

1. Introduction

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

The HWSP is managed in South Australia by Rural Doctors Workforce Agency (RDWA) and nationally by the consortium of Rural Workforce Agencies.

The HWSP aims to support increased skills, capacity and or/scope of practice of privately employed primary health professionals in the fields of medicine, nursing and allied health to target services to rural and remote areas where they are most needed.

The HWSP provides two streams of grants:

- **Scholarships** for postgraduate health practitioners undertaking further study; and
- **Bursaries** for rural professionals participating in development and upskilling courses and/or related expenses such as accommodation or travel.

The maximum funding available to an individual (combined streams) is \$10,000 in a 12-month period commencing 1 July of the relevant financial year.

Applications can be for courses of up to \$20,000 over two years.

RDWA opens several application rounds in a financial year.

Applications assessed as eligible are prioritised within available funding.

When a grant is offered in either stream, RDWA will offer successful Applicants a Grant Agreement which will outline all obligations, including return of service if applicable. All course and bursary activity funded by 30 June 2025 must be completed by 31 December 2026.

RDWA's annual Health Workforce Needs Assessment (HWNA) is used to prioritise HWSP funds.

2. Eligibility

2.1 Location

South Australian rural and remote locations classified within MMM 3-7 are eligible for the HWSP. The MMM locator is found at: doctorconnect.gov.au/internet/otd/publishing.nsf/Content/locator

2.2 Applicant

Applicants must be working in an eligible Location practising in the fields of medicine, nursing or allied health (including Aboriginal health practitioners/workers) providing primary health care services to patients in a primary care setting. Health professionals who have not commenced work in an eligible Location and have a contract or employment agreement can apply prior to starting work if the activity commences after the employment start date. Evidence of the arrangement will be requested by RDWA.

Health professionals employed solely by the State Government (employed in a public hospital/health service, or other public service), solely providing disability support services or solely working in aged care services are not eligible to apply.

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2.3 Scholarship and Bursary stream activities

Scholarships are available for post-graduate/further study in a field of medicine, nursing or allied health.

Bursaries are available to cover the cost of training or course fees and/or cover or partially cover training related expenses such as accommodation and transport where appropriate in a field of medicine, nursing or allied health.

Applicants for both streams must demonstrate how the proposed study, training or upskilling activity will meet local community needs and HWSP objectives and priorities.

Courses and activities do not need to be accredited.

RDWA will assess applications for relevance, value for money and workforce benefit, and grants will be prioritised within available funds.

2.4 Ineligible activities

Funding cannot be provided for:

- Retrospective costs
- Overseas course, travel or accommodation expenses
- Study funded by other sources
- Activities for which other Commonwealth, State, Territory or Local Government bodies have primary responsibility.

3. Process

3.1 Application

Applicants complete an on-line form available through the RDWA website when the HWSP round is open. The applicant will need to:

- Provide personal and employment/practice role details to establish eligibility
- Write a detailed description of the activity and costs
- Demonstrate clearly how the application aligns to local identified need and the HWSP Applicant Guidelines
- Agree to the grant terms and conditions, Applicant declaration and information privacy consent.

Applicants can only submit one application per round.

RDWA may approach potential applicants directly in priority communities or disciplines to support priority workforce needs.

Applying for a grant does not guarantee that a grant will be made to the Applicant.

3.2 Assessment

Applications will be assessed by RDWA on the following basis:

- Eligibility (Location, Applicant, Stream, Activity)
- Alignment with the HWSP Applicant Guidelines and HWNA priorities.

Where there are more applications assessed as eligible than funds available, priority in allocating grants will be given to Applicants:

- Applicants working an MMM 5-7 location; or
- Applicants working in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services; or
- Where the proposed activity will result in improved quality of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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3.3 Notification and Grant Agreement

Successful Applicants will be contacted by email and advised their application has been successful, and a Grant Agreement between RDWA and the Applicant will be attached for the Applicant's consideration.

The agreement will set out the applicable payments and the obligations on the Applicant and RDWA. The grant is not provided as a cash payment.

If the Applicant wishes to accept the offer and its terms and conditions, the Applicant will execute the agreement and return it to RDWA within seven days or the offer will lapse.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by email and RDWA will provide feedback if requested.

3.4 Payments

The Grant Agreement will specify a reimbursement schedule for eligible items.

Applicants complete a Grant claim form and attach supporting evidence that the costs have been incurred by the Applicant (Invoices in the Applicant's name, for example).

Claims will be assessed by RDWA and if complete, RDWA will pay by electronic funds transfer to the Applicant's nominated account.

Payments will be reclaimed by RDWA where grant obligations are not met.

The Grant Agreement specifies the process for payment recovery.

3.5 RDWA contact

Applicants who accept a grant will be required to participate in a number of activities including regular liaison and provision of information to RDWA.

Each grant will be managed to ensure that all payments, obligations and other terms set out in the Grant Agreement are met.

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

- Assigning an RDWA case manager as a key point of contact
- A grant plan for Scholarships or Bursary grants where the activities extend over a long period to assist in tracking progress and recording utilisation of new skills and/ or for which a return of service (see below) applies
- Completion reports provided by RDWA
- Feedback and evaluation surveys completed by applicants.

4. Return of Service

4.1 Obligation

Applicants granted a Scholarship or Bursary that exceeds (individually or in total) \$5,000 value in a financial year and/or the activity is for longer than six months, are required to enter into a return of service commitment.

The Applicant must remain in the Location delivering primary health care services to the level and type that was in place at the time of the Application for the grant for a defined period after the Activity has been completed.

The return of service obligation (ROSO) will be specified in the Grant Agreement and will not exceed 12 months per grant.

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4.2 Exceptional circumstances

Where exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated, RDWA will consider an application:

- to complete the ROSO in an alternative SA MMM 3-7 location
- to complete the ROSO in an alternative ACCHS (if applicable);
- for the Applicant to terminate the Grant Agreement and repay funds already paid to the Applicant by RDWA.

5. Independent advice

Applicants should consider independent advice before applying or accepting an offer for a grant and for the obligations associated with the grant.

Effective September 2024