



Health Workforce Scholarship Program

Program Guidelines

September 2022

**BEFORE PREPARING YOUR APPLICATION IT IS RECOMMENDED
THAT YOU READ THESE GUIDELINES CAREFULLY**

PLEASE NOTE

These scholarships are highly competitive and meeting the eligibility criteria is not guarantee of funding.

Contents

1.0	Introduction	1
2.0	Eligibility	2
2.1	Who is eligible?	2
2.2	Who and what is NOT eligible?	2
3.0	What funding is available?	2
4.0	Application process	3
4.1	How to apply	3
4.2	What do I need to provide with my application?	4
4.3	Application review process	5
4.4	Offer of funding	5
4.5	Payment process	5
5.0	What is a Return of Service Obligation (RSO)?	6
6.0	Case management	6
6.1	Changes to HWSP activities	6
6.2	Termination of grant agreements	6
6.3	Debt recovery	7
7.0	Complaints, RoSO waivers and appeals	7
8.0	Further information	8
9.0	APPENDIX A – Health Workforce Needs Assessment (HWNA)	9
9.1	What are some of WA’s high priority rural health needs?	9

1.0 Introduction

The Health Workforce Scholarship Program (HWSP) provides scholarships and bursaries to help health professionals in rural and remote Australia retain and enhance their skills, capacity and scope of practice.

The HWSP is an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Health, administered in Western Australia by Rural Health West.

The HWSP is available to qualified medical, nursing, midwifery, allied health, dental and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals providing primary health care in rural and remote Western Australia in private practice, a non-government or not-for-profit organisation within a MM 3-7 location, or an Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS), Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHO) in a MM 1-7 location.

The objective of the HWSP is to improve access to the services needed in rural and remote areas by supporting an increase in skills, capacity and/or scope of practice of privately employed health professionals in order to target services to rural and remote areas where they are most needed.

The Health Workforce Needs Assessment (HWNA) is used to prioritise the health and workforce needs of communities within Western Australia and inform the priorities and allocation of scholarships and bursaries within Western Australia. See **Appendix A** for a summary of the HWNA priority locations and health needs.

Payments under the HWSP will be:

- Determined in response to identified local needs for health professionals who provide primary healthcare services to remote and rural areas;
- Justifiable against the perceived workforce benefit of the training.

The Health Workforce Scholarship Program will provide either:

Scholarship Payment:

A payment up to \$10,000 per 12-month period for up to 24 months to support participants to undertake full or part-time studies (maximum of \$20,000 in total over two years) to attain the qualification of either a postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma, Master or PhD.

Bursary Payment:

A payment up to \$10,000 within a 12-month period for participants to put towards the cost of upskilling, training or course fees and training-related expenses such as accommodation and travel, where appropriate. It is expected that incidental expenses will be covered by the applicant.

Applicants can apply for multiple Bursaries & Scholarships for as long as the program continues, and the applicant remains eligible. Eligible applicants can apply for up to \$10,000 in a 12-month period (between Bursary and Scholarship applications) and your funding year begins on the date of your first approved course/activity.

2.0 Eligibility

2.1 Who is eligible?

Use the checklist below to determine whether you meet the eligibility requirements for the HWSP.

Are you:

- A health professional who has obtained their primary professional qualification (minimum Bachelor unless otherwise noted below) and is providing primary care services in the role of:
 - a Medical Practitioner, or
 - a Nurse or Midwife; or
 - an Aboriginal health worker/ practitioner (minimum Certificate 3 in Primary Health Care); or
 - a Dentist; or
 - an allied health professional, including but not limited to:
 - Audiologist
 - Optometrist
 - Chiropractor
 - Osteopath
 - Dietician
 - Pharmacist
 - Exercise physiologist
 - Physiotherapist
 - Medical radiation practitioner
 - Podiatrist
 - Occupational therapist
 - Psychologist
 - Social Worker
 - Speech pathologist
- Providing primary care services to patients on a full-time or part-time basis.
- Providing (or can demonstrate through a service or employment agreement that you are about to provide) primary care services in the **private or non-government health sector**, in a rural or remote area of Western Australia classified as MM 3 – 7, OR; an eligible health professional working in an Aboriginal Medical Service or Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation in Western Australia in an area classified as MM 1–7. You can check your MM location [here](#).
- Intending to continue providing primary care services in an eligible organisation and location as outlined above after completing your course (as you may be required to complete a return of service obligation (RoSO) of up to 12 months after your course is completed). See page 6 for further information on RoSO.

