



Health Workforce Scholarship Program

Program Guidelines

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Contents

1.0	What is the Health Workforce Scholarship Program (HWSP)?	1
1.1	What can funding be used for?	1
1.2	What will not be covered by HWSP funding?	1
2.0	Who should apply?	2
2.1	Applicant eligibility checklist	2
2.2	What are some of WA's high priority rural health needs?	3
3.0	Application information	3
3.1	How to apply	4
3.2	What do I need to provide with my application?	4
3.3	Application review process	5
4.0	Funding information	5
4.1	Scholarship	5
4.2	Bursary	5
4.3	Offer of funding	5
4.4	Payment process	6
5.0	What is a Return of Service Obligation (RoSO)?	6
6.0	Case management	6
6.1	Changes to HWSP activities	7
6.2	Termination of grant agreements	7
6.3	Debt recovery	7
7.0	Complaints, RoSO waivers and appeals	8
8.0	Further information	8

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

1.0 What is the Health Workforce Scholarship Program (HWSP)?

The Health Workforce Scholarship Program (HWSP) is an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Health, administered in Western Australia by Rural Health West. The Health Workforce Scholarship Program provides scholarships and bursaries to help health professionals in remote and rural Australia retain and enhance their skills, capacity and scope of practice.

1.1 What can funding be used for?

HWSP funding can be used towards course fees and/or course related expenses such as travel and accommodation. Courses do not need to be accredited, but will be assessed by Rural Health West for relevance, value for money and the likelihood to meet identified high priority health needs within your community.

Successful applicants will receive an individual grant agreement which will outline what awarded funding can be used towards.

Some examples of what funding can be used toward include:

- Online modules, courses or training
- Short courses, workshops, seminars or conferences
- Post graduate studies at a tertiary institution
- Airline flights or fuel reimbursement for private use vehicles
- Accommodation expenses

All training must conclude by 30 June 2027.

1.2 What will not be covered by HWSP funding?

Successful applicants will receive an individual grant agreement which will outline what awarded funding can be used towards. It is expected that incidental expenses are covered by the grantee. Some examples of expenses not covered by HWSP funding include:

- Retrospective costs (this means courses that are held prior to the round opening date relevant to the round in which you are applying)
- Overseas expenses/international travel
- Purchasing of equipment, e.g. IT items and medical instruments
- Study funded by other sources, e.g. Paid for by your employer
- Activities for which other Commonwealth, State, Territory or Local Government bodies have primary responsibility
- Airport transfers, car hire, rideshare services, or parking fee's
- Meal expenses

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.

2.0 Who should apply?

Applications are welcome from health professionals from the field of medicine, nursing, midwifery, dentistry or allied health, including Aboriginal health workers, who are providing primary care services within rural and remote areas of Western Australia (i.e. locations categorised as Modified Monash Model, MM 3-7) in a private, non-government organisation, Aboriginal Medical Service or Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.

Applications are also welcome from health professionals from the field of medicine, nursing, midwifery, dentistry or allied health, including Aboriginal health workers, who are providing primary care services in an Aboriginal Medical Service or Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, in locations categorised as MM 1-7.

You can check your MM location [here](#).

Health professionals employed solely by the State Government (i.e. employed in a public hospital) are not eligible to apply.

Use the checklist below to determine whether you meet the eligibility requirements for the HWSP, however meeting eligibility criteria is not a guarantee of funding.

2.1 Applicant eligibility checklist

Are you;

- A health professional who provides primary care services in the role of:
 - a Dentist
 - a Nurse or Midwife
 - an allied health professional
 - a Medical Practitioner
 - an Aboriginal health practitioner
- Providing 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; providing primary care services in an Aboriginal Medical Service or Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation in Western Australia in an area classified as MM 1–7.
- Proposing to continue providing primary care services in an eligible organisation and location as outlined above after completing your training. (You may be required to complete a return of service of up to 12 months on completion of training within a rural WA MM 3-7 location).
- Proposing to undertake study or training that will help meet identified health needs, skill shortages or workforce needs in your community

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

Rural Health West will 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 will assist Rural Health West in determining health and health workforce priorities and form 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 Towns of Karratha, Newman, Port Hedland and South Hedland
 - 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), Fitzroy Crossing and the Shire of Derby
 - Great Southern region - Katanning and Kojonup
 - Wheatbelt – Dalwallinu
 - Midwest - Towns of Northampton, Mullewa, Greenough, Kalbarri, Morawa, Carnamah, Three Springs, Coorow and Mingenew
 - Goldfields region - Kalgoorlie
- Priority health needs;
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health
 - Chronic disease
 - Mental health
 - Women's health
 - Sexual health

Training and upskilling of health professionals must be directly related to the priority needs of the HWSP and values will be determined against the perceived workforce benefit of the training.

3.0 Application information

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.

3.1 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 evaluated on the basis of:

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

3.2 What do I need to provide with my application?

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

- A course/activity flyer outlining the cost, content, qualifications and training provider
- 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.
- Proof of enrolment/evidence of application of enrolment (if available at the time of applying)
- Travel and accommodation information (if applicable)
 - Include specific travel dates and accommodation details (with evidence to support your cost estimates in the form of a printout/screenshot from Webjet, Expedia or similar).
- 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

3.3 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 uploaded.

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.

4.0 Funding information

4.1 Scholarship

Scholarships can be awarded to contribute toward the cost of a postgraduate qualification such as a postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma or masters. The value of the scholarship could be up to \$10,000 per year for two years. (Maximum of \$20,000 in total over two years).

4.2 Bursary

Bursaries can be awarded to contribute to the cost of short courses and training, and/or reasonable training related expenses such as travel and accommodation, where appropriate. Multiple bursaries may be awarded, however the total value cannot exceed more than \$10,000 per year for two years.

4.3 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 for 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.

4.4 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 RHW 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 (RoSO)?

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 4569

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