries within MMM 3-7.

b. Application

Potential scholars who work in Victoria and meet the above eligibility criteria should apply directly to RWAV using the application form at <https://www.rwav.com.au/professional-development/grants/>.

Applications will be competitive based on the priorities of the jurisdiction. Applications will be evaluated on the basis of:

- Location eligibility;
- Applicant eligibility;
- Activity eligibility;
- Planned increase in skill capacity and/or scope of clinical practice;
- Meeting one or more identified HWNA priorities for the jurisdiction; and
- Demonstration of service provision to rural and remote community.

c. Case Management

Successful applicants will be appropriately case managed by RWAV throughout their scholarship/bursary activity relevant to the value of the scholarship/bursary and the scope of any Return of Service Obligation (see d and f below).

d. Payments

The Case Manager will establish a payment schedule with each scholar, which will be reflected in the contract as a schedule to that contract. The case manager will ensure that payments are made on time as agreed.

e. Return of Service Obligations

Return of Service Obligation (ROSO) will be negotiated with the scholar as part of the application process. The ROSO will be clearly stated in their contract with RWAV, which the scholar will need to sign before commencing the activity.

f. Debt Recovery

Where a participant does not fulfil their contract with RWAV, they will seek to recover the relevant monies.

g. Complaints, ROSO Waivers and Appeals

Unsuccessful applicants who wish to appeal the outcome of their application should initially discuss their situation with the RWAV Grants Administrator to determine if they may be eligible for a future round of grants, or if there are other avenues to access funding and/or support to meet their upskilling or professional development needs.

Scholars who are unable to meet their ROSO due to exceptional circumstances are able to request to negotiate alternatives with their case manager. Exceptional circumstances are any circumstances beyond the control of the scholar, which were not reasonably foreseeable by that scholar at the time they entered into the contract and which prevent that scholar from meeting their ROSO.

The case manager will, however, seek to find alternatives to allow the scholar to meet their ROSO before a waiver will be considered. RWAV reserves the final right to hold the scholar to their ROSO, however, and can recover the debt where a mutual outcome cannot be found.

Should the above not resolve their concern, the unsuccessful applicant/ROSO scholar can lodge an appeal as per the RWAV Complaints Policy.

<https://www.rwav.com.au/contact-us>.