

Regional Mental Health Workforce Incentives

Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services (AMHWS) Guidelines

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The rural and regional incentive program

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 alcohol and other drug (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 (recommendation 40).

Purpose of the program

The Department of Health (the department) launched the rural and regional incentive 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 program aims to attract and retain mental health and wellbeing workers to rural and regional, state-funded area mental health and wellbeing services (AMHWS). The program aims to meet this objective through two components:

- Rural and regional workforce incentive grants
- Integration support for workers and their families.

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

Purpose of the Guidelines

The purpose of this document is to support services to understand the program including eligibility requirements, conditions of the grants and the process to access the program.

The Guidelines will be reviewed by the department in collaboration with RWAV. The next scheduled review of the Guidelines is late 2023.

It is important to review this document in its entirety and adhere to the process outlined, including confirming eligibility of candidates prior to formalising offers.

Rural and regional workforce incentive grants

Service eligibility

To be eligible for the grants, the service applying must be delivering services in a MMM2 – MMM6 area in the Modified Monash Model (MMM). As such, the following Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services (AMHWS) are eligible:

- Albury Wodonga Health
- Grampians Health
- Barwon Health: where roles are based in MMM2 – MMM6 areas.
- Bendigo Health
- Forensicare: where roles are based in MMM2 – MMM6 areas.
- Goulburn Valley Health
- Latrobe Regional Hospital
- Mildura Base Hospital
- South West Healthcare

Please access the following link to check MMM classification <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/rural-health-workforce/classifications/mmm#how-to-find-current-areas-under-the-mmm>.

Candidate eligibility criteria

To be eligible for the grants, workers will need to:

1. 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.
2. be relocating from interstate or within Victoria subject to the candidate moving into a **more** regional area, based on MMM classification.
 - for example, a candidate relocating from a Victorian MMM2 to a Victorian MMM4 area is eligible. However, a candidate relocating from a Victorian MMM4 to a Victorian MMM4 area would be ineligible.
 - flexibility may be granted on a case-by-case basis (such as extenuating family circumstances or where a critical shortage is identified for a senior management or speciality role). This would only be granted following discussion with RWAV and the department and may have additional conditions placed onto the grant.
3. be employed for a minimum of 24-months with a minimum 0.6FTE.
 - flexibility may be granted in cases of paternity leave or when the duration of program funding limits contract length. This would only be granted by negotiation with RWAV and the department. In these instances, additional considerations would be placed on the grants, such as pro-rata grant values and reimbursements provided at the conclusion of the program and/or on contract extensions being provided.

Grant coverage

Grants should not exceed \$20,000 (inc. GST) and are designed to support relocation, settlement and recruitment.

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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relocation expenses associated with the initial move eg. removalist fees. Travel costs associated with costs of relocation only eg. flights (noting that they must be economy and the most direct route). Initial rental costs eg. bond and upfront rent. Accommodation costs eg. AMHWS can access grant funding to secure short-term accommodation for new workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School fees and childcare costs Accommodation costs eg. home buying deposits (noting that the grant may not be used towards a home deposit for workers relocating with a short-term contract) Costs associated with setting up home in a new location eg. purchase of whitegoods, furniture, utilities. Vehicle purchasing or leasing costs (noting that a maximum of \$5,000 may be used towards vehicle purchasing).
Recruitment costs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AMHWS can access grant funding to pay for services from migration agents, recruitment agencies and marketing expenses to promote job vacancies. <p>For further information please visit: https://www.health.vic.gov.au/jobs/migrating-to-victoria/support-for-international-healthcare-workers.</p>	

Out of scope

The grant cannot cover expenses that are:

- ordinarily paid by the employer.
- sign on bonuses.
- financial penalties, including cost to break rental agreements.
- expenses funded by other Commonwealth, State, Territory or Local Government initiatives.

Conditions associated with the grants

The following conditions apply to the grants:

- Grants must be advertised with job vacancies.
- Grants should not exceed \$20,000 (inc. GST) and the amount of funding should represent the seniority of the position.
 - grants in excess of \$20,000 may be permitted for senior management, executive and specialist medical roles.
- A minimum of 25% of the grant should be held and paid to the candidate at the contract's conclusion. Services may choose to stagger grant payments within the contract period however a minimum of 25% should be held until the contract's conclusion.

