Regional Mental Health Workforce Incentives

Local Services, AOD and community-managed mental health services Guidelines

OFFICIAL

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Department of Health

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In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 'Indigenous' or 'Koori/Koorie' is retained when part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

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Background

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System (the Royal Commission) outlined a vision for the future mental health and wellbeing system. Since 2019, the Victorian Government has been working in partnership with clinical, community and AOD services, consumers, families, carers, and supporters to implement all the recommendations of the interim and final reports.

The Royal Commission placed the mental health and wellbeing workforce at the heart of system reform, highlighting workforce supply challenges across Victoria which are exacerbated in rural and regional areas.

To address supply challenges in rural and regional Victoria the Royal Commission recommended the establishment of an incentive scheme to attract and retain Victoria's rural and regional mental health and wellbeing workforce (recommendation 40).

The Department of Health (the department) launched the Regional Mental Health Workforce Incentives program (the program) in July 2022. This program is part of *Victoria's Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy 2021-2024* (the Strategy) and is supported by investment from the 2021–22 Victorian State Budget.

The department funds the Rural Workforce Agency Victoria (RWAV) to administer the grants on its behalf.

Purpose

The program has been introduced to address the workforce challenges to attract and retain mental health, AOD and lived and living experience workers in rural and regional Victoria. The program includes:

- workforce incentive grant
- integration support for workers and their families

The program has two separate streams:

- Stream 1: Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services (AMHWS) and Forensicare.
- Stream 2: Local Services, AOD and community-managed mental health services including Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).

The purpose of these Guidelines is to clarify the details of Stream 2. The Guidelines will be reviewed by the department in collaboration with RWAV as required.

Scope – Workforce Incentive Grants for AOD, MHCSS, ACCHO and ACCO services

Service eligibility

Grant applications are assessed competitively. To be eligible for this program, the service applying for a grant must:

- provide one of the following Victorian Department of Health-funded services:
 - Mental Health Community Support Services (MHCSS).
 - Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Services.
 - Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) or Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) that provide mental health and wellbeing or AOD services.
 - AOD services based in a public health service (note that an AOD practitioner recruited to work in an Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Service is eligible for an incentive under the Stream 1 program and guideline).
 - Local adult and older adult mental health and wellbeing services (Local Services).
 - For staff relocating to work in an adult and older adult Local Mental Health and Wellbeing Service (Local Service) please see page 8 of this guideline.
- be delivering services in an MM2 MM6 area in the Modified Monash Model (MM).
 - please access the following link to check MM classification https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/rural-healthworkforce/classifications/mmm#how-to-find-current-areas-under-the-mmm.
- assess workforce supply and demand recognising that they may be awarded one grant per financial year (per region).

Candidate eligibility criteria

To be eligible for this program, mental health and AOD workers must:

- have appropriate working rights in Australia:
 - be an Australian or New Zealand citizen.
 - be an Australian permanent resident or have the necessary professional and migratory approvals to work in Australia.
- be relocating to live from interstate or within Victoria subject to the candidate moving into a **more** regional area, based on MM classification. Flexibility may be granted for extenuating family circumstances or critical workforce shortages.
 - For example, a candidate relocating from a Victorian MM2 to a Victorian MM4 area is eligible. A candidate relocating from a Victorian MM4 to a Victorian MM4 area would be ineligible.
- be employed in a role based in a Victorian Department of Health funded service or program.

- be employed in a frontline service delivery or leadership role supervising frontline mental health and/or AOD workers.
- be employed for a minimum of 24 months with a minimum 0.6FTE. Flexibility may be granted for lived and living experience workforce roles employed at a minimum of 0.4FTE.

Please note, that flexibility can only be granted by the department and additional conditions may be placed on grants.

Grant coverage

Individual services can request an allocation of up to \$30,000 (inc. GST) per region in 2024-25. Each relocation incentive can be for up to \$15,000 (inc. GST).

Services may also choose to use a portion of this funding to support service activities like marketing and advertising. Alternative uses for the requested funding must be approved through a brief proposal being provided to RWAV for review.

