Frequently Asked Questions

Suburban University Study Hubs Program – 2024

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Contents

General information

1. **What is a Suburban University Study Hub?**
- A Suburban University Study Hub is a facility that improves access to tertiary education for people living in outer metropolitan and peri-urban areas who may face barriers to accessing and completing tertiary education.
- Suburban University Study Hubs support students enrolled at any Australian tertiary institution by providing dedicated study facilities and wrap-around services which may include:
  o Infrastructure: study spaces, break out areas, video conferencing, computer facilities, internet access
  o Administrative and academic skills support services: developing writing and research skills, managing administrative processes
  o Student support services: general wellbeing support, study advice, help accessing student services, supporting students with paid placements and Work Integrated Learning, careers advice.

2. **What is the difference between a traditional university campus and a Suburban University Study Hub?**
- A traditional university campus typically indicates co-located physical facilities (as appropriate to the location, disciplines/degrees taught, and the students enrolled); teaching facilities, including laboratories, studios, lecture theatres, and tutorial rooms; research facilities; library; student study and workspaces; leisure spaces; staff offices; and student accommodation. It also connotes that a full range of services is delivered at that co-location: lectures; tutorials; academic and student support services (including academic advisement); and administrative services. Traditional campuses are also generally limited to the one provider which operates that campus.
- Suburban University Study Hubs are not education providers. They provide a range of support to students studying at any tertiary education institution. This includes study spaces, video conferencing, computing facilities, and internet access, as well as administrative, general wellbeing, academic and career skills support for students.
- Suburban University Study Hubs are provider agnostic, meaning they welcome any student studying at any Australian tertiary institution.
- Program funding is not intended to replicate the existing traditional university campus model, rather to improve access to tertiary education for outer metropolitan/peri-urban students by providing flexible support so they can choose to study locally for part or all their degree.

3. **Do Suburban University Study Hubs deliver courses locally?**
- Suburban University Study Hubs are not education providers.
- Suburban University Study Hubs are funded to provide support for students studying with any Australian tertiary institution who face increased barriers to attend a significant physical university campus (for example, due to limited public transport options and/or long commute times).
- Suburban University Study Hubs may choose to offer professional learning or short courses to support their local community. The courses delivered by each Suburban University Study Hub will depend on community need.

4. **What is the difference between a Regional University Study Hub and a Suburban University Study Hub?**

- The Regional University Study Hubs program has been in operation since 2018. There are 46 existing Regional University Study Hubs, 41 of which are currently open with the other 5 expected to open by Semester 1 2025.
- The Regional University Study Hubs support students in regional or remote Australia. More information is available on the Regional University Study Hubs website.
- The Suburban University Study Hubs are designed to encourage aspiration and participation in tertiary study in areas of low attainment. This is generally in areas of low socio-economic status and in outer metropolitan and peri-urban areas.
- The facilities and services at each Hub will depend on the needs of the local community.

Eligibility

5. **Who is eligible to apply for the Suburban University Study Hubs Program?**

- Applicants must meet all the following eligibility criteria to apply for the program:
  - The proposed Hub must be located in:
    - 'Major Cities of Australia' as per the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) *Australian Statistical Geographical Standards (ASGS) Remoteness Areas* classification; or
    - 'Greater Darwin' or 'Greater Hobart' as per the ABS ASGS *Greater Capital City Statistical Areas* classification.
  - The proposed Hub must be located in a Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) classified by the ABS as Quintile 1 (Q1) or 2 (Q2), according to the Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) which is one of the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA).
  - Funding will only be provided to new Hubs. Existing facilities providing similar or equivalent services are ineligible for funding.
  - Applicant organisations must be, or be able to become, a body corporate to be eligible to receive funding under the program
    Applicants must demonstrate they are a 'fit and proper person'. The application will ask questions regarding the applicant's business and financial affairs to determine this.

Location

6. **Are there additional requirements for the Targeted Round?**

- In addition to the eligibility criteria above, proposed hubs must be located in an Identified SA2.
- The targeted round will support up to 4 applications for Hubs located in an eligible SA2 within one of the seven identified clusters across Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.
- A full list of identified SA2s can be found in Tables 1-3 and shown in Maps 1-7 provided at Appendix A of the Targeted Round Application Guide.
- Only proposed hubs which fall within these identified locations will be considered.

