

Regional Mental Health Workforce Incentives

State-funded Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) services Guidelines

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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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Available at Rural Workforce Agency Victoria's website <<https://www.rwav.com.au/community-managed-mental-health-and-aod-services/>>

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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 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).

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 community mental health and alcohol and other drug (AOD) services. 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 the 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

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 Organisation (ACCOs) that provide mental health and wellbeing or AOD services.
 - AOD services based in a public health service or a designated Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Service.
- be delivering services in a MMM2 – MMM6 area in the Modified Monash Model (MMM).
 - 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>.
- assess workforce supply and demand recognising that they may be awarded only one grant per financial year (per region).

Candidate eligibility criteria

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

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 to live 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 to a role based in a Victorian Department of Health funded service or program.
4. be employed to a frontline service delivery or leadership role supervising frontline mental health and/or AOD workers.
5. 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 \$10,000 (inc. GST) and are designed to support relocation, settlement, professional development 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. 	<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).
Professional development and training costs	Recruitment costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External discipline-specific supervision eg. nursing or psychology. Specialised training to build capability related to the role and aligned to reform eg. the AOD skill set, clinical supervision training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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:

- ordinarily paid by the employer (including professional development and training costs).
- 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:

1. Grants must be advertised with job vacancies.
2. Grants should not exceed \$10,000 (inc. GST) and the amount of funding should represent the seniority of the position.
 - grants in excess of \$10,000 may be permitted for senior management, executive and specialist medical roles.
3. A minimum of 25 per cent 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 per cent should be held until the contract's conclusion.
 - this may not apply to grants awarded to support professional development and training costs.
4. Reimbursements can only be processed for eligible items once an application has been approved by the department and RWAV has been notified.
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 to 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. Services with unspent or partially spent grant funding must notify RWAV immediately so funds can be returned.
11. All candidates and services involved in the program must commit to participating in monitoring and evaluation activities.
12. By applying, applicants are agreeing to these conditions.

The process

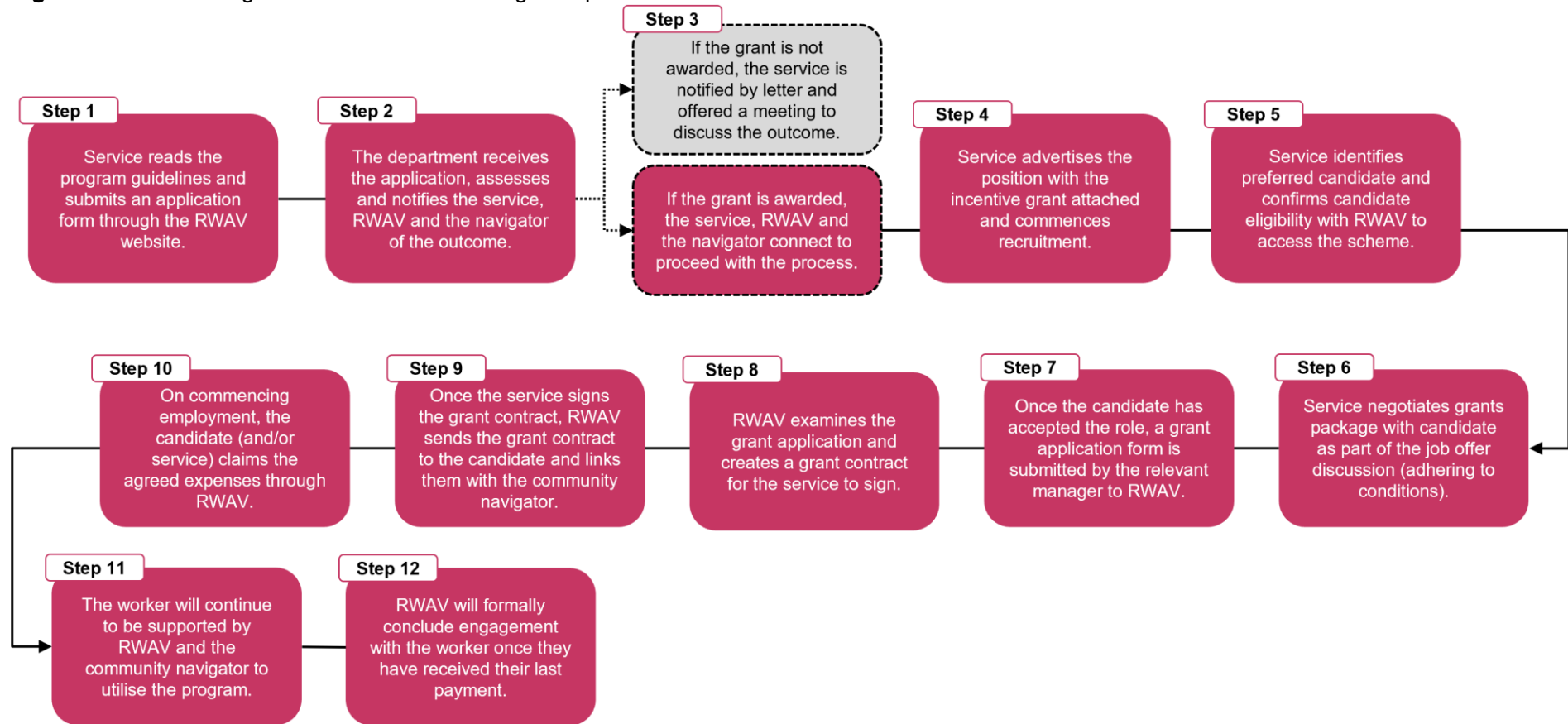
To access the grants, service will need to complete the following process to enable support, monitoring and evaluation (also visually demonstrated in **Figure 1** on page 9):

