

WORKFORCE TRAINING INNOVATION FUND

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Victorian Government has implemented reforms to the training and TAFE system, *Skills First*, to improve the quality, stability and adaptability of the system and align it to industry needs, where ‘real training leads to real jobs’.

The Workforce Training Innovation Fund (WTIF) is one of the targeted funding streams that is being delivered to support these reforms.

FUNDS OVERVIEW

WHAT IS THE WORKFORCE TRAINING INNOVATION FUND?

WTIF provides grant funding for industry and training provider partnerships to develop and deliver innovative strategies for improving training outcomes and the relevance of training to industry.

WTIF also has capacity to provide a limited amount of seed funding for activities such as scoping studies, research, consultancy and workshops, to support development of WTIF grant funding proposals. This excludes proposal writing services.

The fund has an initial \$40 million in the first year. WTIF is a four-year fund.

WHAT IS INNOVATION?

Innovation is broadly a new idea, device or method, or the act or process of introducing it.

Innovation expresses itself in three distinct ways:

- Incremental change
- Radical change
- Systematic change

WTIF invites parties to consider innovation broadly and how any proposal can promote learning for the sector.

WHAT PROJECTS WILL BE FUNDED UNDER WTIF?

Grants will be provided to support partnership projects that align with one or more of the four fund categories:

- **Future Growth Sectors** - Design of skills development approaches for new, emerging industries and Victorian Government priority sectors
- **New training programs and methods** - Innovation in course development, product design and delivery in support of VET sector improvement
- **Workforce Training and Skills Development** – improving delivery of workplace skills to support business productivity
- **Applied research** – Research solving ‘real-world’ industry and business productivity challenges, that lead to innovation in product development, design and delivery.

WHAT TYPE OF TRAINING ACTIVITY WILL BE ELIGIBLE FOR WTIF FUNDING?

Grant funding proposals can include accredited or pre-accredited and non-accredited training.

A link to future accreditation, embedding training practices or training system alignment is required for pre-accredited and non-accredited training.

The training delivery portion will be funded through the Skills First Contestable Training Market, provided that relevant eligibility requirements and application processes are met.

DOES WTIF SUPPORT INITIATIVES THAT INCREASE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WITHIN A WORKFORCE?

Yes. We would encourage applicants to include evidence of social and/or economic benefits stemming from the proposed project

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ON WTIF?

For more information visit (the *Skills First* website) www.skillsfirst.vic.gov.au

For general queries, information on facilitation support, or to register for email notifications and updates email w.tif@edumail.vic.gov.au

ELIGIBILITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR WTIF GRANT FUNDING?

Grant funding is only available for industry and training provider partnerships. This can include Consortia.

WHY DO I HAVE TO HAVE A PARTNERSHIP TO SUBMIT A GRANT FUNDING PROPOSAL?

A key focus of WITF is strengthening partnerships between and industry and the training and TAFE system to better respond and adapt courses and materials for existing, new and emerging industry.

Partnerships will bring together training providers and employers to design, test and deliver projects that:

- improve the quality and relevance of training to industry; assist industry or enterprises to develop and deploy new skills required for productivity improvement; and
- demonstrate a direct link to workplace outcomes.

Therefore, a partnership or Consortia is a requirement of WTIF.

DOES THE PARTNERSHIP FOR SEED FUNDING APPLICATIONS HAVE TO BE FORMAL?

No. A partnership does not have to be formal or established at the point of application for Seed Funding. Partnership development is an approved activity for Seed Funding.

A partnership needs to be formalised before a Grant Funding Proposal can be submitted.

CAN AN INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION WHO IS ALSO A REGISTERED TRAINING PROVIDER APPLY AS A PARTNERSHIP IN THEIR OWN RIGHT (AS BOTH AN INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION AND TRAINING ORGANISATION)?

When an Industry Associations is also a Registered Training Provider (RTO) we require partnership applications that include member employers/ workplaces that the association represents.

Applications may comprise a consortia arrangement where the partnership is between the RTO and member employer/ workplace and the Industry Association is involved as a consortium member.

This includes entities that operate in all priority growth sectors.

CAN A UNIVERSITY BE THE LEAD IN A PARTNERSHIP APPLYING FOR FUNDING?

A dual sector University is able to be the lead in a partnership through their Vocational division.

The higher education division is able to participate through a Consortia arrangement as a member. Such applications still require an Industry and a training provider (i.e., the VET component of the dual sector provider).

IS A NATIONAL INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION ELIGIBLE TO APPLY TO WTIF AS A LEAD?

