



# Regional, Rural and Remote Home Care Workforce Support Program Manual 2024-2025

November 2024

## **About this manual**

The Department of Health and Aged Care (the department) has prepared this manual for Regional, Rural and Remote Home Care Workforce Support Program (RR&R HCWSP) grant applicants and recipients.

It explains what the RR&R HCWSP is and how it operates and will form part of each grant recipient's Grant Agreement. The department reviews and updates this manual regularly. This version of the RR&R HCWSP Program Manual was published in November 2024.

## **Where to find more information**

More information about the RR&R HCWSP, including a copy of this manual, is available on the department's website.

# Table of Contents

- Regional, Rural and Remote Home Care Workforce Support..... 1**
- About this manual ..... 2
- Where to find more information..... 2
- Introduction ..... 4
  - The Regional, Rural and Remote Home Care Workforce Support Program..... 4
  - About the Program ..... 4
  - History of the Regional, Rural and Remote Home Care Workforce Support Program..... 5
  - About Aged Care..... 5
- Eligible Grant Activities ..... 6
- Additional information for applicants ..... 9
  - What qualifications, skills or checks do grant recipients need?..... 9
- Eligible expenditure..... 10
- Eligible locations..... 12

# Introduction

## **The Regional, Rural and Remote Home Care Workforce Support Program**

The Regional, Rural and Remote Home Care Workforce Support Program is a 2024-25 Budget measure which will focus on building the home care workforce in regional, rural, and remote locations where workforce shortages are the most acute and will allow for an additional 4,000 Personal Care Workers (PCWs) to be engaged in these regions.

The program will also support aged care providers to build their capacity to expand their own local workforce and support PCWs in these regions to develop the skills and training required to work in the sector.

This builds on work done by the previous Home Care Workforce Support Program, which ceased on 30 June 2024 and attracted 13,000 new PCWs to the home care sector nationally over two years.

## **About the Program**

The 2024-25 Budget included investments to support an increase in the number of home care workers in regional, rural, and remote areas where workforce shortages are the most acute. This included \$20.134 million over three years (2024-25 to 2026-27) to attract, retain, train, and support personal care workers to the home care workforce.

The purpose of the program is to build the home care workforce in regional, rural, and remote locations (Modified Monash Model (MMM) 3 to 7 areas) where workforce shortages are the most acute by providing funding for an additional 4,000 Personal Care Workers (PCWs) to be engaged in these regions.

The program also aims to support aged care providers build their capacity to expand their own local workforce and support PCWs develop the skills and training required to work in the sector.

The Department of Health and Aged Care (the department) anticipates delivery of the program in several regions of acute workforce need in MMM 3 to 7 areas in Statistical Area Level 3 (SA3) regions.

Grantees must demonstrate:

1. an understanding of existing programs and initiatives run or funded by Commonwealth, State or Territory governments to support workforce development.
2. previous experience in and knowledge of cultural awareness and trauma responsiveness, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas and in First Nations communities.

3. how they work in partnership with other care providers (including aged care, disability support and veteran support providers) region to promote growth of the home care workforce. This strategy could include linking with care providers in their region to build on resources, facilities, administrative arrangements, and relationships.
4. knowledge of local communities and the unique needs and diversity of the region and to work with providers to recruit to meet those needs.
5. why the region they are proposing to service is one of acute workforce shortages.

### **History of the Regional, Rural and Remote Home Care Workforce Support Program**

The grant opportunity builds on the previous Home Care Workforce Support Program (GO4990) which ran from 2021-22 to 2023-24. The program assisted the home care sector to increase the size of the personal care workforce by 13,000 workers nationally. The evaluation of GO4990 found that:

- There is a need to improve the skills and capacity of providers regarding HR processes, including attraction, recruitment, screening, interviewing, placing workers in jobs quicker and developing the workforce.
- There is a need to adapt to labour market conditions and the sector needs to be agile and innovative, for example speeding up the time taken to finalise recruitment processes.
- Grant recipients with existing relationships with industry stakeholders and aged care providers and/or skills in relationship building were able to undertake activities more efficiently and effectively.
- Grant recipients who had a physical presence in communities were able to develop relationships and local knowledge about candidates, providers, and other stakeholders more easily.
- There is also a need to build strong relationships with registered training organisations and show providers the value of taking on students and trainees.