7. **How do I determine if my proposed Suburban University Study Hub is in an eligible location?**
   - The eligibility of a potential Suburban University Study Hub location can be determined using the online interactive map found at Suburban University Study Hubs – 2024 Application Round.
   - Zoom in to a desired area or click on the magnifying glass in the lower left-hand corner to search for a known address or location.
   - The proposed location of the Hub must fall within both:
     o an eligible Statistical Area Level 2 (Quintile 1 or 2 according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (Index of Relative Socioeconomic Advantage and Disadvantage) (shown in blue outline), and
     o an eligible geographic classification of 'Major Cities of Australia' (shaded orange) or 'Greater Hobart'/'Greater Darwin' (shaded red).
   - Please note that some SA2s will have sections of the SA2 which fall outside of 'Major Cities of Australia' or 'Greater Hobart'/ 'Greater Darwin'. These areas which are not shaded will not be considered eligible locations for placement of a Hub within the SA2.
   - If unsure, please contact the department to confirm eligibility at suburbanhubs@education.gov.au

8. **How do I determine if my proposed Suburban University Study Hub is in an Identified location?**
   - A full list of identified SA2s can be found in Tables 1-3 and shown in Maps 1-7 provided at Appendix A of the Targeted Round Application Guide.
   - The online interactive map for eligible locations can be used to determine the name of SA2s for your proposed hub location. This can be cross-referenced with the list of identified SA2s.

9. **Can a proposed Suburban University Study Hub span multiple locations?**
   - A proposed Suburban University Study Hub may include multiple sites or satellite locations through a hub-and-spoke model.
   - The application form will allow for a maximum of 2 sites in one application.
   - All locations must be specified in your application and meet the eligibility criteria.
   - If you wish to apply for more than 2 sites, you will need to contact the suburban hubs team.
   - Applications which include multiple sites will be assessed as one application against the eligibility requirements as set out in the Program Guidelines.
   - It is recommended careful consideration be given to the capacity to deliver across more than one site, and the associated financial, staffing, and administrative requirements.
   - Where applicants wish to apply for multiple distinct Hubs (i.e. not a hub-and-spoke model), this must be via separate applications.

10. **If we are applying for multiple locations in a hub and spoke type model, can we apply for more than 2 x staff to cover the extra site?**
    - Applicants may apply for what they believe to be fair and reasonable to run the operations of their Hub/s.

- It is at the discretion of the program delegate as to whether successful applicants will be funded for everything requested.
- It is up to the applicant to determine if submitting one application for multiple Hubs or if separate applications for different locations would be most appropriate for their circumstances.

11. **Some areas are eligible, but they appear to have a low population and infrastructure. Can a Hub be set up there?**
- Not all locations, which are eligible, will be suitable locations for establishing a Hub.
- Suburban University Study Hubs should reflect the community they serve and will be assessed with consideration to:
  - o geographic location, including proximity to public transport and other community services
  - o population size, demographics and needs of the local community
  - o the location of higher education and VET providers
  - o ability to support open access to all tertiary students.

12. **Why are some outer-metropolitan areas not eligible when similar areas closer to the city are?**
- Suburban University Study Hubs will be established in areas that will benefit most from their presence, with emphasis placed on supporting underrepresented and disadvantaged students from suburban areas with low tertiary education participation who face increased barriers to accessing tertiary study.
- To apply for this round Hubs must be in both **an eligible location** and **an identified location.**

13. **My organisation is not in an eligible or identified location but we propose to open a Suburban University Study Hub in a location which is eligible and identified. Is this ok?**
- Yes. Applications will be considered from organisations who meet the 'body corporate' and 'fit and proper person' eligibility criteria if their proposed Hub location is in an eligible and an identified area. The organisation itself may or may not be based in the eligible location.
- Partnerships with organisations who are based outside these locations are also acceptable.
- Consideration should be given to ensuring Hubs are community-driven spaces that offer tailored support to their local community. Hubs will be expected to respond to the education support needs and be reflective of the community they serve. Local partnerships and consultation will be a key component of a successful application.

14. **Can our Hub service an area outside of our proposed SA2?**
- Applicants should consider the 'catchment area' (which may include neighbouring SA2s) of the proposed Hub in demonstrating the community's need for a Hub.

15. **How do I determine the socio-economic status (SES) of my proposed Suburban University Study Hub?**
- The SES classification of an anticipated Hub location can be determined using the online ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Map tool.
- In the map, filter the settings as follows:

1. Ensure the "**IRSAD**" map is selected along the top of the page.
2. Click the "**Local Government Areas (LGA) 2021**" geography on the left-hand side of the page to hide the LGA map.
3. Click the "**Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) 2021**" geography on the left-hand side of the page to show the SA2 map.
4. Type the street address of your proposed Hub location in the "**Find address or geography**" search bar in the top right corner of the page and select the correct result for your location.
5. Click the appropriate point on the map of your searched location. The "**Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) SA2**" box will open with the SEIFA Quintile for your potential Hub location.

- You may also use the mapping tool developed by the department. Areas which are coloured orange (or red if in Darwin or Hobart) and surrounded by a blue line are considered eligible under this program.
  - o You can search the tool by either using the scroll function on your mouse or the 🔍 icon on the bottom left of screen to look for a specific address.

16. If my proposed Hub is in an area which does not meet the location criteria due to feasibility such as flood plains, but aims to service an area that does, can we apply?

