

Health Workforce Scholarship Program

APPLICANT GUIDELINES



Introduction

The Health Workforce Scholarship Program (HWSP) provides scholarships and bursaries to help qualified 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 the Northern Territory (NT) by the Rural Workforce Agency Northern Territory (RWA NT).

The HWSP is available to qualified health professionals in the fields of medicine, nursing, midwifery, allied health, dental and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals providing primary health care services in rural and remote NT in private practice, a non-government or not-for profit organisation within a Modified Monash (MM) 3 - 7 location, or an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (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 to target services to rural and remote areas where they are most needed.

The [Health Workforce Needs Assessments](#) (HWNA) is used to prioritise the workforce needs of the communities within the NT and informs the allocation of scholarships and bursaries.

Scholarships and bursaries 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 workforce benefit of the training.

Eligibility

Who is eligible?

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

- ❖ A health professional who has obtained their primary professional qualification and/or is currently practicing as:
 - An Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health worker/practitioner (minimum Certificate II in Primary Health Care); or
 - An Allied Health Professional, including:
 - audiologist
 - chiropractor
 - counsellor
 - diabetes educator
 - dietitian
 - exercise physiologist
 - nutritionist
 - occupational therapist
 - optometrist or orthoptist
 - osteopath
 - pharmacist
 - physiotherapist
 - podiatrist
 - prosthetist
 - psychologist
 - radiographer
 - social worker
 - speech pathologist

- A Dentist or dental hygienist; or
 - A Medical Practitioner; or
 - A Nurse or Midwife.
- ❖ Providing primary health care services full or part-time basis (minimum of 15 hours per week).
 - ❖ Providing (or can demonstrate through a service or employment agreement that you are about to provide) primary health care services in private practice, or a non-government health sector, in a rural and remote location classified as a MM 3-7. Or; an eligible health professional working in an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO) in the NT in a location classified as MM 1-7. Refer to the [Health Workforce Locator](#).
 - ❖ Proposing to undertake study or upskilling activities that will fill the established, high priority gaps in primary healthcare service provision that will help meet identified health needs in your community.
 - ❖ Proposing to continue providing primary health care services in the NT in a MM 3-7 (or MM 1-7 if you are employed by an ACCHO) location after completing your course. If the funding provided is greater than \$5,000 and/or the course length is greater than 6 months, you will be required to complete a return of service obligation (ROSO) for 12 months after the completion of the course.

Who and what is not eligible?

Who is not eligible?

Any health professional that is:

- Employed solely by the Northern Territory government (i.e., employed in the primary health care setting, public hospital, TAFE, University).
- On a short-term employment contact or does not have regular contract hours (e.g. Casual)
- Solely working in a role providing management, leadership, teaching, supervising, or similar as this work is not considered primary health care to patients/clients.

Scholarships and Bursaries cannot be used for:

- Retrospective costs (i.e. course already completed – if you are part way through your course, you may be eligible for partial funding).
 - Expenses that include international travel and/or face to face attendance at international continuing professional development or education events.
 - Study funded by other sources (e.g. your employer, other grants/funding providers).
 - Textbooks, equipment, software, membership fees, subscriptions, exam fees.
 - Fellowship supervision and exam related cost.
 - Meal expenses or other expenses not deemed reasonable cost for your upskilling.
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- Activities for which commonwealth, state, territory, or local government bodies have primary responsibilities, this includes training and postgraduate studies for health professionals working in a public or private acute care setting.

What funding is available?

The HWSP offers two types of funding:

Scholarship: payment of course/subject fees towards the cost of completing a postgraduate course leading to a postgraduate qualification; or

Bursary: a payment for completing a short course or to attend a conference. This funding may include reimbursement for the cost of both the course and travel related expenses.

If you are unsure which funding, you are eligible for, please select the option you believe is correct when completing your online application and the RWA NT HWSP case managers will review your choice.

Scholarship funding amount

Scholarships of up to \$10,000 per 12-month period for up to of 24 months to support eligible health professionals 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's Degree or PHD.