While this program will focus on the aged care workforce, the disability support and veterans' workforces may also benefit where providers also deliver these services.

### **About Aged Care**

Aged care is the support provided to older people who need help in their own home or who can no longer live at home. It can include:

- Help with everyday living
- Assistive equipment and home modifications
- Personal care and health care
- Accommodation

Aged care can help people to:

- Stay connected to their community
- Be more independent
- Take care of their health and safety
- Meet their cultural and social needs

## Eligible Grant Activities

Grant activities must promote links between relevant industry stakeholders, which could include:

- aged care providers
- First Nations organisations
- Recruitment agencies/job service providers
- Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)
- Group Training Organisations (GTOs)
- aged care peak bodies, and
- other businesses or organisations with relevant skills with a view to improve attraction and retention for potential PCWs.

Grantees must understand existing programs and initiatives run or funded by Commonwealth, State or Territory governments to support workforce development.

Grant activity must include activities that support the recruitment and training of personal care workers and improve the capability of home care providers to attract, train and retain workers as outlined in the three themes below. Examples of the activities that may be undertaken under each theme are provided below.

To support meeting the unique needs and diversity of the region/s the program will be delivered in, other delivery strategies that meet the objectives of the program may be proposed by grantees. The department will assess these on a case-by-case basis.

**Note:** aged care and home care providers must not be charged by the grant recipient for activities delivered under the program.

### **Theme 1: Activities to recruit new personal care workers to the sector, such as:**

- facilitating information sessions to promote careers in the care and support sector, for example:
  - place based recruitment through job fairs
  - career expos
  - social media
  - community groups
  - school/university networks
  - men's sheds, and



- disability support providers.
- undertaking recruitment in line with the [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan 2021-2031](#) (National Workforce Plan), which aims to increase Indigenous employment in the national health workforce to 3.43% by 2031.
- undertaking pre-screening, pre-employment and skills assessment of potential new PCWs to ensure they possess the required personal characteristics for working in the home care sector (such as working with vulnerable people checks, psychometric testing, etc).
- providing opportunities to expose potential workers to the aged care environment before commencing training or employment, such as youth engagement programs and career discovery days.
- working with employment services providers, RTOs, GTOs and Apprentice Connect Australia Providers to promote employment opportunities to a wider range of jobseekers.

**Theme 2: Activities to support personal care workers to complete high-quality training, such as:**

- identifying TAFEs and RTOs that can deliver high quality training to meet local home care providers' requirements.
- partnering with RTOs to support individuals to complete the:
  - Entry into Care Roles Skill Set
  - Certificate III in Individual Support
  - Certificate IV in Ageing Support
- ensuring students meet minimum requirements for work in the sector, before they are enrolled in formal training. This could include police checks, drivers' licence, literacy in communication, work-readiness, and digital skills.
- brokering recognition of prior learning (RPL) opportunities to support candidates with transferrable skills to enter the sector.
- working with RTOs and employers to broker work placement opportunities.
- mentoring students during work placement and training.
- supporting home care providers to provide backfilling, appropriate supervision, mentoring or buddy arrangements to students while on placement. These programs must meet the expectations and capacity of individual home care providers.
- supporting home care providers to identify existing workers with the skills and aptitude to mentor or provide buddy support to new recruits to the sector.
- upskilling existing workers to build their capability to supervise students during their work placement.
- establishing peer support programs to help encourage workers to complete training.

- assisting individuals recruited through the program to use other funding sources to support their training for example, through State and Territory Government subsidies and grants, Fee-Free Tafe.
- working with home care providers and RTOs to provide support to students while on work placement for example:
  - ensuring clear roles and responsibilities
  - best practice for on-boarding.
  - providing or ensuring appropriate supervisory/mentoring arrangements in place.
  - offering other support as required to support students to complete their training for example pastoral support, complaint handling and whistleblower/professional reporting pathways.
- subsidising cost of travel to promote access to training. This could include bringing training providers to a community or allowing students to travel to complete training.
- identifying innovative models to deliver training that addresses challenges in rural and remote areas for example through virtual or augmented reality or mobile training.