Yes, provided that it is under a Consortia arrangement that includes a training provider and a Victorian based member employer/ workplace that meet WTIF eligibility requirements.

DOES THE TRAINING PROVIDER HAVE TO BE THE LEAD ORGANISATION?

No. The lead organisation can be either the training provider or the industry.

DOES AN RTO NEED TO BE APPROVED FOR SKILLS FIRST FUNDING TO APPLY FOR WTIF?

No. However the Selection Criteria requires training providers to demonstrate their track-record of quality training delivery.

DO RTOS THAT ARE ALREADY WORKING WITH INDUSTRY BUSINESSES TO DEVELOP PROGRAMS NEED FORMAL AGREEMENTS IN PLACE TO APPLY FOR THE WTIF?

Yes, evidence of a partnership is required and may include a memorandum of understanding or partnership agreement.

PROGRAM FUNDING

HOW MUCH FUNDING CAN I APPLY FOR UNDER WTIF?

Funding through WTIF is available to projects of varying size, duration and complexity.

Amounts for grants and seed funding are capped as follows:

- a maximum of \$5 million for grant funding proposals
- a maximum of \$50 000 for seed funding applications.

ARE CO-CONTRIBUTIONS COMPULSORY UNDER WTIF?

Preference will be given to proposals that include a financial or in-kind contribution and that include a strategy for ongoing activity post funding.

IS ONGOING FUNDING AVAILABLE UNDER WTIF?

No. Ongoing funding is not available.

Preference will be given to applications that demonstrate a strategy for ongoing activity post grant funding.

The Department encourages the inclusion of a sustainability plan that addresses any long-term funding and sustainability considerations, as relevant to individual projects.

CAN I APPLY FOR FUNDING FROM OTHER LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SOURCES FOR THE SAME PROJECT?

Yes. Any collaboration with other parties where funds can be leveraged to enhance the project is acceptable, provided that duplication of funding does not occur.

It is expected that a breakdown of any additional funding or subsidies will be provided and will demonstrate no duplication in funding.

Preference will be given to applications that demonstrate a strategy for ongoing activity post grant funding.

The Department encourages the inclusion of a sustainability plan that addresses any long-term funding and sustainability considerations, as relevant to individual projects.

GRANT FUNDING

IS THERE A MINIMUM OR MAXIMUM LENGTH OF PROJECT DURATION FOR GRANT FUNDING UNDER WTIF?

The maximum project length is 24 months unless otherwise negotiated.

IS THERE A LIMIT ON OVERHEAD COSTS FOR WTIF PROJECTS?

No, a figure has not been set for project overhead. We expect that the evidence provided in proposals will be adequate to substantiate the amount sought.

CAN WTIF PROVIDE FUNDS TO INCREASE DELIVERY HOURS WHERE THERE IS NOT ENOUGH DELIVERY SCOPE FOR THE HOURS REQUIRED?

WTIF does not provide funding to top up subsidies provided under Skills First contracts. Providers will need to liaise and negotiate under their particular contract.

SEED FUNDING

WHAT ARE THE SEED FUNDING PARAMETERS AND DO THEY INCLUDE TRAVEL?

The fund will not cover travel costs.

There are five categories for funding for activities that support development of proposals:

- scoping studies,
- research,
- consultancy,
- workshops and
- other specialist activities.

Seed Funding is capped at a maximum of \$50 000 for development activities in total.

WHAT IS THE EXPECTED TIMEFRAME FOR SEED FUNDING APPLICATIONS?

All proposals received will be acknowledged within 3 to 5 business days.

Correspondence will include advice on expected timeframes.

CAN A SEED FUNDING APPLICATION SEEK TO DELIVER AN OUTCOME IN ISOLATION FROM A GRANT FUNDING PROPOSAL?

Seed Funding is explicitly available for the development of Grant Funding Proposals and applications are expected to identify deliverables that are directly related to the preparation of a proposal.

Grant Funding is available for varying size, scope and value proposals and can be applied for directly.

The amount of evidence expected in a Grant Funding Proposal is directly linked to the size, scope and value of the proposal.

IS INITIAL INVESTIGATION TO IDENTIFY A "PROBLEM/ OR OPPORTUNITY" AN APPROVED ACTIVITY FOR SEED FUNDING?

Preliminary investigation to identify a problem/ opportunity would need to take place to inform a Seed Funding Application and align it with one or more of the fund categories.

Scoping activity to establish the size, depth or detail of the identified problem/ opportunity would be an eligible activity for seed funding.

SUBMISSIONS

HOW DO I APPLY FOR FUNDING UNDER WTIF?

