

Regional and Specialist Training Fund

Application Guidelines

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 [WTIF and RSTF Government Priorities](#) document 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.

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 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 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 specialised occupations of economic importance to Victoria. Applications that address the identified occupations will be prioritised for funding.

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 Victorian Government's current target cohorts for funding through RSTF. Applications that address the target cohorts will be prioritised for funding:

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 **21 September 2022**. There will be three rounds of RSTF throughout the financial year, occurring approximately every four months. **Applications can be lodged outside of these rounds 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 1	21 September 2022	28 October 2022

How to apply

DET will facilitate a virtual information session at the commencement of the financial year to inform applicants of the areas of focus for RSTF, current Victorian Government priorities and to respond to any queries. Information sessions are recorded and available to applicants on the RSTF website.

Different funding streams are available to TAFE and non-TAFE applicants. All applicants will have access to guidance and resources to develop applications in line with Government priorities. Once a 'preliminary application' is completed, a DET representative will call or email the nominated contact to discuss the proposed project and provide guidance on next steps.

The 'preliminary application' can be accessed from the RSTF website.

What are the assessment criteria for RSTF grant applications?

Applications will be assessed by the Department of Education and Training against the eligibility and assessment criteria, noting that applications that address the priorities identified by the Victorian Government will be prioritised for funding. 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.

Assessment criteria

The submission addresses:

Regional need: ☐

Specialist need: ☐

Priority cohort need: ☐

Weighted scores will be applied to the following criteria:

1. 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 <link to supplementary document>?

2. Initiatives to maximise attraction and retention for priority cohorts – 20%

- Does the project maximise attraction and retention for priority cohorts?

3. Training Delivery Capability, Capacity and Approach - 20%

- Does this project demonstrate a rationale for the proposed mode of delivery?

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?

2. Evaluation

- Does the proposal provide a completed DET evaluation plan template completed in line with Department expectations?

3. Sustainability

- Is there clear evidence of post-funding sustainability for the proposed initiative?

4. Sharing best practice and learnings

- Does the project include satisfactory evidence of a plan to share best practice and learnings?

**Note: If funded, the submitter will be required to provide a detailed project plan that includes an evaluation framework detailing how this project will provide benefits to the Victorian economy and/or increase access to training for priority cohorts. Budget line items should be within the threshold of benchmarks provided in DET's online application portal.*