Courses and activities do not need to be accredited but will be assessed by Rural Health West for relevance, value for money and the likelihood of meeting the identified learning and community needs based on Rural Health West's HWNA (as outline in Appendix A).

NOTE: Meeting the eligibility criteria is not a guarantee of funding.

2.2 Who and what is NOT eligible?

Who is not eligible?

Any health professional that is:

- Employed solely by the State Government (i.e. public hospital);
- On short-term employment contract or does not have regular contact hours (e.g. casual or locum work);
- Solely providing telehealth services;
- Solely working in a role that provides management, leadership, teaching or supervision or similar, as this work is not considered providing primary health care to patients.

Funding cannot be used for:

- Upskilling specifically undertaken to gain new employment and not related to your current role.
- Retrospective costs (this means courses that are held prior to the round opening date relevant to the round in which you are applying).
- Overseas face-to-face courses and related expenses.
- Textbooks, equipment, software, memberships, subscriptions, exam fees or similar.
- Study funded by other sources (e.g. your employer, other grants/funding providers).
- Activities for which other Commonwealth, State, Territory or Local Government bodies have primary responsibility.
- Meals, taxi, airport transfers, car hire, rideshare services, parking fees or similar.

This is not an exhaustive list and Rural Health West reserves the right to reject any other expense that is deemed unreasonable. It is recommended your application thoroughly outlines your anticipated expenses or that you contact Rural Health West to determine eligibility prior to incurring expenses that may not be covered.

3.0 What funding is available?

The HWSP offers two types of funding:

- **Scholarship:** Funding towards the cost of completing a postgraduate course leading to a postgraduate qualification.

A scholarship payment of up to \$10,000 per 12-month period for up to 24 months can be provided to support participants to undertake full or part-time studies (maximum of \$20,000 in total over two years) to attain the qualification of either a postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma, Masters or PhD.

- **Bursary:** Funding towards the completion of a short course, workshop or attendance at a conference.

Bursary payments of up to \$10,000 within a 12-month period can be provided to put towards the cost of upskilling, training or course fees and training-related expenses such as accommodation and travel, where appropriate.

Bursaries can be used for courses such as:

- Online or face-to-face: short courses, workshops, conferences and seminars (excluding bundled courses/modules)
- Fellowship exam preparation courses; and/or
- Supervision or mentoring, noting the following reimbursement limits:
 - Provisional Psychologist (completing 4+2 or 5+1 internship) – max \$5,000 in a 6-month period
 - All other professions – max \$3,500 in a 6-month period.

The type of funding (i.e. scholarship or bursary) will be determined by Rural Health West during the application review process.

Travel related reimbursement limits are as follows:

- Accommodation up to \$250 per night (reasonable dates considered) and;
- Flight costs must be considered reasonable (e.g. economy) or;
- Private car mileage calculated according to the Australian Tax Office (ATO) rates (considered reasonable).

Applicants will need to provide a tax invoice and receipt to be reimbursed for your approved expenses (up to the approved limits only). If rounds are oversubscribed priority will be given to course costs and therefore, travel related expenses may not be funded.

All training must conclude by 30 June 2023.

4.0 Application process

Application rounds will occur twice per year. Applications must be received during round opening and closing dates. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Where rounds are undersubscribed, or where new priorities emerge, Rural Health West may accept applications throughout the year that will meet identified priorities.

4.1 How to apply

You must apply online through the Rural Health West website during round opening and closing dates. An online application form will become active when the round is open and can be found [here](#) on the Rural Health West website.

Rural Health West will review all submitted applications equitably, prior to making offers of funding. Meeting eligibility criteria and submitting an application does not guarantee you will receive funding.

Applications will be assessed on the basis of:

- The location of your employment and service provided;
- Applicant eligibility;
- Proposed professional development activity;
- Planned increase in skill, capacity and/or scope of clinical practice;
- Meeting one or more identified primary health workforce needs (identified in the HWNA – see Appendix A); and
- Demonstration of primary healthcare service provision to rural and remote communities.

