Regional and Specialist Training Fund

Application Guidelines

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The Regional and Specialist Training Fund (RSTF) is a targeted funding stream that supports training for specific skills in regional areas of Victoria and specialist areas of industry need, as well as for priority cohorts whose needs are not being met by the government-subsidised training under the Skills First program.

The fund meets the needs of:

* Localised employer needs in regional Victoria (Regional)
* Specialised occupations of economic significance to Victoria, (Specialist)
* Specialist workforce priorities for Victoria
* Priority cohorts experiencing barriers to accessing training (Priority cohorts)

The fund is intended to provide industry with increased confidence in the training and TAFE system to respond to the needs of regional industries and confidence that specialised industries of economic significance to Victoria can be supported to grow through access to a skilled workforce.

The objectives of RSTF are to support the Victorian Government’s economic growth priorities, through focussed supports that:

* Assist identified rural and regional communities to provide training that meets their local industry and State Government economic needs
* Address place-based and occupation specific barriers to training that are significant to identified localities or industries/occupations that are needed to deliver Victorian Government economic priorities
* Support improved training outcomes for regional and metropolitan Victoria, for key priority cohorts identified by the Victorian Government
* Build greater alignment between workforce requirements and training needs identified in the Victorian Skills Plan.

Grant applications that respond to the skills needs identified in the Government Priorities document (viewable under ‘Priority Areas’ on the [RSTF website](https://www.vic.gov.au/regional-and-specialist-training-fund)) or a demonstrated need for a priority cohort will be given highest priority for consideration.

# Eligibility - Who can apply for a grant?

All Victorian training providers that hold a current Skills First VET Funding Contract are eligible to apply. This includes Victorian TAFEs (including dual sector universities), learn locals and private training providers.

Applicants must:

1. hold a current Skills First VET Funding Contract

2. have read the RSTF Guidelines 2022

3. understand and accept the assessment and eligibility requirements

4. ensure the application aligns to a priority area

# Project or activity types not eligible for funding

Project activities that will NOT be considered for grant funding under the RSTF program include:

* major capital works (e.g., new builds)
* the purchase of land
* maintenance works
* equipment and facilities primarily used by students not undertaking the proposed training
* equipment or minor capital works already funded through other government programs
* already-completed equipment purchases and minor capital works.

Funding Approach

RSTF funding is available to meet Victorian Government, industry and community demand for training that is too costly to deliver through the Skills First program. Each application will need to address at least one of the three identified priority areas below.

*If your project proposal includes components that are eligible for funding under other Victorian Government grant programs, the application can be considered for RSTF and provided with provisional approval under RSTF subject to funding being received through alternative funding arrangements. Alternative complementary funding arrangements must be outlined in the grant application.*

Priority area 1: Localised employer need in regional Victoria (Regional)

All regional areas of Victoria are eligible for RSTF funding through this stream. Regional grants address local skill needs across regional areas of Victoria, in the locations where employer and students reside. This includes training that is critical for Victoria’s regional economies to equip students with the training needed to support the local workforce skills required.

Priority area 2: Specialised occupations of economic significance to Victoria (Specialist)

Supporting specialist occupations is critical to facilitating the Government’s response to structural change occurring in the economy. Training in Victoria needs to be efficient, flexible and responsive to new and emerging industry specialisations.

The Government recognises that there are courses for specialised occupations of economic importance to Victoria, which are not currently delivered to levels demanded by industry. RSTF funding enables training for specialist occupations where training activity demanded by industry is small (but of high economic value) and the cost of delivering high-quality training is not viable at the mainstream subsidised rate.

Applicants are advised to refer to the RTSF website for guidance on the specialised occupations of economic importance to Victoria.

Priority area 3: Supports diverse cohorts to participate in training (Priority cohorts)

The Victorian Government is committed to supporting priority cohorts to engage in education and training. RSTF supports training for priority cohorts to access courses, where there is an identified cost barrier to delivering training that meets the needs of the cohort. For instance, where people with disability may experience accessibility barriers to training, or for women seeking to participate in training in male-dominated industries.