1. Service reads the Guidelines and submits an Application Form. The Guidelines and the Application Form can be found on RWAV's [website](#).
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.

The following steps apply to services who have been awarded a 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: recruitment@rwav.com.au to advertise on RWAV Mental Health Vacancies webpage: <https://www.rwav.com.au/mental-health-vacancies/>.
5. Service identifies preferred candidate and confirms candidate eligibility with RWAV to access the program (including potential grant amounts).
6. Service negotiates grant package with 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 link 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. These 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 because of short-term contracts or relocating from ineligible MMM areas, provided it aligns with eligible services and roles.

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

Location*	How to contact the local community navigator
Albury Wodonga	Name: Vivian Email: Vivian.Ives@awh.org.au
Grampians	Name: Vicki Email: Vicki.Dekker@bhs.org.au
Barwon	Name: Elizabeth Email: Elizabeth.Baxendale@barwonhealth.org.au
Bendigo	Name: Bree Email: BHewett@bendigohealth.org.au
Goulburn Valley	Name: Jodi

	Email: mentalhealthcareers@gvhealth.org.au
Latrobe	Name: Kylie Email: KMoloney@lrh.com.au
Mildura	Name: Julie Email: JPettett@mbph.org.au
Warrnambool	Name: Rachel Email: REdwards@warrnambool.vic.gov.au

**Includes surrounding areas.*

Complementary initiatives

This section provides details about other department initiatives that may be relevant for services 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, please email recruitment@rwav.com.au.

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

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.

Is there a difference between the state-funded MHCSS and AOD program and the Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Service 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).

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.

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.

Is Geelong an eligible MMM area?

No, Geelong is defined as a MMM1 area. For the purposes of this grant, only 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>.

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.

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

Pending eligibility requirements and conditions being met, yes public health services recruiting international candidates may be able to claim the international travel allowance and the relocation incentive grant. The department recommend that recipients and/or services first claim the international travel allowance.

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 with grants attached 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.

Services are encouraged to send vacancies with incentives attached to RWAV via email:

recruitment@rwav.com.au