Applicants can submit multiple applications for funding each round but each course/activity must be submitted on a new application. Multiple courses on the one submission will not be assessed.

Submitting your application does not mean you will be offered a scholarship or bursary.

If the course/activity you have applied for is due to start during the review process, and you choose not to undertake the course/activity as outlined in your application, Rural Health West reserves the right to withdraw any offer of funding.

4.2 What do I need to provide with my application?

In order to complete the online application, the following information is required:

- Details of the proposed professional development activity including: cost, learning outcomes, qualifications and training provider. This can be provided by including the website address for the course/activity.
- Course/activity start and finish dates
 - For university courses, you will need to provide a study plan outlining the schedule for completing all units plus individual unit costs.
- Travel and accommodation budget (if applicable)
 - Noting the travel related reimbursement limits as outlined on page 3.
- CV outlining your current employment and work history (no more than 4 pages)
- A statement addressing the following questions:
 - What is the health need that has been identified in your community?
 - How will the local community benefit from your upskilling or training?
- Any other supporting documentation relevant to the application

4.3 Application review process

If your online application has been successfully submitted, you will see a message on the screen to confirm the submission has been completed and you will receive an automated email confirming the application submission.

All applicants will receive the outcome of their application once the round has closed and all applications have been reviewed. This may take up to ten weeks after the application round has closed in order to assess all applications fairly.

Rural Health West will not be able to discuss the outcome of your application during the review process.

If the course/activity you have applied for is due to start during the review process, and you choose not to undertake the course/activity as outlined in your application, Rural Health West reserves the right to withdraw any offer of funding.

4.4 Offer of funding

Successful applicants will be sent an email outlining the offer of either a scholarship or bursary, along with a grant agreement outlining:

- The amount offered (this is not necessarily the amount applied for)
- The course/activity supported by the funding
- Any return of service obligation

Grant agreements must be signed and returned. Rural Health West reserves the right to withdraw an offer of funding if not returned by the nominated date.

If you are unable to complete the course/activity as outlined in your grant agreement, Rural Health West reserves the right to withdraw its offer of funding.

4.5 Payment process

Funding through the HWSP is via reimbursement.

Grantees are required to pay for course and travel costs upfront and only as outlined in the grant agreement. You must then apply to Rural Health West for reimbursement, providing evidence of reasonable expenses incurred related to the training. It is strongly recommended you check your potential claim with Rural Health West prior to making payment to ensure it will be covered. You will not be able to claim reimbursement until your course has been completed and all your grant agreement requirements have been met.

In situations where the grantee is experiencing financial hardship, alternative funding arrangements can be discussed with the Rural Health West case manager.

Claims not made within 30 days of the end date outlined in your grant agreement will be forfeited.

5.0 What is a Return of Service Obligation (RSO)?

Return of Service Obligation (RoSO) will be applied on applications over \$5,000 or for courses/study longer than 6 months.

A return of service obligation (RoSO) means you will continue to provide primary care services in rural or remote WA. The RoSO will be outlined in the grant agreement and grantees with a RoSO will be case managed and supported during their period of service to ensure they are able to successfully complete their obligation.

The maximum period of a RoSO will be 12 months and will commence immediately following successful completion of the funded activity, with the start date outlined in the grant agreement. The return of service is to be in an eligible organisation and in the same MM location noted at the time of application. Any alterations are to be discussed with the Rural Health West case manager.

6.0 Case management

Successful applicants will be appropriately case managed by Rural Health West throughout their funding agreement. The case management framework can include:

- A case manager is assigned and the grantees understanding of their obligations are reinforced (having been agreed at the time of acceptance of funds).
- A case management plan is developed.
- Case manager retains regular contact to track progress and determine how new skills are being utilised.
- Case manager signs off on completion, collects evaluation information and instigates debt collection if all other avenues for completing requirements have failed.

6.1 Changes to HWSP activities

Approval from Rural Health West is required to change the course/activity outlined in your grant agreement. Rural Health West will review any new activity against the identified health/workforce need, the original application and the reason for the change.