The table below provides some examples of expenses that may be claimed. Note, this list is not exhaustive and other expenses may be considered by agreement with the department.

In scope

| Relocation and travel costs | Settlement and integration costs |
|---|---|
| Relocation expenses associated with the initial move e.g. removalist fees. Travel costs associated with costs of relocation only e.g. flights (noting that they must be economy and the most direct route). | School fees and childcare costs. Accommodation costs e.g. home buying deposits (noting that the grant may not be used towards a home deposit for workers relocating with a short-term contract). |
| Initial rental costs e.g. bond and upfront rent. | |
| Professional development and training costs | Recruitment costs |
| External discipline-specific supervision e.g. nursing, psychology or lived and living experience supervision (consumer perspective or family/carer perspective). Specialised training to build capability related to the role and aligned to reform e.g. the AOD skill set, clinical supervision training. | Services can access grant funding to pay for services from migration agents, recruitment agencies and marketing expenses to promote job vacancies. |

Out of scope

The grant cannot cover expenses that are:

- sign-on bonuses.
- financial penalties, such as cost to break rental agreements.
- expenses (including professional development and training costs) that are funded by other Commonwealth, State, Territory or Local Government initiatives.

Conditions associated with the grants

The following conditions apply to the grants:

- Individual services can request an allocation of up to \$30,000 (inc. GST) per region in 2024-25. Each relocation incentive can be for up to \$15,000 (inc. GST). The requested funding is primarily to be used for relocation grants but can be used flexibly by services in negotiation with RWAV and the department.
- 2. Relocation incentive grants should be advertised with job vacancies.
- 3. 25 per cent of the workforce incentive grant must be held as a retention payment and can only be paid on completion of 24 months of service or contract end date (if an exception was granted for a contract less than 24 months).
 - this may not apply to grants awarded to support professional development and training costs.
- 4. Recipients of workforce incentive grants will be reimbursed for eligible costs. Grants must expend the full grant awarded within 24 months of commencement date. If funding is not expended within 24 months recipients will not be able to claim the funding.
 - Original receipts and/or invoices must accompany all reimbursement claims.
 - Reimbursements can only be processed for eligible items once an application has been approved by the department and RWAV has been notified.
 - Reimbursements will be processed after workers have commenced in their new role noting recipients can claim up to \$5,000 in relocation and travel costs prior to their commencement date (this applies to eligible international candidates also).
 - International candidates (who have been deemed eligible to access this program) are unable to claim reimbursements until they arrive in Australia.
- 5. Candidates or services who have received initial funding approval must advise RWAV immediately of any changes to contact or employment details.
- 6. Services with unspent or partially spent grant funding must notify RWAV immediately so funds can be returned.
- 7. All candidates and services involved in the program must commit to participating in monitoring and evaluation activities.
- 8. By applying, applicants are agreeing to these conditions.

Scope – Workforce incentive grants for Local adult and older adult mental health and wellbeing services (Local Services)

Service eligibility

Below is a list of rural and regional adult and older adult Local Services currently providing support. Note services are being stood up progressively, and service offerings vary across locations.

- Benalla Wangaratta Mansfield
 - Wellways Australia in partnership with Albury Wodonga Health and Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO)
- Bairnsdale and Orbost, servicing East Gippsland
 - Wellways Australia in partnership with Gippsland Lakes Complete Health and Latrobe Regional Health
- Bendigo and Echuca, servicing Greater Bendigo, Loddon and Campaspe
 - Mind Australia in partnership with Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative, Bendigo Health, Echuca Regional Health, The Salvation Army and Thorne Harbour Health Ltd
- Greater Geelong and Queenscliff
 - Barwon Health in partnership with Wellways Australia, ermha365 and Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative
- Shepparton, servicing Greater Shepparton, Strathbogie and Moira
 - Wellways Australia in partnership with APMHA Healthcare Ltd and Goulburn Valley Health
- Latrobe
 - Neami National in partnership with Drummond Street Services and Uniting Vic.Tas
- Mildura, servicing Rural City of Mildura
 - Wellways Australia in partnership with Mallee District Aboriginal Services,
 Mildura Base Public Hospital and Sunraysia Community Health Services
- Whittlesea
 - Neami National in partnership with Drummond St Services, Uniting Vic Tas and Victorian Aboriginal Health Service.

