

HEALTH WORKFORCE Scholarship Program

Applicant Guidelines - RDWA March 2019



1. Program Description

The Health Workforce Scholarship Program (HWSP) is an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Health's, Health Workforce Program.

The HWSP is managed nationally by the consortium of Rural Workforce Agencies and locally by RDWA.

The objective of the HWSP is to improve access to the services needed in rural and remote areas (i.e. 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.

HWSP funding will improve access to services in rural and remote communities in response to identified local needs. RDWA conducts an annual Health Workforce Needs Assessment (HWNA) and uses information from the HWNA to prioritise the workforce needs of SA rural and remote communities and to inform the priorities and allocation of scholarships and bursaries.

Payments made to health professionals must be directly related to training and up-skilling health professionals who will provide services to rural and remote areas and be justifiable against the perceived workforce benefit of the training.

2. Program Scope

The HWSP will provide:

- Scholarships to postgraduate health practitioners undertaking further study in the field of medicine, nursing or allied health; and
- Bursary or support payments to rural professionals in the field of medicine, nursing or allied health participating in development and upskilling courses.

Scholarships payments of up to \$10,000 per year for up to two years will be available to support participants for 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. Eligibility

1. Locations

South Australian 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/internet/otd/publishing.nsf/Content/locator>

II. Applicants

Health professionals who are practising in the fields of medicine, nursing or allied health (including Aboriginal Health Workers) who provide services to 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 providing services to MMM 3-7 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 opens.

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

III. Scholarship and Bursary Types

HWSP Scholarships are available to post-graduate health professional applicants who are undertaking or planning (with evidence) 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 study. Scholarships must be directly related to training and upskilling health professionals who will provide services to rural and remote areas (MMM 3-7 locations). 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 be directly related to training and upskilling health professionals who are providing or who are planning (with evidence) to provide services to rural and remote areas (MMM 3-7 locations). 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 RDWA for relevance, value for money 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
- 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.

4. Process

I. Application

Potential applicants who work in South Australia and meet the above eligibility criteria should apply directly to RDWA using the on-line form on the RDWA webpage. Applicants may only submit one application per round.

Application rounds will occur at least twice a year and individual scholarships may also be awarded at any time outside of the application round process.

Applications will be competitive. RDWA may work with potential applicants in priority communities or disciplines to support and promote particular workforce needs.

Applications will be evaluated based on:

- Location eligibility (MMM 3-7 location at time of application);
- Applicant eligibility;
- Activity eligibility;
- Planned increase in skill, capacity and/or scope of clinical practice;
- Meeting one or more identified workforce priorities; and
- Demonstration of service provision to rural and remote community.

Where Application rounds are oversubscribed, priority will be given to:

- Applications that most closely align to the identified needs and skill mix
- Applications that will result in improved quality of services to priority populations e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders communities
- Applications that will result in the development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce.

II. Case Management

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

The case management can include (but is not limited to):

- A case manager is assigned and recipients' understanding of their obligations are reinforced (having been agreed at the time of application for funds);
- A case management plan is developed for threshold recipients only;
- Case manager retains regular contact to track progress and determine how new skills are being utilised.

Through the case management process, RDWA will sign off on completion reports, collect evaluation information and instigate debt collection if all other avenues for completing requirements have failed.

RDWA will confirm with successful applicants the type of case management involved during a telephone interview prior to formal offer of the funds and will be clearly stated in the HWSP Agreement, to ensure applicants they understand the responsibilities of RDWA and the participant and so that the process is clear to all parties.

III. Payments

RDWA will establish a payment schedule with successful applicant which will be reflected in the HWSP Agreement.

IV. Return of Service Obligations

Return of Service Obligation (ROSO) will be applied on grants over \$5,000 or for course/study longer than 6 months. The ROSO will not exceed more than 12 months and must be completed in a South Australian MMM 3-7 location.

ROSO is the commitment a participant makes to the Australian Government when accepting public money to build their capacity to provide services.

Participants with ROSO will be case managed and supported during their period of service to ensure they are able to successfully complete their commitments.

V. Debt Recovery

Where a participant does not fulfil their contract with RDWA, RDWA will seek to recover the relevant monies. The HWSP Agreement will outline the process for debt recovery should the candidate be unable to meet their obligations.

VI. Complaints, ROSO Waivers and Appeals

Unsuccessful applicants who wish to appeal the outcome of their application should initially discuss their situation with the RDWA's Director, Primary Health Workforce 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 can request to negotiate alternatives with RDWA's Director, Primary Health Workforce who will seek to find alternatives to allow the participant to meet their ROSO before a waiver will be considered. The RDWA reserves the final right to hold the recipient 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 participant can appeal to the RDWA Chief Executive Officer to consider their case. A copy of the complaints procedures should be requested from the Director, Primary Health Care Workforce prior to follow in pursuing a complaint.

The RDWA CEO is the final arbiter for any appeal on the HWSP.

We are your rural
workforce agency –
RDWA the Heart of
Country South Australia.

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