

Regional and Specialist Training Fund (RSTF)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the regional and specialist training fund?

The Regional and Specialist Training Fund (RSTF) is a targeted funding stream under Skills First designed to meet regional industry and specialist training needs across Victoria.

RSTF focuses on meeting specialist training needs and the skills requirements of regions as determined by industry and government workforce priorities.

RSTF aims to do this by assisting regional communities to access training that meets their local industry needs, as well as facilitating training for specialist occupations that are not currently delivered at levels demanded by industry.

What is Regional?

Regional is defined as regional Victoria. The Fund will meet regional Victoria's employers and industry training needs. Regional areas of Victoria eligible for funding through this stream include:

- Barwon South West
- Gippsland
- Grampians
- Hume
- Loddon Mallee
- Mornington Peninsula
- Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges

What is Specialist?

Specialist is defined as specialised occupations or niche skills, considered to be of economic significance to Victoria.

Who is eligible to apply for RSTF?

Only training providers holding a current Skills First VET Funding Contract are eligible to receive RSTF.

Applications may be received from an eligible training provider or from partnerships or consortia involving TAFE, RTOs, industry associations and peak bodies.

What does the funding look like?

The Fund is administered through the payment of a grant. Applicants are required to submit an Application form that:

- Provides details of collaboration with industry and community partners with evidence of job vacancies and occupational need as identified by employers.
- Outlines the end-to-end process of course delivery, including the cost for the delivery of the course.

Qualifications and/or courses must be on an eligible provider's scope of registration. Applications for a qualification and/or course not on a provider's scope will be considered on merit.

How do I apply for funding under RSTF?

Before being given approval to proceed in developing a RSTF grant application, you need to prepare an Expression of Interest (EOI) to provide evidence that there is a need for the proposal.

The EOI will be reviewed by a representative from the Department who will contact you to discuss your proposal. If the proposal is considered appropriate to proceed, a link will be sent to the online application form.

[EOIs](#) can be accessed from the RSTF website.

If the proposal is considered appropriate to proceed, a link will be sent to the RSTF online application form. The application requires a justification of regional or specialist need for training including job outcomes, an outline of the end-to-end process of course delivery and the cost for the delivery of the course.

Details of collaboration with industry and community partners along with evidence of job vacancies and occupational need, as identified by employers, will also be required. Once submitted the RSTF application will be assessed by the Department.

Each application will be assessed against set criteria. Only applications that successfully meet the criteria will be considered for funding under the program.

EOIs can be submitted on a rolling basis in response to regional or specialist training needs.

What if we can't attract the planned number of students for the course to be financially viable under the agreed RSTF funding?

Your application to RSTF should consider student attraction, retention and engagement techniques, as well as build in projected student attrition rates in the relevant grant budget tab. Industry connections and partnerships can also help in the attraction of students.

The Department monitors student enrolment numbers. If you find you cannot attract the number of students to achieve financial viability for course delivery, even with the increased funding you receive under RSTF, it is important to contact the Department to discuss.

What is a Course Delivery Plan?

The application form asks for a Training and Assessment Strategy (TAS) to be attached or a description of the course delivery. This helps assessors understand the provider's capacity to deliver, the delivery approach, and where course content responds to specific regional or industry needs.

What kind of budget do I need to provide?

A budget is required to be attached to your online application, as well as a rationale explaining how this demonstrates value for money.

The budget template is provided when you receive your link to the RSTF online application. Each line item of expenditure and income is considered by the assessors so please ensure it is clear what is included and why.

Can I apply for funding that supports the development of training and assessment resources?

Yes you can. RSTF supports the development of quality training and assessment resources to provide the best learning outcomes to the student. RSTF will fund the training and assessment resources for a maximum of one time for any qualification. Where funding has already been provided to develop resources for the same qualification for which you are applying, you will be referred to the VET Shared Learning Resources (VSLR) [website](#).

If you wish to deliver a different elective stream or unit/s that have previously been funded by RSTF, you may apply for funding to develop these units. You will need to provide rationale in your application why these elective units will provide the learning outcomes required.

DET is collecting all training and resource materials developed from RSTF funding. The materials will be made available on the VET Shared Learning Resources site to be shared with Victorian TAFE providers.

What kind of reporting is required if my application for funding is successful?

Regular milestone reports pertaining to the application activities and budget line items will need to be completed throughout the project. This includes reports about teacher allocation, training activity, commencement numbers, student retention and any procurement.

A financial acquittal signed by the Chief Financial Officer is required with the final milestone report. Students or providers may be surveyed about job outcomes resulting from this funding application.

Can I vary the project in response to changes in the project environment?

The Department values industry consultation and encourages collaboration to ascertain the scope of the project prior to the application. However, the Department acknowledges that there are sometimes circumstances where the project environment changes and a variation to the project scope is appropriate to achieve the project outcomes. In some circumstances, the Department will consider a negotiation to vary the project contract.

Can my organisation apply for a course that is on the Free TAFE or Job Trainer Priority Courses list?

Yes you can. Free TAFE and Job Trainer removes the financial barriers to students however it is recognised these courses may still be operating in a thin or specialised market.

Can my organisation apply for a course if we have previously received Regional and Specialist Funding for that same course?

Yes you can. An EOI that outlines the on-going need for the course will need to be submitted. If the proposal is considered appropriate to proceed, a link will be sent to the RSTF online application form and must be completed as a new application.

Where do I go for more information?

All questions and applications relating to RSTF should be directed to either the Department's representative for your region or you can contact the RSTF Program Team at rstf@education.vic.gov.au