Changes to a proposed course/activity is at the discretion of Rural Health West and is usually only permitted where the training provider cancels the training or under exceptional circumstances. Rural Health West reserves the right to cancel the grant agreement if the original activity cannot be completed.

6.2 Termination of grant agreements

Rural Health West may terminate a grant agreement if it reasonably believes the grantee:

- Transferred to a different activity without consent from Rural Health West
- Has breached the grant agreement
- Provided false or misleading information in their application
- Fails to complete the activity as outlined in the grant agreement
- Fails to complete the RoSO

6.3 Debt recovery

Where a participant does not fulfil their grant agreement, Rural Health West will seek to recover the relevant monies. The debt recovery process will be as follows:

Each grantee will be asked to sign the grant agreement, confirming that they have understood the terms and conditions of the agreement including the process for debt recovery should the grantee be unable to meet their obligations.

Each grant agreement will clearly state the grantee's requirements, including:

- The funded course/activity;
- The amount of funding available;
- The return of service obligation (if applicable); and
- The process for debt recovery if the above is not met.

The Rural Health West case manager will support the participant during the grant agreement period to address issues as/before they arise. This will minimise the need for debt recovery in most cases.

Where this fails, and the grantee is unable to meet their obligations, the case manager will contact the grantee to inform them that the debt recovery process will begin.

7.0 Complaints, RoSO waivers and appeals

Unsuccessful applicants who wish to appeal the outcome of their application should initially discuss their situation with the Rural Health West Scholarship Program Coordinator 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.

Grantees who are unable to meet their RoSO due to exceptional circumstances are able to request to negotiate alternatives with their case manager. Exceptional circumstances means any circumstances beyond the control of the grantee, which were not reasonably foreseeable at the time they entered into the agreement and which prevent the grantee from meeting their RoSO.

The Rural Health West case manager will however, seek to find alternatives to allow the grantee to meet their RoSO before a waiver will be considered. Rural Health West reserves the final right to hold the grantee 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 grantee can appeal to the Rural Health West Chief Executive Officer to consider their case. The CEO is the final arbiter for any appeal on the HWSP in their jurisdiction.

The Consortium of Rural Workforce Agencies will review the HWSP Guidelines and underpinning policies annually, taking into account the feedback from case managers, scholars and stakeholders.

8.0 Further information

Any questions relating to the HWSP in Western Australia should be directed to:

Health Workforce Scholarship Coordinator

Rural Health West

E: hws@ruralhealthwest.com.au

P: +61 8 6389 4573

Information relating to round opening and closing dates along with some 'Frequently Asked Questions', can be found on the [Rural Health West website](#).

9.0 APPENDIX A – Health Workforce Needs Assessment (HWNA)

9.1 What are some of WA’s high priority rural health needs?

Rural Health West has identify local health and health workforce needs through an annual Health Workforce Needs Analysis (HWNA) in collaboration with a local Health Workforce Stakeholder Group (HWSG). The HWNA assists Rural Health West in determining health and health workforce priorities and forms the basis for determining the allocation of funding through the HWSP.

Where application rounds are oversubscribed, priority will be given to applications aiming to meet or improve the following health and/or workforce needs:

- Priority locations;
 - Pilbara region (east) including Jigalong, Marble Bar, Cotton Creek, Punmu and Nullagine.
 - Pilbara region including towns of Karratha, Port Hedland and South Hedland. Shire of Ashburton and towns of Onslow, Tom Price, Paraburdoo and Pannawonica.
 - Kimberley region - Balgo Community, Shire of Halls Creek includes the Kutjungka region, Aboriginal communities of Bililuna and Mulan, along with the Ringer Soak clinic and Warmun Aboriginal community.
 - Great Southern region - Katanning and Kojonup.
 - Wheatbelt region – Wagin, Williams, West Arthur, Dowerin, Goomalling, Wongan Hills and Wyalkatchem.
 - Goldfields region – Kalgoorlie and Boulder, Kambalda, Coolgardie, Norseman, Leinster, Leonora, Laverton, Ngaanyatjarra Lands and Tjunjuntjara
- Priority health needs;
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health
 - Chronic disease
 - Mental health
 - Sexual health