Scholarship values will be determined against the perceived workforce benefit of the training. Scholarships must be related to training and upskilling health professionals who are providing or planning (with evidence) to provide primary healthcare services to rural and remote areas.

Scholarship payments are made on reimbursement of course/subject costs (travel and accommodation cost are not covered). Scholarship funds can be used to cover or partially cover the cost of postgraduate course fees. If you are unable to pay upfront for your study, please contact us for alternative arrangements.

Please note that Scholarships may be approved for courses that extend beyond 30 June 2023, but the study period must conclude no later than 30 June 2027.

Bursary funding amount

Bursary payments are made on reimbursement up to \$10,000 within a 12-month period is available to eligible health professionals to put towards the cost of upskilling, training or course fees and training-related expenses such as accommodation and travel, where appropriate.

Bursaries must be related to training and upskilling health professionals who are providing or who are planning (with evidence) to provide primary health services to rural and remote areas. Bursary values will be determined against the perceived workforce benefit of the training.

Bursaries can be used for the following:

- Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) recognised training packages
- VET courses, Certificate IV and above, where the employer can support the required block release requirements
- training that meets the professional development policy of the applicant's professional association
- recognised industry skills training and upskilling for individual health professionals and/or teams (Note: individual team members will receive individually managed grants)
- short courses, workshops, and seminars
- Provisional Psychologist supervision cost. Applicants must be completing either 4+2 or 5+1 internship program.

Please note you need to apply and receive approval for the grant before attending the education or professional development activity you are seeking funding for. Any activity undertaken prior to approval is not eligible for payment.

Multiple Bursary Applications

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/conference.

Where an applicant has been approved for one initial bursary, the HWSP panel will not approve subsequent bursary applications until the prior activity is successfully completed and the reimbursement process has been completed. The HWSP panel will recommend subsequent bursary applications on a case-by-case basis.

How do I apply?

Bursaries and Scholarships are open all year round and applications are assessed by the grants panel on the last Thursday of every month. Applicants are required to complete the online HWSP application form, on NT PHN [website](#).

Upon completion of the online application form, you are required to provide evidence of employment, a current resume, and proposed professional development activity information. These documents need to be email to grants@ntphn.org.au before the grant panel meets.

Applications will be assessed based on:

- The locations of your employment and service provided
- Applicant criteria
- Proposed professional development activity
- Planned increase in skill, capacity and/or scope of clinical practice
- Meeting one or more identified primary health workforce needs, and
- Demonstration of primary healthcare service provision to a rural or remote community.

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

What do I need to provide?

Use the checklist below to ensure you provide the correct documentation when submitting your application.

1. Complete the online HWSP application form
2. Provide information about the proposed professionals development activity
3. CV outlining your current employer and work history
4. Evidence of employment
 - Employment contract, or
 - Letter from employer.

The employment contract or letter from employer must be:

- On the employer' letterhead
- signed by the HR or line manager
- dated and signed.

And state your:

- name as the employee
- position title
- employment status (full time/part time)
- work hours per week
- length of employment
- location of services provided.

What happens after I apply?

Selection panel

RWA NT will establish a panel to facilitate the awarding of HWSP scholarships and bursaries. The selection panel will assess, shortlist, rank and select successful HWSP applicants based on the following criteria:

- consistency with HWSP program guidelines, aims, objectives and eligibility criteria
- relevance to NT rural and remote practice in the primary health care setting
- supporting service improvement, change management and best practice approaches to care and/or support service delivery
- cost-effectiveness and consistency with budget criteria
- consistency with RWA NT identified priority areas (outlined below)

Identified Priority Areas

The identified priority areas are classified as Tier 1 and 2.

Tier 1 Priority Area

- Indigenous Health
 - Remote Health
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Tier 2 Priority Area

- Mental Health
- Chronic Disease
- Alcohol and Other Drugs
- Aging
- Cancer Care
- Maternal and Child Health

Panel Decision

Following the panel meeting, applicants will be advised in writing on the outcome of their application.

Successful candidates will be advised:

- whether the grant is for a bursary or scholarship
- if any additional information is required to support the grant
- details of whether the grant requires a Return of Service Obligation (ROSO).