**Theme 3: Activities to enhance the capability of home care providers to attract, train and retain workers, such as:**

- providing tailored advice regarding recruitment strategies and workforce planning.
- establishing communities of practice for aged care providers in the region to share and work together on workforce issues.
- developing relationships between aged care providers and existing government programs and fostering connections with existing providers of these programs and initiatives.
- In collaboration with home care providers:
  - develop strategies to create a supportive working environment
  - improve induction of new recruits into the workplace, and
  - increase retention rates (for example developing on-boarding programs)
- mentoring new personal care workers, to build confidence and resilience and overcome challenges they may experience.
- supporting providers with rostering, including shared workforce pools, to provide high quality jobs with enough hours for workers.
- establishing peer support programs to help new personal care workers transition into sustained employment.
- promoting online support networks and remote nursing support networks available to people in regional and rural areas.



- assisting residential aged care providers to undertake the above activities to increase use of home care services and aged care more in thin markets.

Continuous improvement of how the program is delivered will be required to ensure its objectives and intended outcomes are achieved in the timeframes. To help this, grant recipients will be required to participate in an ongoing National Governance Committee. We expect the National Governance Committee, managed by the department will meet quarterly to discuss ongoing activities, performance, data, and successful strategies for achieving the program's objectives.

Operational details about the National Governance Committee will be determined in consultation with grant recipients. However, we expect the National Governance Committee process will help grant recipients to participate in a national evaluation of activities to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement. It is also likely that the National Governance Committee will include representatives from the department, relevant unions, [HumanAbility](#), grant recipients and technical experts.

Grant recipients will also be required to participate in evaluation activities, including data collection on key performance indicators.

To maximise their effectiveness, grant recipients must work in partnership with other care and support providers (including aged care, disability support and veteran support providers) in their specified region to promote growth of the home care workforce.

For instance, this strategy could include linking with aged care providers or other care and support providers in their region to build on resources, facilities, administrative arrangements, and relationships.

## **Additional information for applicants**

Knowledge of local communities and cultural safety and sensitivity are also of key importance for the program. Grant recipients must consider the unique needs and diversity of the region and to work with providers to recruit to meet those needs.

Successful applicants must be able to give support to a range of home care providers in their nominated region/s and should not favour individual home care providers, particular registered training organisations or specific human resource organisations. Preference will be given to applicants with demonstrated reach across the home care sector in their nominated region.

Grant recipients must show they approached 80% of the home care providers in their eligible region to provide services over the course of the grant activity.

### **What qualifications, skills or checks do grant recipients need?**

All applicants must show previous experience in and knowledge of cultural sensitivities, particularly in regional and remote areas.

Home Care Service Providers must be delivering services under the [Home Care Packages Program](#).

Registered Training Organisations wanting to participate must:

- provide nationally recognised aged care training, and
- receive State and/or Territory Government funding.

Group Training Organisations wanting to participate must:

- be registered as a Group Training Organisation in their jurisdiction
- provide nationally recognised aged care training, and
- meet all the [National Standards for Group Training Organisations \(2017\)](#).

If you are applying on behalf of a Registered or Group Training Organisation, or if a Registered or Group Training Organisation is a member of your Consortia, you must attach relevant evidence demonstrating that the Registered or Group Training Organisation meet the additional eligibility criteria.

Consultancy and business advice firms wanting to participate must give advice to the care and support sector.

## Eligible expenditure

You can only spend the grant on eligible expenditure you have incurred for eligible grant activities during the grant period.

Eligible expenditure items include:

- **Recruit and retain new personal care workers to the home care sector in MMM 3-7 regions**
  - Direct costs with running information sessions, participation in job fairs, and career expos.
  - Direct costs with undertaking pre-screening, pre-employment and skills assessment of candidates to onboard suitable new workers through interviews, police checks, working with vulnerable people checks or using other pre-screening or aptitude tools.
  - establishing communities of practice and mentoring services for new workers.
  - Promote employment opportunities with employment services providers, RTOs, GTOs and Apprentice Connect Australia Providers.
- **Support high quality training for new personal care workers**
  - establishing support programs to promote new students' completion of the Entry to Care Skillset, Certificate III in Individual Support or Certificate IV in Ageing Support.

