

# Regional Mental Health Workforce Incentives

## Workforce Relocation and Incentive Grant Guidelines

Community-managed Mental Health and Alcohol and other Drugs Services – July 2022

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## Introduction

The Regional Mental Health Workforce Incentives aim to:

- Support the attraction, recruitment, and retention of new workers to priority positions across state funded mental health and alcohol and other drug services in rural and regional Victoria
- Support individuals and their dependents to move, settle and integrate into rural and regional Victorian communities.

The incentives include the following elements:

- Regional mental health workforce incentive grants that will encourage and support mental health workers to relocate, settle and remain in rural and regional areas.
- Navigator roles that will ensure all new workers are well supported prior to employment, during relocation, settlement and integration into local communities.
- Support for the promotion of jobs and the broader incentives to attract workers with the appropriate skills from metropolitan areas, interstate, and overseas to rural and regional services across Victoria.

The incentives are supported by a Victorian Government investment of \$13.7m over four years.

## Background

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System highlighted ongoing workforce challenges experienced by rural and regional areas, identifying that these areas struggle to attract and retain mental health workforce across all disciplines.

The Royal Commission recommended the Victorian Government address mental health and wellbeing workforce supply needs in rural and regional areas and establish an incentive scheme to:

- a) attract mental health and wellbeing workers to rural and regional mental health and wellbeing services
- b) retain mental health and wellbeing workers in such services.

## Workforce relocation and incentive grants

The Victorian Government has allocated funds to support rural and regional Community-managed Mental Health and Alcohol and other Drugs (AOD) services to provide incentives to attract workers to roles that are difficult to fill.

## Purpose

The purpose of the incentive grants is to:

- support organisations to attract suitable recruits through the provision of additional incentives
- provide applicants with additional training or supervision, or other kinds of support to enable them to move into roles which would otherwise be unsuitable.

## Grants scope

The workforce relocation and incentive grants will support workers relocating to rural and regional areas with expenses associated with the initial move, settling and integration into the rural and regional areas.

## Service eligibility

The following service types are eligible to apply for grants:

Rural and Regional state-funded Community Managed Mental Health Services in MMM 2-6

Rural and Regional state-funded Alcohol and other Drugs services in MMM 2 – MMM 6

<https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/rural-health-workforce/classifications/mmm#how-to-find-current-areas-under-the-mmm>

## Candidate eligibility

The following roles will be eligible for grants:

- Mental health or AOD workers providing frontline services
- Leadership roles giving direct supervision to the above roles.

## Items covered by grants

Services will negotiate with candidates regarding eligible expenses. Below are some examples of expenses employees can claim. Note, this list is not exhaustive and other expenses may be considered by agreement with the Department of Health (the department).

- Relocation costs
- External discipline-specific supervision, for example nursing or psychology
- Course fees for training related to the role, for example the AOD skill set, clinical supervision training
- Other – by agreement with the department.

## International travel allowance

In addition to the Workforce Relocation and Incentive Grants, new international and returning Australian healthcare workers who have secured a role in a regional or rural Victorian public health service, will continue to be able to access relocation packages of up to \$13,000 per recruit from 1 July 2022 to 30 Jun 2023. This includes international mental health workers who have secured a position directly with a public health service. The relocation packages could cover costs such as flights, professional registration expenses, temporary accommodation, freight, professional advice and family member visa applications.

Services recruiting international candidates should first claim the international travel allowance and then make a claim for any additional costs up to a total of \$20,000 through the Regional Mental Health Workforce Incentives. Whilst services and candidates can access support through both initiatives, services and candidates must not claim reimbursement for the same relocation costs.

For further information about the department's international travel allowance visit [www.health.vic.gov.au/medical-workforce-in-victoria/international-recruitment](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/medical-workforce-in-victoria/international-recruitment)

## Administration of the grants

Grant applications will be assessed by the department, and payments will be made by the Rural Workforce Agency Victoria (RWAV). Guidelines and the application form are available from the RWAV website [rwav.com.au](http://rwav.com.au).