Grant Agreement

Successful applicants will receive a grant agreement outlining the terms and conditions of the HWSP including grant amount, and ROSO requirements if applicable.

Successful applicants will need to sign the grant agreement and return it to RWA NT via email to grants@ntphn.org.au by the nominated date.

If RWA NT does not receive your signed agreement by the date nominated date, we reserve the right to withdraw the offer for funding. A reminder email will be sent prior to the nominated date.

Payment process

HWSP funding is paid to the grantee on a reimbursement basis. RWA NT will reimburse costs from the date that both parties signed the grant agreement until three months following the educational activity completion date specified in the agreement.

For Scholarship grantee to make a claim, you must complete an RWA NT Reimbursement Form, provide official confirmation of enrolment, a valid tax invoice for university fee on official university documentation for the Australian postgraduate course, and proof of payment to support your expenditure.

For Bursary grantee to make a claim, you must complete an RWA NT Reimbursement Form and provide a valid tax invoice for course fees, travel, and accommodations cost (if applicable) and proof of payment receipts to support your expenditure.

Reasonable domestic travel and accommodation for the purposes of course attendance only will be reimbursed in line with the Australian Government Australian Tax Office (ATO) Taxation Determination [TD 2021/6](#) for reasonable travel and accommodation. Costs associated with meals, alcohol, and all in-room services, will not be reimbursed.

Please note, reimbursements cannot be provided to the health professional's employing organisation and reimbursements can only be issued to the individual grant recipient.

Return of Service Obligations

A Return of Service Obligation (ROSO) will be applied on applications over \$5,000 or for course/study longer than 6 months. The ROSO requires the grantee to continue providing primary health care services in the NT in a MM 3-7 (or MM 1-7 if employed by an ACCHO) location for 12 months following the completion of their approved course. Any application under \$5,000 may carry a ROSO at the panel's discretion.

The ROSO must commence within six months from the completion of the professional development activity supported through the scholarship or bursary. The HWSP agreement will allow a timeframe of 18 months for the grantee to complete the 12-month ROSO. This is to allow flexibility for part time work at minimum 0.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE), personal leave, leave from work, or any unforeseen circumstances where a substantial portion of leave and or absence from work needs to be taken.

When undertaking the ROSO the requirements are as follows:

- the grantee undertakes ROSO in the primary health care sector in the NT, in an area classified as MM 3-7 location (or MM 1-7 location if employed by an ACCHO).
- ROSO is undertaken in an eligible health service (i.e., private practice, not for profit, or ACCHO)
- ROSO is completed at a minimum of 0.5 FTE for a total of 12 months within the 18-month period set out in the HWSP agreement.

Failure to complete ROSO may result in action being taken to recover the total or a portion of the HWSP grant monies.

All scholarship and bursary recipients are required to complete the course of study for which they are awarded funds and provide proof of completion. Failure to complete the studies or training may result in action being taken to recover the total or a portion of the HWSP grant.

Grantees who are unable to meet the Return of Service Obligation (ROSO) due to exceptional circumstances may be eligible to negotiate alternative ROSO pathways with the Case Manager. Exceptional circumstances mean any circumstances beyond the control of the grantee, which were not foreseeable by the grantee at the time they entered into the Grant Agreement, and which prevent that grantee from meeting the 12-month employment period ROSO.

The Case Manager will, however, seek to find alternatives to allow the grantee to complete their ROSO before a waiver is considered. RWA NT reserves the final right to hold the grantee to their ROSO and can recover the grant monies paid where a mutually agreeable outcome cannot be found.

Case management

The Case Manager will be the primary contact at RWA NT for all HWSP grantees. Successful applicants will be made aware of whom their case manager is once awarded a scholarship or bursary.

The Case Manager will maintain regular contact with the grantee and is responsible for ensuring the grantee fully understands their obligations with respect to the HWSP, including ROSO.

Where required, the Case Manager will develop an agreed case management plan with the grantee to assist in monitoring progress against completion of the HWSP.