Applicants are advised to refer to the RTSF website for guidance on the Victorian Government’s current target cohorts for funding through RSTF.

# Duration

Funded projects are expected to be completed within 24 months of a grant being awarded.

# Key dates

The next RSTF funding will open on 1 March 2023. **Applications can be lodged outside of this round where a time-sensitive opportunity has been identified.** Please contact rstf@education.vic.gov.au to confirm when an out of session application will be assessed. Applicants will need to provide their rationale for the urgency of the issue being addressed.

The timeline for the next RSTF round is as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **RSTF Round** | **RSTF applications open** | **RSTF applications close** |
| **Round 2** | 1 March 2023 | 21 April 2023 |

# How to apply

All applicants will have access to guidance and resources to develop applications in line with Government priorities.

1. Complete a **‘preliminary application’** accessed from the [RSTF website](https://www.vic.gov.au/regional-and-specialist-training-fund).

Once a ‘preliminary application’ is completed, a representative of the department will call or email the nominated contact to discuss the proposed project and provide guidance on next steps.

1. A link to the application form will be provided after preliminary application has been submitted and reviewed. All applications are to be lodged using the Department’s on-line application form. Applications are to address the Assessment Criteria as set out in this document.

The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions will provide a video information session to inform potential applicants of the areas of focus for RSTF and current Victorian Government priorities. The video will be available to applicants on the RSTF website.

Enquiries should be submitted by email to: [rstf@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:rstf@education.vic.gov.au)

# What are the assessment criteria for RSTF grant applications?

Applications will be assessed by the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions against the eligibility and assessment criteria~~.~~

Applications must also address Additional Application Requirements below. Applicants will be notified if these requirements are not met and provided with an opportunity to re-apply in the following round.

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| --- |
| Assessment criteria  The submission addresses:  Regional need: ☐ Specialist need: ☐ Priority cohort need: ☐  *Weighted scores will be applied to the following criteria:*   1. Strength of alignment to Victorian Government identified priority in at least one of the three identified priority areas listed above – 60%  * Does the project align to supporting a stated Victorian Government priority region, occupation, cohort, or industry as identified in the Government Priorities (viewable under ‘Priority Areas’ on the [RSTF website](https://www.vic.gov.au/regional-and-specialist-training-fund)) * What is the Project Aim? Describe what you intend to do and the intended impact * What is the Skills gap need?   + how does your proposal address place-based and occupation specific barriers to training?   + How does your proposal support improved training outcomes for regional and/or metropolitan Victoria  1. Initiatives to maximise attraction and retention for priority cohorts – 20%  * Does the project maximise attraction and retention for priority cohorts?   + how will you attract your identified priority cohort/s?   + how will you support your identified priority cohort/s?  1. Training Delivery Capability, Capacity and Approach - 20%  * Does this project demonstrate a rationale for the proposed mode of delivery? * Describe how you will achieve short, medium and long-term outcomes? * Provide a comprehensive TAS aligned to the proposal   Additional Application Requirements  *To be considered for a grant, applications should also demonstrate the following requirements:*   1. Clearly outlined budget and justification of proposed expenditure  * Is the project budget within a satisfactory range for the planned activities? * Provide details on the extent of any co-investment * Provide breakdown on costings.   + Complete Grant Budget Template   + Expenses should be categorised in accordance with the RSTF Budget Glossary & Guidance   + Attach photos and designs where available, and quotes / independent estimates to verify costs wherever possible  1. Sustainability  * Is there clear evidence of post-funding sustainability for the proposed initiative?  1. Sharing best practice and learnings  * Does the project include satisfactory evidence of a plan to share best practice and learnings?  1. Evaluation Plan   • Does the proposal provide a completed evaluation plan template  All documents can be accessed from the [RSTF website](https://www.vic.gov.au/regional-and-specialist-training-fund). |
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