- brokering placement opportunities for existing students and supporting home care providers to create new work placement opportunities in aged care.
- brokering recognition of prior learning (RPL) for potential workers to reduce the training burden for new recruits with transferrable skills.
- subsidising cost of travel and incidentals to promote access to training for students in regional, rural and remote communities (MMM 3-7) with preference given to those in MMM 6-7 regions. This could include bringing training providers to a community or allowing students to travel to undertake training.
- supporting innovative models of training both in person and online.
- **Improve retention of new personal care workers in the sector**
  - helping home care providers identify workers with personal traits suited to becoming supervisors and frontline managers.
    - Note: Existing employees upskilling to undertake a supervisor role **must** hold a Certificate III in Individual Support (or equivalent) or higher.
  - upskilling/training to increase the number of supervisors to promote work placement and supervision in the home care setting (training could include non-accredited training programs or the unit of competency *BSBLDR413 Lead Effective Workplace Relationships*).
  - a maximum of \$4,300 per supervisor role is available for grant recipients to allocate to the following activities.
    - subsidising the costs of supervisors for new recruits (must not exceed 50% of the staff member's earnings)
    - backfilling to allow existing staff to perform new supervisory duties, this may include undertaking training to improve supervisor/mentoring skills.
  - engaging registered training organisations to provide training in supervisory and mentoring skills.
  - incentives for existing workers to provide mentoring to new workers and support buddy shifts.
  - domestic travel support to allow participation in supervisor training or to facilitate backfilling in rural, regional, and remote locations, and
  - assisting residential aged care providers to undertake the above activities to increase use of home care services and aged care more in thin markets.
- **Enhance the capability of providers to attract, retain, train and support workers**

- enhancing capability of providers to facilitate work placements for students and undertake independent recruitment processes, including through establishing relationships between home care providers, local RTOs, and employment agencies.
  - marketing campaigns/stakeholder engagement activities (funding for these activities is capped at 5% of the total grant amount).
  - establishing and operating a community of practice to bring together key stakeholders, including providers, RTOs, and job service providers to drive continuous improvement throughout the duration of the program.
  - administration costs which can include wages of grant recipient's employees working on eligible grant activities, accounting, auditing, and information technology etc, and
  - venue/facility hire.
- **Evaluation and continuous improvement activities**
    - participation in independent evaluation and reporting activities.
    - contribution to or participation in governance committees run by the department.
    - external management advisory services (performance audits) designed to measure implementation progress and create opportunities to strengthen outcome delivery or manage risk, and
    - audit services to give independent assurance that the acquittal/expenditure report is compiled in accordance with the grant agreement.

If your application is successful, we may ask you to verify project costs that you provided in your application. You may need to provide evidence such as quotes for major costs.

Not all expenditure on your grant activity may be eligible for grant funding. The Decision Maker will decide what is eligible expenditure and may give more guidance on eligible expenditure if required.

You must incur the expenditure on your grant activities between the start date and end or completion date of your grant agreement for it to be eligible.

## Eligible locations

Eligible regions **must** meet all the following criteria:

- Be in SA3 regions in MMM 3 to MMM 7 where there is a market for home care services and workforce shortages in the home care sector. For example: the South Coast SA3 region which incorporates MMM 4 and MMM 5 locations and has a 65+ population of 28%, or the Wheatbelt North and South SA3 regions

which incorporate MMM 4 to MMM 6 locations, have a 65+ population of 20% and where employers are unable to fill or considerable difficulty filling vacancies.

- A population eligible for aged care services (65+ or 50+ for First Nations people).
- Evidence of home care provider interested in further developing their workforce capability through the Program.
- Opportunity and willingness to work towards integrated service delivery across the care and support economy. For example: integration with Integrated Care and Commissioning (ICC) sites and Community Development Program (CDP), collaborating with reform efforts underway for remote employment services including a focus on increasing local care sector workforces, and providers in the region who offer aged care, disability support and veteran support.
- RTO or GTO availability to support training for the eligible region.

There will be some flexibility to allow communities on the border of two regions to be serviced as part of the administrative region that best fits with their primary networks and connections, for example remote services in northern areas of South Australia may better align with Northern Territory regions. Applicants must outline exactly which areas they intend to service, and this will inform the amount of funding they are allocated. Successful applicants must also show why the region they are proposing to service is one of acute workforce shortages.