The process for submission of Seed Funding Applications and Grant Funding Proposals is outlined in the WTIF Guidelines.

To apply for Seed Funding, an application form must be completed and submitted electronically, and to apply for Grant Funding, a proposal form must be completed and submitted electronically.

Interested applicants should read the WTIF Guidelines before completing an application form. To obtain a copy of the WTIF Guidelines and relevant forms, visit (*Skills First* website) at www.skillsfirst.vic.gov.au

WHAT ARE THE SUBMISSION DATES FOR WTIF?

WTIF is open for submission of Seed Funding Applications and Grant Funding Proposals.

Seed Funding Applications are assessed as they are received and Grant Funding Proposals will be assessed on a monthly basis starting end of March 2017.

WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERESTED APPLICANTS?

To ensure fairness and maintain the integrity of the application process, the Department cannot provide applicants with individual assistance to develop their applications for funding.

In addition to information sessions, facilitation sessions and one on one consultation with Principal Regional Advisors (PRAs) will be made available upon request.

For details about facilitation sessions and to contact a PRA email wtif@edumail.vic.gov.au or visit www.skillsfirst.vic.gov.au

IS THERE A CAP ON THE NUMBER OF SUBMISSIONS THAT CAN BE MADE?

No, there is no cap, but each seed funding application or grant funding proposal must be different.

As outlined in the WTIF Guidelines, there are a number of filters employed during the evaluation stage, including assessment of the capability to manage the project(s), geographic spread, mix of project types and sizes, and sectors covered. Consequently, it is important that submissions are comprehensive and reflect the investment of applicants in preparing them.

HOW WILL SUBMISSIONS BE ASSESSED?

Seed Funding Applications will be assessed on the merits of the application, as assessed against four weighted criteria:

- The project proposed for development is consistent with the objectives of WTIF – 40%
- Alignment of development activity(s) proposed to the preparation of a Grant Funding Proposal and evidence provided that demonstrates the need for the activity(s) – 40%
- Alignment of deliverables identified to the development activity(s) proposed – 10%
- Quality of application – 10%

Grant Funding Proposals will be evaluated on the merits of the proposal, as assessed against six weighted criteria:

- Industry Partnerships – 20%
- Innovation – 20%
- Economic and/or Social Impact -15%
- Student/Leaner – 15%
- Value for Money – 15%
- Capability and Capacity – 15%

WILL UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS BE NOTIFIED?

Yes. All applicants for Seed and Grant funding will be advised in writing of the status of their application.

CAN UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS REQUEST A REVIEW?

Yes, unsuccessful applicants may lodge a request for the Panel to review the decision by email to wtif@edumail.vic.gov.au

ASSESSMENT

IS THERE MORE INFORMATION ON THE WTIF PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK?

Yes, the WTIF Performance and Evaluation Framework will be made available at www.skillsfirst.vic.gov.au and all stakeholders registered on the WTIF mailing list will be notified by email.

IN THE ASSESSMENT OF SUBMISSIONS, WILL ADVICE BE SOUGHT OUTSIDE OF THE DEPARTMENT?

Yes, where appropriate, advice will be sought from relevant specialists and/or experts in the assessment of proposals.

WILL LONGER-TERM, ESTABLISHED PARTNERSHIPS BE VIEWED MORE FAVOURABLY IN THE ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS?

No. Whilst long-term, established partnerships may demonstrate qualities of sustainability, new partnerships may demonstrate innovation. We would expect that responses to the assessment criteria would capture the strengths and benefits of the proposal as a whole.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND CONTRACTING

HOW WILL FUNDS FOR SUCCESSFUL GRANT FUNDING PROPSALS BE RELEASED?

Release of funds for successful projects will be aligned with milestones as negotiated for and captured in the Common Funding Agreement.

HOW WILL INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS BE DETERMINED/ ASSIGNED UNDER WTIF?

The Victorian Government standard position on Intellectual Property is outlined in the core Terms and Conditions of the Victorian Common Funding Agreement.

The standard position will apply.

The ownership and licensing of intellectual property rights will be addressed in each funding agreement awarded to organisations that submit successful grant proposals. The *Whole of Victorian Government Intellectual Property Policy* can be made available on request.

WHAT ARE THE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS?

Seed funding recipients will be required to complete acquittals of funds expended and submit deliverables as outlined in funding agreements.

Grant funding recipients will be required to report against output and outcomes indicators and measures as outlined in funding agreements.

The WTIF Performance and Evaluation Framework will stipulate the reporting requirements and outline the expected evaluation activity for projects funded by WTIF.