4. Reimbursement can only be processed for eligible items once a grant application has been approved by RWAV.
5. Reimbursement will only occur after commencement of the position.
 - noting moving expenses outlined in the table above under “Relocation and travel costs” may be eligible for earlier reimbursement to support relocation.
6. International candidates (who have been deemed eligible to access this program) are unable to claim reimbursements until they arrive in Australia.
7. Original receipts/invoices must accompany all funding claims.
8. Candidates or services who have received initial funding approval must advise RWAV immediately of any changes in contact or employment details.
9. The candidate must agree to repay any grant funds received should they leave the organisation within 24 months of commencement of employment (or prior to the contract concluding if an exception was granted for a shorter-term contract).
10. All candidates and services involved in the program must commit to participating in monitoring and evaluation activities.
11. By applying, services and candidates are agreeing to these conditions.

The process

To access the grants, services will need to undertake the following prescribed process to enable support, monitoring and evaluation (also visually demonstrated in **Figure 1** on page 9):

1. Service nominates a key contact (their responsibilities are outlined below).
 - key contact sets up initial meeting with RWAV to identify workforce needs and vacancies that may be eligible under the program.
2. Key contact reads the Guidelines on the RWAV [website](#).
3. Service advertises positions with incentive grants attached and commences recruitment.
 - services should include specific information about the program, including the dollar value (up to \$20,000) and how the grant may be utilised to support relocation and settlement.
 - services should send vacancies to RWAV via recruitment@rwav.com.au to advertise on RWAV Mental Health Vacancies webpage: <https://www.rwav.com.au/mental-health-vacancies/>.
4. Service identifies preferred candidate(s) and confirms candidate(s) eligibility with RWAV to access the program (including amounts). This step must be completed prior to the service making an offer to the candidate.
5. Service negotiates grant package with candidate(s) as part of the job offer discussion (in line with the conditions in this document).
6. Candidate accepts the role. Then, the candidate’s manager or service’s key contact submits a grant application form to RWAV, including details of the items to be claimed through the program.
7. RWAV examines the grant application and creates a grant contract for the service to sign.
8. The service signs the grant contract. Then, RWAV send the grant contract to the candidate to be signed (and returned to RWAV), and links them to the community navigator.
9. On commencing employment, the candidate (ie. grant recipient) claims the agreed expenses, attaching all relevant receipts and documents.

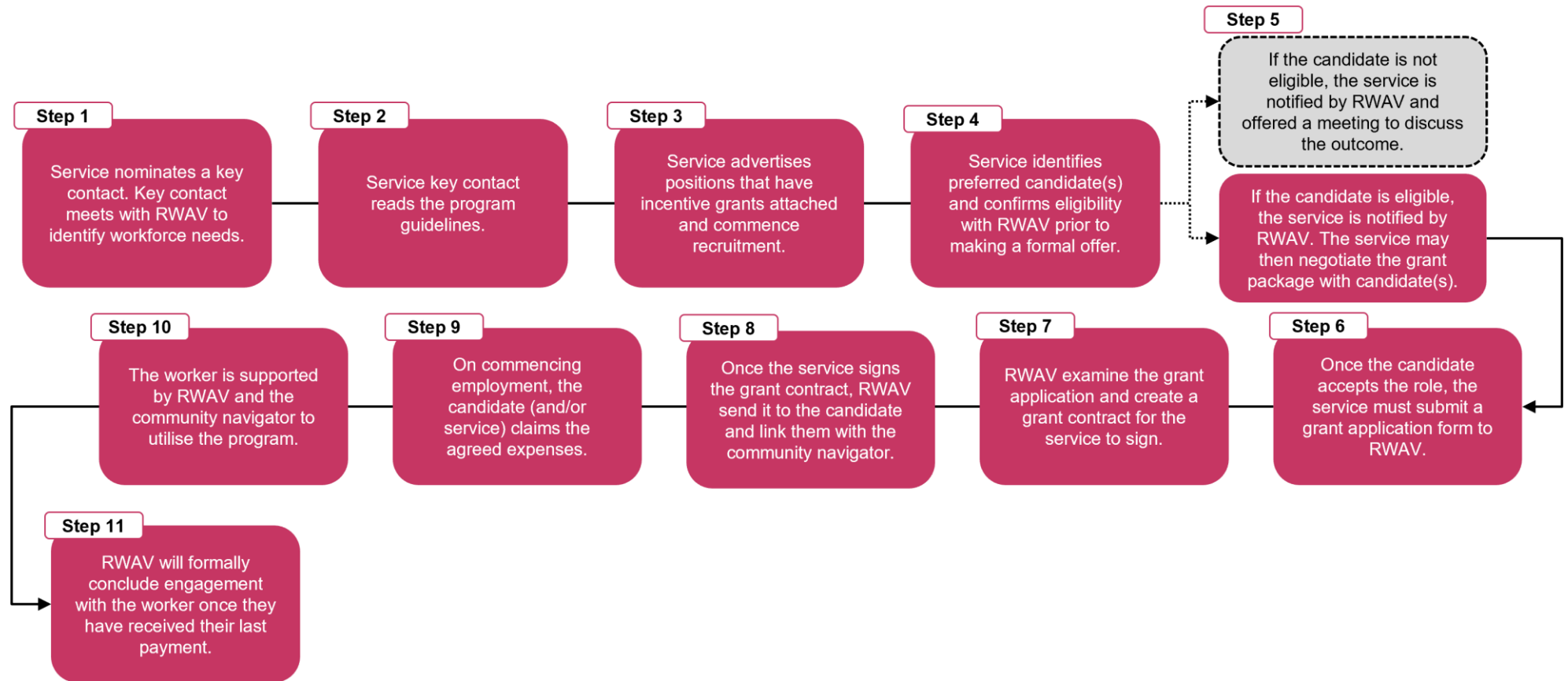
- some moving expenses are eligible to be claimed prior to commencement to support relocation.
10. RWAV and the local community navigator will continue to support the grant recipient.
- the local community navigator supports the grant recipient and their family throughout relocation and settlement. Services can connect them to community navigators during the recruitment process.
 - RWAV supports the grant recipient to access the grant throughout the period of engagement.
11. RWAV will formally conclude engagement with the grant recipient once they have received their final payment.