The case management framework will include, but not necessarily, be limited to the following:

- support and access to any RWA NT resources that may be relevant to the grantees' needs
- facilitate access to other support services required
- monitor progress of postgraduate studies and/or training programs at key milestones, e.g., at completion of units of competency, at the end of academic semesters etc.
- assisting the grantee with ROSO where applicable, including monitoring progress and determining how new skills are being utilised
- meetings and/or regular contact with the grantee depending on distance to location

The Case Manager with the appropriate approvals is also responsible for ensuring sign off on completion of the grantees HWSP obligations as per the Grant Agreement, collecting evaluation information and/or instigating debt collection if all other avenues for completing requirements have failed.

Changes to approved education activity

Written approval from RWA NT is required to change the proposed HWSP activity in any way. In considering a response to a change request, RWA NT will consider identified geographical and priority areas, the relevance of the new activity to the applicant's original application, and any other matters considered relevant to the HWSP.

Deferment is at the discretion of RWA NT and is usually only permitted where the training provider cancels the activity or training program or under exceptional circumstances.

Complaints, waivers, and appeals

Unsuccessful applicants who wish to appeal the outcome of their application should initially explain their situation to the Health Workforce Coordinator - Education to determine if there are other avenues to access funding and/or support to meet their professional development needs.

Please email grants@ntphn.org.au

If the matter is not resolved, applicants can appeal to the Health Workforce Manager to consider their case. The Health Workforce Manager will review and consider the appeal and will be the final arbiter for any appeal on the HWSP. You will be formally advised of the outcome of the appeal once the panel has come to a decision and has been provided with enough evidence and documentation to review the appeal.

Definitions

Bursary: a grant of up to \$10,000 within a 12-month period for development and upskilling to contribute towards the cost of training or course fees and training related expenses such as accommodation and transport, where appropriate.

Case management: the process of mutual agreement between RWA NT and the grantee to ensure the right level of support and mutual responsibility is in place to ensure the grantee fulfils grant obligations.

Exceptional circumstances: any circumstances beyond the control of the grantee, which were not foreseeable by the grantee at the time they entered into the Grant Agreement, and which prevent that grantee from meeting the 12-month employment period.

Grant Agreement: an agreement between RWA NT and the approved grantee, which sets forth the terms and conditions of the HWSP.

Primary Health Workforce Needs Assessment (HWNA): aggregates evidence themed around primary health care workforce access, quality, and sustainability, and identifies issues and trends for these priority areas.

Health professional: refers to applicants who are recognised as registered health professionals by their appropriate registration board and able to provide services to the consumer as identified by the jurisdictional Health Workforce Needs Assessment.

Medicine, nursing, and allied health (including Aboriginal Health Workers): refers to the clinical context and scope of practice of professionals providing services in these disciplines outside of a jurisdictionally funded service.

Overseas expenses: no costs associated with an activity physically held outside of Australia will be considered. Where an expense is incurred overseas but accessed locally (such as an online course) then that expense can be considered.

Postgraduate: a level of qualification offered by education providers. Postgraduate qualifications are open to people who already hold undergraduate (Bachelor) degrees and/or, in many cases, people who can demonstrate equivalent experience in the workplace. You do not always need qualifications to be eligible for postgraduate studies. Many universities and training providers will recognise an applicant's career to date as prior learning and admit to postgraduate study on that basis.

Primary health care: health professionals working in the primary health care sector, providing health related and/or clinical services as first point of contact within a rural or remote community for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of ill-health and for ongoing management of chronic disease.

Retrospective costs: no funding will be provided where the applicant has completed the course prior to applying. Where an applicant has commenced a course of study but has not completed the activity then any costs incurred after lodging an application can be considered.

Return of Service Obligations (ROSO): the commitment the grantee makes to the Australian Government when accepting public money by continuing to provide services for up to 12 months in a MM 3-7 location or in a MM 1-7 location if employed by an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO).

Scholarship: a grant of up to \$10,000 per 12-month period for up to 24 months to support health professionals to undertake full or part-time studies (maximum of \$20,000 in total over 24 months period) to attain the qualification of either a postgraduate Certificate, postgraduate Diploma, Masters, or PhD.