Worker eligibility

To be eligible for this program, mental health and AOD workers must:

- have appropriate working rights in Australia:
 - be an Australian or New Zealand citizen.
 - be an Australian permanent resident or have the necessary professional and migratory approvals to work in Australia.
- be relocating to live from interstate or within Victoria subject to the candidate moving into a **more** regional area, based on MM classification. Flexibility may be granted for extenuating family circumstances or critical workforce shortages.
 - for example, a candidate relocating from a Victorian MM2 to a Victorian MMM4 area is eligible. A candidate relocating from a Victorian MM4 to a Victorian MM4 area would be ineligible.
- be employed in a role based in a rural or regional Local Service, as listed above.
- be employed in a frontline service delivery or leadership role supervising frontline mental health and/or AOD workers.
- be employed for a minimum of 24 months with a minimum of 0.6FTE. Flexibility may be granted for lived and living experience workforce roles employed at a minimum of 0.4FTE.

Please note, that flexibility can only be granted by the department and additional conditions may be placed on grants.

Scale of funding

Grants for individual relocating staff should not exceed \$15,000 (inc. GST) and can support relocation, settlement, professional development, and recruitment. Each Local Service is eligible to receive up to 5 grants. Service lead at each Local Service should ideally liaise with delivery partners to ensure equity and the appropriate roles are prioritised.

The table below provides some examples of expenses that may be claimed. Note, that other expenses may be considered by agreement with the department.

In scope

| • | | |
|--|---|--|
| Relocation and travel costs | Settlement and integration costs | |
| Relocation expenses associated with the initial move e.g. removalist fees. Travel costs associated with costs of relocation only e.g. flights (noting that they must be economy and the most direct route). | School fees and childcare costs. Accommodation costs e.g. home buying deposits (noting that the grant may not be used towards a home deposit for workers relocating with a short-term contract). | |
| Initial rental costs e.g. bond and upfront rent. | | |

| Professional development and training costs | Recruitment costs |
|---|--|
| External discipline-specific supervision e.g. nursing, psychology or lived and living experience supervision (consumer perspective or family/carer perspective). Specialised training to build capability related to the role and aligned to reform e.g. the AOD skill set, clinical supervision training. | Services can access grant funding to pay for services from migration agents, recruitment agencies and marketing expenses to promote job vacancies. |

Out of scope

The grant cannot cover expenses that are:

- Sign-on bonuses.
- financial penalties, such as cost of breaking rental agreements.
- expenses (including professional development and training costs) that are funded by other Commonwealth, State, Territory or Local Government initiatives.

Conditions associated with the grants

The following conditions apply to the grants:

- 1. Grants must be advertised with job vacancies.
- 2. Grants should not exceed \$15,000 (inc. GST) and the amount of funding should represent the seniority of the position. Each local is eligible for 5 grants.
 - grants over \$15,000 may be permitted for senior management, executive and specialist clinical roles.
- 3. 25 per cent of the workforce incentive grant must be held as a retention payment and can only be paid on completion of 24 months of service or contract end date (if an exception was granted for a contract less than 24 months).
 - this may not apply to grants awarded to support professional development and training costs.
- 4. Recipients of workforce incentive grants will be reimbursed for eligible costs. Grants must expend the full grant awarded within 24 months of commencement date. If funding is not expended within 24 months recipients will not be able to claim the funding.
 - Original receipts and/or invoices must accompany all reimbursement claims.
 - Reimbursements can only be processed for eligible items once an application has been approved by the department and RWAV has been notified.
 - Reimbursements will be processed after workers have commenced in their new role noting recipients can claim up to \$5,000 in relocation and travel costs prior to their commencement date (this applies to eligible international candidates also).
 - International candidates (who have been deemed eligible to access this program) are unable to claim reimbursements until they arrive in Australia.