Responsibilities of the service key contact

Services are required to nominate a key contact to support the implementation of the program. The responsibilities of the service key contact are to:

- engage with RWAV on a regular basis to monitor service needs and vacancies.
- inform RWAV of relocation needs and how decisions have been reached to assign package(s) to vacancies.
- keep an up-to-date record of all grant allocations and the grant balance held by RWAV.
- ensure that eligibility criteria and funding conditions are met.
- identify candidates' support needs and ensure that the candidates are linked to local community navigators.
- participate and promote in data collection activities associated with the evaluation of the program. This may include direct participation in surveys and interviews and ensuring that other stakeholders and grant recipients are engaged in similar activities.
- promote and disseminate evaluation findings at their service.

Figure 1. Rural and regional workforce incentive AMHWS 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 AMHWS, Council or other approved location; 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 supports may differ across rural and regional areas.

Please note that the navigators can be available to assist new recruits who may not be eligible for grants under this program, for example, due to short-term contracts or relocating from ineligible MMM areas.

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

Service	How to contact the local community navigator
Albury Wodonga Health	Name: Vivian Email: Vivian.Ives@awh.org.au
Grampians Health	Name: Vicki Email: Vicki.Dekker@bhs.org.au
Barwon Health	Name: Marion Email: Marion.Vansuyt@barwonhealth.org.au
Bendigo Health	Name: Bree Email: BHewett@bendigohealth.org.au
Goulburn Valley Health	Name: Jodi Email: mentalhealthcareers@gvhealth.org.au

Latrobe Regional Hospital	Name: Kylie Email: KMoloney@lrh.com.au
Mildura Base Hospital	Name: Julie Email: JPettett@mbph.org.au
Warrnambool City Council (for workers at South West Health)	Name: Rachel Email: REdwards@warrnambool.vic.gov.au

Complementary initiatives

This section provides details about other department initiatives that may be relevant for services and candidates accessing the program.

International recruitment program

Please note the following information is only relevant for international healthcare workers who have secured a role in a regional or rural Victorian public health service.

Overview

International healthcare workers 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 the international recruitment program in addition to the grants. Eligible workers will be able to access relocation packages of up to \$13,000 per recruit from **1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023**. The relocation packages 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 through the grants. 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 recruitment program visit: www.health.vic.gov.au/medical-workforce-in-victoria/international-recruitment or contact InternationalRecruitmentProgram@health.vic.gov.au.

Frequently asked questions

Please review the frequently asked questions below. If you have further questions about the program, please email recruitment@rwav.com.au.

Who is responsible for completing and submitting the grant application?

The nominated service's key contact is responsible for completing and submitting the grant application to RWAV.

What information will be required when completing the grant application?

The application form requests the following information:

- Candidate and role details. Services need to provide copies of:
 - the candidate's current address
 - the position description
 - the employment contract or letter of offer.
- An overview of recruitment difficulties experienced.
- An overview of how the grant will support recruitment **and retention**. Including which items will be funded through the grant.