## Conditions associated with the grants

The following conditions apply to incentive grants:

- Grants will have a nominal value of up to \$10,000 (GST incl.) per person. Services will negotiate the exact value and details of the package with eligible employees.
- Candidates or services can only seek reimbursement for eligible items once a grant application has been approved by the department and RWAV has been notified.
- In accordance with public funding guidelines, original receipts must accompany all funding claims.

- Candidates who have received initial funding approval must advise RWAV immediately of any changes in contact or employment details.
- The candidate must agree to repay any grant funds received should they leave the organisation within 24 months of commencement of employment (unless extenuating circumstances apply).
- Services with unspent or partially spent grants should notify RWAV so funds can be returned to the pool.
- All candidates and services involved must commit to participating in monitoring and evaluation activities.
- By submitting an application, applicants are committing to the conditions of these guidelines.

## Workforce relocation and incentive grants process

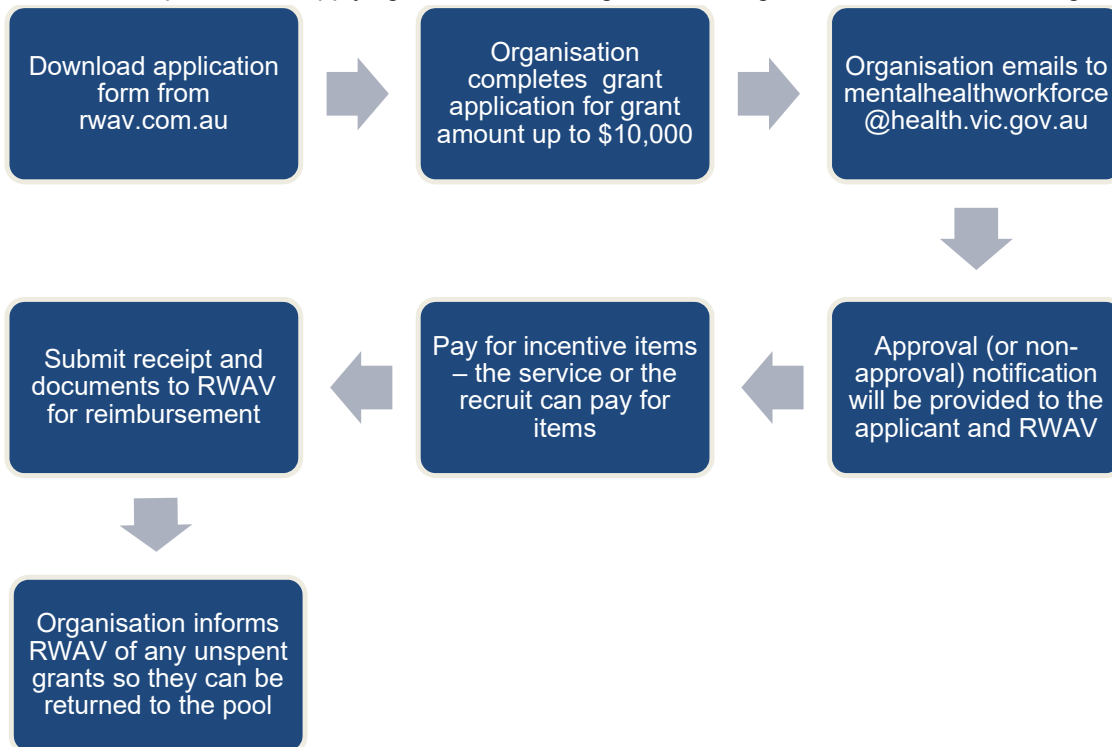
Accessing the grants will follow a prescribed process which will allow supporting, monitoring and evaluation activities.