- 5. Candidates or services who have received initial funding approval must advise RWAV immediately of any changes to contact or employment details.
- 6. Services with unspent or partially spent grant funding must notify RWAV immediately so funds can be returned.
- 7. All candidates and services involved in the program must commit to participating in monitoring and evaluation activities.
- 8. By applying, applicants are agreeing to these conditions.

Processes for workforce incentive grants (including Local Services)

To access the grants, services will need to complete the following process to enable support, monitoring, and evaluation (also visually demonstrated in **Figure 1** below):

- 1. The service reads the Guidelines and submits an Application Form. The Guidelines and the Application Form can be found on RWAV's <u>website</u>.
- 2. The department assesses the application. The department may reach out to the service to clarify points in the application prior to deciding.
- 3. The department contacts the service, RWAV and the appropriate community navigator with the outcome.
 - if the grant is not awarded, the service will be notified by letter and offered a meeting to discuss the outcome.
 - if the grant is awarded, the service and RWAV will connect to proceed with the grant.
- 4. Service advertises the position that has the incentive grant attached to progress recruitment.
 - services should include specific information about the program, including the dollar value and how the grant may be utilised to support relocation and settlement.
 - services should send approved roles to RWAV via email: <u>mentalhealth@rwav.com.au</u> to advertise on RWAV Mental Health Vacancies webpage: <u>https://www.rwav.com.au/mental-health-vacancies/</u>.
- 5. Service identifies the preferred candidate and confirms candidate eligibility with RWAV to access the program (including potential grant amounts).
- 6. Service negotiates grant package with the candidate as part of the job offer discussion (in line with the conditions in this document).
- 7. The candidate accepts the role, and the service submits a grant application form to RWAV. This includes details of items to be claimed through the program.
- 8. RWAV examines the grant application and creates a grant contract for the service to sign.
 - during this step RWAV may provide further guidance to support the service to utilise the grant within the requirements stipulated in this Guideline.

- 9. The service signs the grant contract. Then, RWAV send the grant contract to the candidate to be signed and returned to RWAV. Once completed, RWAV links the candidate with the community navigator.
- 10. On commencing employment, the candidate (and/or service) claims the agreed expenses, attaching all relevant receipts and documents.
 - as noted above, some moving expenses can be claimed prior to commencement to support relocation.
- 11. RWAV and the local community navigator will continue to support the grant recipient to utilise the program. This includes:
 - the local community navigator supporting the candidate and their family throughout relocation and settlement. Services can connect candidates to community navigators during the recruitment process.
 - RWAV supports the grant recipient, as required, to access the grant throughout the period of engagement.
- 12. RWAV will formally conclude engagement with the grant recipient once they have received their last payment. The service must inform and return to RWAV, any unspent grant funding.

Figure 1. Rural and regional workforce incentive grants process



Integration support for workers and their families

As part of the program, local community navigators have been funded to support integration and settlement. Navigators can be based in designated Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services, Councils, or other approved locations; however, their role is to support all eligible candidates who relocate to rural and regional areas.

Navigators will support recruits and their families by:

- Providing local information to individuals who are interested in moving to the region. This includes information about job opportunities, childcare, schools, and housing availability.
- Connecting individuals and their families to services needed for relocation to rural and regional areas. This includes removalists, car rental companies, accommodation agencies and schools.
- Coordinating initiatives to help workers create social and professional connections and integrate into local communities. This includes working with local councils, businesses, sporting clubs and primary health services to arrange various activities and programs for new workers.
- Working closely with services to understand and maintain up-to-date knowledge of their vacancies and priorities for recruitment.

Navigators are also responsible for developing tailored, placed-based supports across clinical and community services for their region. As such, the types of support may differ across rural and regional areas.