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

Services and candidates will negotiate who pays for the expenses before reimbursement. If the candidate covers the expenses, they can submit the receipt(s) for reimbursement to RWAV. If the service pays for the expenses, they can submit the receipts for reimbursement to RWAV.

Are interstate applicants eligible to receive a grant?

Yes, eligible candidates relocating from interstate are eligible for a grant.

Is eligibility based on where the candidate lives or works?

To be eligible to access the program candidates need to be relocating to live in a more rural or regional area (as defined in this Guideline). If a candidate is not relocating but has accepted a role in a more rural or regional location, they are not eligible.

If a candidate already works in a rural or regional area but lives in a less rural or regional area, are they eligible for a grant if they relocate?

Yes, to be eligible candidates must be relocating from interstate or within Victoria subject to the candidate moving into a **more** regional area, based on MMM classification.

- for example, a candidate relocating from a Victorian MMM2 to a Victorian MMM4 area is eligible. However, a candidate relocating from a Victorian MMM4 to a Victorian MMM4 area would be ineligible.

Is Geelong an eligible MMM area?

No, Geelong is defined as a MMM1 area. For the purposes of this grant, areas defined as MMM2 – MMM6 are eligible. Please note, other areas in the Barwon region are eligible including Colac. To find out if your service is eligible, please refer to <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/rural-health-workforce/classifications/mmm#how-to-find-current-areas-under-the-mmm>.

I want to apply for flexibility to offer a grant to a candidate relocating from the same MMM classification. How do I progress this?

To be eligible, candidates must be relocating from interstate or within Victoria. However, if moving within Victoria the candidate must be relocating to a more regional area based on the MMM classification. Flexibility on this may be granted on a case-by-case basis (such as extenuating family circumstances or where a critical shortage is identified for a senior management or speciality role) by negotiation with RWAV and the department.

To apply for flexibility, the service must submit a 1-page proposal to RWAV detailing the reason (aligned to examples provided above) and any risks associated if the request is not approved. The department and RWAV will review the proposal considering the requirements stipulated in these Guidelines and the rationale provided by the service. The department and RWAV will aim to provide the outcome to the service in a timely manner to support recruitment processes. They may also contact the service for further information, if required.

Are sign-on bonuses in scope?

No, sign-on bonuses are not eligible for 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. In addition, AMHWS can access grant funding to secure accommodation for grant recipients.

Are candidates who have been allocated to a service (through a matching process) eligible for a relocation incentive?

Candidates completing a rotation, or a placement, are subject to the eligibility requirements within this Guideline.

Could the grant be used to support recruitment of graduates?

Yes, applications that support recruitment of graduates may be considered noting that eligibility criteria still apply (including the 24-month contract duration). The department recommends the following structure to incentive graduate positions.

Recommended grant structure for 1-year graduate programs

- First payment eligible for \$5,000 to support relocation.
- Second payment eligible for \$5,000 at end of first year as an early career clinician (ie. end of year 2).
- Third payment eligible for \$10,000 if worker completes the additional year with the health service (ie. end of year 3).

Recommended grant structure for 2-year graduate programs*

- First payment eligible for \$5,000 to support relocation
- Second payment eligible for \$5,000 if worker completes the 2-year graduate program (ie. end of year 2)
- Third payment eligible for \$10,000 on completion of the additional year with the health service (ie. end of year 3)

*This only applies to the psychology registrar graduate program.

Could the grant be used to support students completing placement?

For students completing placement to be eligible for a grant they will have to be accepting a role within the health service. This will be subject to meeting all eligibility criteria including length of contract. In this case, services may wish to apply the recommended grant structure for graduate programs.

Are internal candidates eligible for the grants?

Internal candidates (people who are already employed at an eligible AMHWS) may be eligible to access the program. For example, if an internal candidate relocates from a MMM1 area to a MMM3 area with the same AMHWS, they may be eligible for a grant.

Is there a difference between the AMHWS program and the state-funded mental health and alcohol and other drug (AOD) program?

Yes, the programs differ in terms of candidate and service eligibility. To access the relevant Guidelines for state-funded mental health and AOD services please visit the RWAV website: <https://www.rwav.com.au/regional-mental-health-workforce-incentives/>.

Can a recipient of the department's international recruitment program also access the grants?

Yes, services recruiting international candidates should first claim the international travel allowance. Services can then make a claim for any additional costs up to a total of \$20,000 through the program. More information regarding international recruitment can be viewed here: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/medical-workforce-in-victoria/international-recruitment>.

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

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