HEALTH WORKFORCE *scholarship* PROGRAM

RURAL HEALTH WEST



PROGRAM GUIDELINES

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The Health Workforce Scholarship Program, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, is administered in Western Australia by Rural Health West.

Contents

Introduction 1

Eligibility 2

- Who is eligible? 2
- Who and what is NOT eligible? 2

What funding is available? 3

Application process 4

- How to apply 4
- Application requirements 5
- Application review process 5
- Offer of funding 5
- Payment process 5

What is a Return of Service Obligation? 6

Case management 7

- Changes to HWSP activities 7
- Termination of grant agreements 7
- Debt recovery 7

Complaints, RoSO waivers and appeals 8

Further information 8

APPENDIX A – Health Workforce Needs Assessment (HWNA) 9



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, Disability and Ageing, administered in Western Australia (WA) 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 care in rural and remote WA in private practice, a non-government or not-for-profit organisation within a Modified Monash Model (MMM) 3-7 location, or an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS) in an MMM 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 WA and inform the priorities and allocation of scholarships and bursaries within WA. 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 care services to remote and rural areas; and
- justifiable against the perceived workforce benefit of the training.

The HWSP 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 and scholarships for as long as the program continues, and the applicant remains eligible. Applicants can apply for up to a total of $10,000 in a 12-month period. Your funding year begins on the date of your first approved course/activity.

Eligibility

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 one of the following roles:
  - Allied health professional, including but not limited to:
    - Audiologist
    - Chiropractor
    - Dietitian
    - Exercise physiologist
    - Medical radiation practitioner
    - Occupational therapist
    - Optometrist
    - Osteopath
    - Physiotherapist
    - Podiatrist
    - Psychologist
    - Social worker
    - Speech pathologist
  - Aboriginal health worker/practitioner (minimum Certificate 3 in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care)
  - Dentist
  - Medical practitioner
  - Nurse or midwife – minimum diploma
  - Pharmacist
- 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 WA classified as MMM 3-7 OR an eligible health professional working in an ACCHS in WA in an area classified as MMM 1-7. You can check your MMM 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.

Who is NOT eligible?

Health professionals who are:

- Employed solely by the State Government (ie public hospital).
- Employed on a short-term contract or do not have regular contact hours (eg 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 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 current round).
- Travel, accommodation or courses held outside Australia (excludes online courses).
- Textbooks, equipment, software, memberships, subscriptions, exam fees or similar.
- Study funded by other sources (eg 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.

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, Master 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. Maximum two courses.
- Supervision or mentoring, noting the following reimbursement limits:
  - Provisional Psychologist (completing 4+2 or 5+1 internship) – maximum $5,000 in a six-month period.
  - All other professions – maximum $3,500 in a six-month period.

The type of funding (ie 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 (ie economy); or
- private car mileage calculated according to the Australian Tax Office rates up to $1,000.

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 2031.



Application process

Application opening and closing dates are available on the Rural Health West **website**. Applications must be submitted by 11.59pm the day prior to the activity commencing. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

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 and/or workforce needs (identified in the HWNA – see Appendix A);
- demonstration of primary healthcare service provision to rural and remote communities; and
- funding provided in previous rounds of the HWSP.

A maximum of one application per person per round will be considered. Multiple courses on the one submission will not be assessed.

Submitting your application does not mean you will be offered a scholarship or bursary. **Please note** that the maximum number of approved applications will be four per person per financial year.

If the course/activity you have applied for is due to start during the review process you must be prepared to register, pay and commence the course prior to receiving the outcome of your application. You should not rely on receiving a grant to participate in the course/activity.

If you wait to receive the outcome of your application before registering for the course/activity and registrations are then full or the course is no longer taking place on the dates specified in your application, Rural Health West reserves the right to withdraw any offer of funding.

Application requirements

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

Course details

Course name, provider, cost, learning outcomes, website link and 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 accomodation

Budget for anticipated travel and accommodation, noting the travel related reimbursement limits as outlined on page three. If sharing accommodation, all names must be on the tax invoice/receipt.

Supporting documents

Résumé outlining your current employment and work history (no more than four pages).

Community benefit and health need

A minimum 100-word 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?

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 via email. RHW may take up to six weeks to assess, approve and notify applications.

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.

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 requested);
- the course/activity supported by the funding; and
- RoSO (if applicable).

Grant agreements must be accepted online by agreeing to the terms and conditions. Rural Health West reserves the right to withdraw an offer of funding if not accepted by the nominated date.

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. Reimbursement must go to the applicant's bank account, not to the organisation.



What is a Return of Service Obligation?

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

A 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 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 RoSO is to be completed in an eligible organisation and in the same MMM location noted at the time of application. Any alterations are to be discussed with the Rural Health West case manager.

If you are currently undertaking a RoSO with the HWSP you are ineligible to receive further funding until completed.

Case management

Case management framework

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

- assignment of a case manager and reinforcement of the grantee's understanding of their obligations (having been agreed at the time of acceptance of funds);
- development of a case management plan;
- regular communication with the grantee to track progress and determine how new skills are being utilised; and
- ensuring all elements of the agreement have been fulfilled at completion of course (ie receiving a completion certificate and collecting evaluation information).

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.

Termination of grant agreements

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

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

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;
- amount of funding available;
- RoSO (if applicable); and
- 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.

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 HWSP 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 negotiate alternatives with their case manager. Exceptional circumstances means 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 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, Rural Health West 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 Chief Executive Officer 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.

Further information

Any questions relating to the HWSP in WA should be directed to:

Rural Health West
C/- HWSP Coordinator
E **hwsp@ruralhealthwest.com.au**
T +61 8 6389 4500

Information relating to round opening and closing dates can be found on the Rural Health West **website**.

Appendix A

Health Workforce Needs Assessment

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

Rural Health West has identified local health and health workforce needs through an annual Health Workforce Needs Assessment (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.

Priority will be given to applications aiming to meet or improve the following health and/or workforce needs:

Priority locations

- **Pilbara Region (east)**: Jigalong, Parngurr, Punmu and Kunawarritji. Marble Bar, Gooda Binya and Strelley communities. Nullagine, Yandeyarra, Newman.
- **Pilbara Region**: Roebourne, Wickham and Dampier.
- **Wheatbelt**: Chittering, Bindoon, Muchea, Dowerin, Goomalling, Wongan Hills, Wyalkatchem, Gingin-Dandaragan, Lancelin, Jurien Bay.
- **Goldfields**: Kambalda, Coolgardie, Norseman, Leinster, Leonora, Laverton, Ngaanyatjarra Lands and Tjuntjuntjara.
- **Kimberley**: Halls Creek, Balgo, Ringer Soak, Warmun, Bililuna, Yiyili, Kununurra, Kalumburu, Wyndham.
- **Midwest**: Northampton, Mullewa, Greenough, Kalbarri, Exmouth, Denham, Useless Loop, Meekatharra, Cue, Mt Magnet, Paynes Find, Sandstone, Yalgoo, Wiluna.

Priority health needs

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.
- Chronic disease.
- Mental health.
- Sexual health.