Please note that the navigators can be available to assist recruits who may not be eligible for grants under this program, for example because of short-term contracts or relocating from ineligible MMM areas, provided it aligns with eligible services and roles.

| Location* | How to contact the local community navigator |
|----------------|--|
| Albury Wodonga | Name: Vivian |
| | Email: <u>Vivian.lves@awh.org.au</u> |
| | |
| Grampians | Name: Joanne |
| | Email: workforcecommunitynavigator@gh.org.au |
| Barwon | Name: Fiona |
| | Email: <u>Fiona.goonan@barwonhealth.org.au</u> |
| Bendigo | Name: Position vacant |

See the information in the table below to contact your local community navigator.

| | Email: |
|-----------------|---|
| Goulburn Valley | Name: Jodi |
| | Email: mentalhealthcareers@gvhealth.org.au |
| Latrobe | Name: Kate |
| | Email: <u>kate.villani@lrh.com.au</u> |
| Mildura | Name: Monique |
| | Email: <u>MSapuppo@mbph.org.au</u> |
| Warrnambool | Name: Rachel |
| | Email: <u>REdwards@warrnambool.vic.gov.au</u> |

*Includes surrounding areas.

Scope – Expanded Workforce Attraction and Retention Grants

Service Eligibility

In addition to the workforce incentives grants described in the first part of these Guidelines, regional (MM2-MM6) Local Services, AOD and community-managed mental health services are now able to use their funding for attraction and retention grants to support their existing workforce.

Worker eligibility

In this instance, eligible workers include the service's **existing** mental health workforce located in eligible MM2 to MM6 areas and are not required to relocate from interstate, overseas, or within Victoria.

Eligible workers must:

- be employed to a role based in a Victorian Department of Health funded service or program.
- be employed to a frontline service delivery or leadership role supervising frontline mental health and/or AOD workers.
- have been an existing employee for a minimum of 12-months with a minimum 0.6FTE. Flexibility may be granted for lived and living experience workforce roles employed to work a minimum of 0.4FTE.
- have not previously received a relocation incentive as part of this program.

Please note, flexibility can only be granted by the department and additional conditions may be placed on grants.

Scale of funding

Eligible services will work with the department and RWAV to submit business cases for the expanded workforce attraction and retention grants. Grants supporting individual workers should not exceed \$5000 (inc. GST). Services will need to demonstrate how proposed initiatives will support sustainable workforce growth across their region and impact consumers, their families, carers, and supporters. The scale of funding awarded will be negotiated between services and the department.

To access a business case template services should email RWAV via email: mentalhealth@rwav.com.au

Eligible expenses for services

Retention costs

Services may access funding to support the retention of their existing mental health workforce based in eligible areas.

This may include:

- External discipline-specific supervision.
- Course fees for professional development and training related to support career advancement in mental health.

Grant funding cannot cover expenses that are:

- (a) ordinarily paid by the employer;
- (b) towards sign-on bonuses;
- (c) towards financial penalties (e.g. cost to break rental agreements); and

(d) expenses funded by other Commonwealth, State, Territory or Local Government initiatives.

Expanded Workforce Attraction and Retention Grant conditions

- 1. Grants are only accessible pending a business case that has been approved by the department.
- 2. Grants must be expended in full within 12-months of being awarded. If funding is not expended within 12-months, services will not be able to claim the funding.
- 3. Grants can only be awarded to existing employees for a minimum of 12-months with a minimum 0.6FTE. Flexibility may be granted for lived and living experience workforce roles employed to work a minimum of 0.4FTE.
- 4. Grants cannot be awarded to employees who have previously received a relocation incentive as part of this program.
- 5. Services will be reimbursed for approved costs. RWAV will manage reimbursements noting all original receipts and invoices must accompany reimbursement claims.
- 6. Services must advise RWAV immediately of any changes that impact the approved grant.
- 7. Services must participate in monitoring and evaluation activities.

Note: By applying, services agree to these conditions.