The process will generally follow the steps below:

1. Organisation downloads the form from [rwav.com.au](http://rwav.com.au)
2. Organisation completes grant application for estimated grant value up to \$10,000 (GST incl.)
3. Organisation emails the completed application form to [mentalhealthworkforce@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:mentalhealthworkforce@health.vic.gov.au)
4. Approval (or non-approval) notification will be provided by the department to the applicant service and RWAV
5. Pay for incentive items – the organisation or the recruit can pay for the items
6. Submit receipt(s) and documents to RWAV for reimbursement
7. Organisation informs RWAV of any unspent grant funds so they can be returned to the pool.

Figure 1. below provides a flow chart that sets out the process for applying and accessing rural and regional workforce incentive grants

Figure 1. Flow chart process for applying for and accessing rural and regional workforce incentive grants



## Who can I contact for more information?

If you have any questions or queries about the workforce relocation and incentive grants program, please email [mentalhealthworkforce@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:mentalhealthworkforce@health.vic.gov.au)

## Frequently asked questions

### **Is the person paid for their expenses via reimbursement?**

Yes, if the individual covers the cost themselves, they can submit the receipt(s) for reimbursement from RWAV.

### **If the service covers the costs, are they reimbursed too?**

Yes, if the service pays any of the incentive costs, then they can submit the receipt(s) for reimbursement from RWAV.

### **Are the incentives for First Nations workforce and/or disability inclusive?**

Yes, the incentives can be used to provide support to meet the needs of people through providing tailored incentives like external cultural support, or to meet accessibility requirements.

### **Does the area include Geelong?**

No, Geelong is MMM1, but other areas in the Barwon region are eligible.

### **Are sign-on bonuses in scope?**

No, this is a different kind of incentive not covered by this program.

### **What incentives are available for upskilling those who already live in the location. For example, counselling skills specific for AOD?**

Incentives grants can be used to pay for training for a local person to develop additional skills required for the role.

### **Timeframes for the application process may affect the timelines of employment processes i.e., preferred candidates may not make the starting date as they are waiting on the grant payments.**

The department will work as quickly as possible to get the application assessed.

### **Could the application be used for upskilling current staff so they can be allocated a higher role, instead of depending on an external recruitment process?**

Yes, upskilling a current staff member to take a hard-to-recruit role is appropriate.

### **At what stage of the process should a service submit a grant application?**

It's a flexible process, services can apply before or after commencing recruitment, and the department will assess the application as quickly as possible.

### **Could the grant be used for placements – e.g to support recruitment of a final year social work student?**

A grant application to support a student placement for a final year student where they will be moving into an unfilled vacancy upon completion will be considered.

### **How can the program address the barrier of little suitable accommodation in rural and regional areas?**

Accommodation in some regional areas is scarce and unfortunately this program cannot influence this. The funding from the grants can be used to pay for temporary accommodation while more permanent accommodation is secured.

**Can an internal candidate from metropolitan areas relocate to regional but within the same organisation?**

Yes, we want to make moving to rural and regional areas more attractive.

**Is there a difference between community mental health recruitment and area mental health service recruitment in this program?**

Area mental health services have a separate incentives [link here](#) This program just applies to community managed mental health services and state-funded AOD services.

**Can the relocation be within rural and regional Victoria? Or is it just for metro to rural/regional?**

It can apply to relocation within rural and regional Victoria where the MMM number increases.

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/health-workforce-locator/health-workforce-locator>

**Can I apply for a grant for two positions on the one application form?**

If you are recruiting for two of the same roles subject to the same recruitment problems, then yes. Generally, however, one application per role.

**What are the application options?**

**i) Option 1 - apply before recruitment**

- Service prepares to recruit
- Service is aware of the likelihood of difficulties
- Services applies for grant in advance to allow advertisement to include 'incentives may apply'
- Services negotiates the incentive with preferred recruit.

**ii) Option 2 - apply after recruitment**

- Service has finalised recruitment process
- Preferred recruit needs additional support such as:
  - Relocation costs
  - Clinical or professional supervision
  - Professional development
- Services applies for grant including details of what grant will pay for