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| Higher Education and Skills Group**Participation Branch Memo****Department of Education and Training** |

***NUMBER:*** *2016 / February / 02*

**TO:**

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| Learn Local organisations *– ALL* | ACFE Board | ACFE Regional Councils |

**FROM:** Jane DeWildt, Acting Director, Participation Branch

**DATE: 2 February 2016**

**SUBJECT:** *Reconnect Grants Program – Application process now open for 2016*

**ACTIONS / CRITICAL DATES:**

* RTOs on the Foundation Skills Approved Provider List have been invited to apply to the Reconnect Grants Program between 1-19 February 2016.

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Applications are open for the *Reconnect: Engagement and Learning Support (REALS) Grants Program*. REALS grants will help training organisations provide support for young, disengaged school leavers aged 15-24 years to enter further education, training or employment.

The REALS Program, part of the Back to Work Scheme, is providing $14 million over two years to RTOs on the Foundation Skills Approved Provider List for 2016 at: [www.education.vic.gov.au/training/learners/courses/pages/rtolist.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/training/learners/courses/pages/rtolist.aspx).

The program is responding to the multiple barriers vulnerable young people face in remaining in training and transitioning into the workforce or further training.

The REALS Program will enable eligible RTOs to:

* Undertake outreach to recruit young people, aged 15-24 who are not in education, training or full time employment and who left school without year 12;
* Assess students’ learning and non-learning needs and career goals, and develop an agreed learning plan;
* Provide support services that will help them start and stay in training;
* Arrange supervised workplace experience to increase employability; and
* Assist students in transitioning to employment or further training.

Partnerships between RTOs and Learn Locals and other community service providers are integral to the program’s aim of engaging young people and providing them with the supports they need. Learn Local organisations may be contacted by these RTOs in the near future or may decide to contact those operating in their area to discuss potential collaboration under the REALS program.

Applications for REALS program grants will be accepted until **19 February 2016**. Grant recipients will be announced in early March with initiatives commencing at the end of March 2016.

Queries about the REALS Grants Program should be addressed to your Regional Office or via email to: training.participation@edumail.vic.gov.au.