Processes

To access the grants, service will need to complete the following process to enable support, monitoring, and evaluation (also visually demonstrated in **Figure 2** on page 19):

- 1. Service reads the Guidelines and submits a Business Case. The Business Case template can be accessed by emailing <u>mentalhealth@rwav.com.au</u>
- 2. The department assesses the application. The department may reach out to the service to clarify points in the application prior to deciding.
- 3. The department contacts the service and RWAV with the outcome.
 - if the grant is not awarded, the service will be notified by letter and offered a meeting to discuss the outcome.
 - if the grant is awarded, the service and RWAV will connect to proceed with the grant.
- 4. RWAV examines the grant application and creates a grant contract for the service to sign. During this step RWAV may provide further guidance to support the service to utilise the grant within the requirements stipulated in this Guideline. The service signs the grant contract and returns to RWAV.
- 5. On commencing approved activities, service claims the agreed expenses, attaching all relevant receipts and documents.
- 6. RWAV supports the service, as required, to access the grant throughout the period of engagement.
- 7. The service must inform and return to RWAV, any unspent grant funding.

Figure 2: Rural and regional expanded workforce incentive grants process



Frequently asked questions

Please review the frequently asked questions below. If you have further questions, please email <u>mentalhealth@rwav.com.au</u>.

At what stage of the process should a service submit a workforce incentive grant application (including for local services)?

Services should apply before commencing recruitment to ensure that grants can be advertised with approved positions (as per eligibility requirements). Grants are not guaranteed until applications are submitted and approved.

Who is responsible for completing and submitting the expanded workforce attraction and retention grant?

Eligible services will be responsible for submitting the business cases for the expanded workforce attraction and retention grants. RWAV will work with services to develop their business case as required to demonstrate how proposed initiatives will support sustainable workforce growth across their region and impact consumers, their families, carers and supporters.

What information will be required when completing the business case for the expanded workforce attraction and retention grant?

The business case template is available by emailing <u>mentalhealth@rwav.com.au</u> The template requests information regarding:

- Purpose
- Problem statement
- Proposed solution
- Implementation plan
- Budget summary
- Expected results.

Is there a difference between stream 1 and 2 of the incentive program?

Yes, the programs differ in terms of candidate and service eligibility. To access the Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Service program, please visit the RWAV website: https://www.rwav.com.au/area-mental-health-services/.

Are interstate applicants eligible to receive a grant?

Yes, candidates relocating from interstate are eligible to receive a grant (providing all eligibility requirements are met).

Should the candidate or service pay for expenses (to later be reimbursed)?

Services and candidates will negotiate who should pay for the expenses before reimbursement. If the candidate covers the expenses, they can submit the receipts for

reimbursement to RWAV. If the service pays for the expenses, they can submit the receipts for reimbursement to RWAV.

Do the grants cover expenses for First Nations workforce and/or disability?

Yes, the grants can be used to support the needs of recruits by providing tailored incentives. For example, grants can be used to cover external cultural support or to meet accessibility requirements. In addition, ACCHOs and ACCOs that receive state-funding to deliver mental health and/or AOD services are eligible to apply for grants under this program.

How does the program address accommodation barriers in rural and regional areas?

Grants can be used to cover initial housing and accommodation costs. For example, rental costs, bond, and home buying.

How do I check if an area is eligible?

For the purposes of this grant, areas defined as MM2 – MM6 are eligible. To check classifications and eligibility please visit: <u>https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/rural-health-workforce/classifications/mmm#how-to-find-current-areas-under-the-mmm</u>.

Are sign-on bonuses in scope?

No, sign-on bonuses are not covered by this program.

What incentives are available for existing employees?

To be eligible for a grant, workers must be relocating from interstate or within Victoria. This may include existing employees relocating to a rural or regional area. Existing employees who already live in rural and regional areas may be able to access alternate schemes. For example, they may be eligible for the department's postgraduate scholarship program which supports professional development.

Where can I find current job vacancies (that may include a grant)?

Current mental health vacancies with grants attached can be viewed here: <u>https://www.rwav.com.au/mental-health-vacancies/</u>. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list of current vacancies and eligibility requirements apply.

Services are encouraged to send vacancies with incentives attached to RWAV via email: mentalhealth@rwav.com.au