

RECONNECT PROGRAM (2021) APPLICATION INFORMATION SESSION Q&A

Friday 18 September, 11.30am

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Regarding participant eligibility, who are the eligible learners and what are the requirements of their participation in the Reconnect Program?

The Reconnect program will continue to support people that are experiencing disadvantage; participant eligibility encompasses four groups of people: young people; young people impacted by the justice system; mature participants, and asylum seekers. Definitions of these categories are detailed in the Reconnect Program Guidelines (2021).

Eligibility has been broadened across the program by including people that have attained their VCE and are in need of Reconnect support, however young people under 16 years of age are not eligible to participate in the Reconnect program as the Navigator program is available to them. A 17 year old or older person enrolled in school must be formally exempted from school attendance (unenrolled) by the school before registering in Reconnect.

Eligibility requirements include that young people must not have been engaged in education or training for six months or more before enrolling in a Reconnect program, and young people who have been previously registered in Reconnect are not eligible for the following year's program. Individuals can seek an exemption to these criteria which will be assessed by the Department on a case by case basis.

Mature participants must not have engaged in education or training for six months or more, and they must have been unemployed for six months or more, defined as working less than eight hours per week, before enrolling in a Reconnect program. The limit of eight hours per week take account of underemployment and seasonal/casual work. This criterion previously excluded vulnerable learners from participating in the program.

How does the Department of Education and Training define Regional Local Government Areas (LGAs) and will more than one organisation be funded to deliver in one LGA?

The Reconnect program will be utilising the LGA division of metropolitan and regional according to the Victorian Councils Map. This can be found at <https://www.viccouncils.asn.au/find-your-council/council-map>. The Department will consider funding multiple organisations within one LGA if there is a sufficient need.

How does the funding support enrolments in accredited training programs in TAFEs and RTOs?

The funding structure provides \$5,000 (ex GST) for metropolitan LGAs and \$5,500 (ex GST) for regional LGAs and this funding can be used to cover the costs of enrolling in an accredited course.

Each applicant can apply for up to three case loads, which will determine the participant target number and total value of the funding agreement. Is the maximum of three case loads to be applied per contract or is this applied for each LGA?

Each applicant can apply for a maximum of three (3) case loads per calendar year. The allocation will be evaluated and determined for each contracted year as required. There is no maximum number of case loads per LGA because case loads can be spread across more than one LGA.

The per participant rate is set at \$5,000 (ex GST) for metropolitan LGAs and \$5,500 (ex GST) for regional LGAs. Is the full rate required to be spent on supporting each participant or can flexibility be applied?

The participant rate is set and not negotiable, however flexibility can be applied to ensure all participants receive the best support possible. This means that a combined participant funding pool can be shared by more than one participant where one participant requires more funding support than the other. For example, \$4000 can be allocated to one participant and \$6000 on another. However, the total spend on each participant must be reported via Global Enterprise Management System (GEMS) for auditing purposes. For example, the participant rate can be used to fund brokerage and access to wrap-around support services, enrolment and fees associated with participation in education and training. Administration and overhead costs are currently integrated into the case load and staffing provision. The funding each organisation spends on overhead and administration is required to be reported to the Department.

How is the salary component of the Reconnect funding paid?

There is a salary and oncost component of funding to be paid on top of the per participant funding which consists of \$80,000 (ex GST) per case load. This contracted amount is inclusive of all costs and does not include CPI adjustment. This funding is to cover salary of on costs for Reconnect staff. The salary is paid every year of the contract but is dependent on the case load negotiated for that year. Should an organisation apply for half a case load they will be funded for half of the salary and oncost component, \$40,000.

The salary is not paid for an active caseload outside of the 12-month calendar period. This payment will be made in November of the year prior to the program commencing to allow organisations to put employment agreements in place prior to 1 January.

How do we let the Department know which cohorts we are looking to support?

The application form asks that applicants specify one primary cohort, however this may not be the only cohort that is supported. The purpose of this question is to ensure that the Department takes account of cohort coverage across the state. There are no additional incentives for specific cohorts because this consideration has been built into the funding structure.

Regarding the purpose of the program, does the Department define measure equity? Is this an outcome of the Reconnect program?

The purpose of the Reconnect program is to support people experiencing disadvantage to engage in education and training. Equity is not defined or measured as such, however the program has defined a number of outcomes that the Department determines as progressing equity for people and the community.

This focuses on increasing access, choice, skills and capabilities. Those outcomes have a strong focus on engagement in education or employment.

Reconnect Guidelines document refer to reporting of Work and Learning plans. What are Work and Learning Plans and how are they to be reported to the Department?

Work and Learning Plans are similar to the previously used Student Learning and Achievement Plan and identifies and documents the participant's education, training or employment goals. Work and Learning Plans must be reported via the GEMS. The Department also requires providers to report on the number of participants engaged in pre-accredited training and/ or accredited training and/or employment (for a minimum of 12 weeks). Increasing participant's hours of work is recognised as an outcome. The evidence required for these employment outcomes include a letter from the employer or payslips. These outcomes have a funding milestone attached to them and are required to be reported via the GEMS system.

What is the length of time that support is provided for a Reconnect participant?

The expectation is that the participant is supported for up to 18 months, if they register late in the year they will need to be supported into the following year. The funding for that participant would have already been paid in the year of their registration and the Reconnect organisation will need to manage their staff and finances to accommodate for this support. Participants must be tracked for six months after the conclusion of the Reconnect program and this is to be recorded in the GEMS system.

Regarding the governance and Community of Practices (CoP), if a provider is delivering reconnect in LGAs across several of the four regions - how is the provider represented?

Reconnect is a place-based program. Providers delivering the program in more than one region would be expected to participate in their respective CoPs unless an alternative option is negotiated with the Department.

Can an organisation apply to run their own program but also be a partner on another organisation's tender?

Yes, however community and provider capacity will be taken into account.

What is the application form format and can it be previewed prior to completing it?

The application form is an online form available at the Department's Reconnect webpage. The application form can be downloaded as a PDF in order to preview the questions but you must log in first and register first. Otherwise the Application Handbook document contains the Key Selection Criteria and word limits that are built into the application form.

CONTACT DETAILS

Please contact the Department's Reconnect Program team via Reconnect.Program@education.vic.gov.au or speak to Stefanie Wale, Senior Project Officer, Program Management Unit on 03 7022 0606.

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