- No. The *Higher Education Support (Other Grants) Guidelines 2022 (OGGs)* do not allow a Suburban University Study Hub (Hub) to be established outside an eligible area to provide services to an eligible area.
- Under Section 66C of the OGGs, funding must only be used to <u>establish, maintain and operate a facility in, and to provides services from</u>, an area that meets the locational criterion of Major Cities of Australia, Statistical Area Level 2, either Quintile 1 or 2 according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD).

17. Can a Hub be established 15 mins from a campus?

- If the location of the Hub is within an eligible location an application can be submitted regardless of the distance from a tertiary campus.
- However, applications will be evaluated based on the needs of the community.
- The assessment process will consider factors such as distance from existing campuses and the availability of similar or equivalent services.
- During assessment moderation, the Panel will consider the distance/time by public transport to any sites that appear to be near similar services or other applicants. The Panel may apply a minimum distance. This is to ensure the commonwealth is achieving greatest impact by prioritising areas of greatest need.

18. Will a location be considered less favourable if it is located on the border of an eligible area?

- The Hub must be located within an eligible area.
- Community need should be a key consideration when determining a location for a Hub.

Body corporate

19. What type of entities can apply for funding?

- Applicants must be a body corporate or a Table A or Table B provider listed in the *Higher Education Support Act (2003)* to be eligible for funding.
- The nature and structure of the body corporate entity is not prescribed.
  - For example, partnerships, consortia or individual community organisations, local councils, businesses or tertiary education providers (including TAFE, VET and universities) can apply if the body corporate eligibility criteria are met.
  - Tertiary providers may also like to partner with other community organisations to support a proposed Hub, including through offering in-kind and/or financial support. An important requirement of Hubs is they provide open access to any student enrolled at any tertiary education provider in Australia. Where a tertiary education provider is operating a Hub, they are expected to meet this requirement and offer provider-agnostic services.
- Where an applicant is not yet incorporated, a declaration must be submitted with the application, indicating the group understand it must become a body corporate to be eligible for funding. If the group becomes a successful applicant for funding, execution of the funding agreement is contingent on the group's successful incorporation.
- Where an applicant is not yet incorporated the Financial and Credentials Information form should be completed with details of the proposed body corporate that would be funded to operate the proposed Suburban University Study Hub if successful. Applicants should provide as many details as possible at this time, including any proposed relevant persons and any contingency funding or support the entity may receive from other sources. Financial history is not the only determinant of an applicant's ability to achieve financial viability and sustainability. Having a well-researched plan and budget for establishing and operating a Suburban University Study Hub that demonstrates consultation and includes detailed expected income and expenditure is also relevant.
- Information on how to register a body corporate is available on the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) website: asic.gov.au/regulatory-resources/forms/forms-folder/202-application-for-registration-of-a-body-corporate-as-a-company/
- There are a range of materials and tools online that may be helpful if you are planning to start a business: www.business.gov.au/planning.

20. Why are only bodies corporate eligible for funding under the program?

- The Suburban University Study Hubs program is a grants program established under Division 41 of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA), for the purpose of supporting open access to higher education across Australia. Under section 41-10 of the HESA, eligibility for grants for this purpose is limited to Table A and Table B providers and bodies corporate.

21. Can consortia apply?

- Yes, consortia, partnerships, individual community organisations, businesses, local councils and tertiary education providers can apply for funding if the body corporate eligibility is met.

- There must be one organisation responsible for the administration of the Suburban University Study Hub. Applicants should decide the most appropriate structure of the body corporate for their community and situation. This could include the establishment of one entity, or a lead partner in the consortia.
- It is recommended that applicants seek independent professional advice on their specific circumstance.
- If an organisation, consortia or partnership (including local councils and tertiary providers) is not currently a body corporate there must be enough evidence provided in the application that they can become one. The body corporate criterion must be met by the time the Condition of Grant is signed.

22. **Given the focus of the Accord on lifelong learning and integration of all tertiary education, can Study Hubs include collaboration with TAFE and VET providers?**
- Yes. TAFEs and other VET providers may collaborate and/or apply for funding if they meet all program eligibility.
- If your organisation is not currently a body corporate, we recommend seeking independent professional advice on your specific circumstance.
- Applicants are encouraged to leverage existing infrastructure. This may include establishing a Hub within existing TAFE or VET facilities.
- In any co-location, there must be dedicated space for the Hub and funds must be used for the establishment and ongoing operations of the Hub only.
- Where a Hub is established within a TAFE or other tertiary provider premises, the Hub must maintain an openness to serve any student studying at an Australian publicly funded institution.

23. **Are all local councils, universities and TAFEs body corporates?**
- Not all TAFEs are body corporate. This can vary depending on jurisdiction and the specific legislation governing them in different states and territories.
- Most local councils will have dual nature, functioning as both a body corporate and body politic.
- Most universities will be body corporate.
- The department recommends seeking independent professional advice for your specific circumstance.

New Hubs only

24. **Can an existing Regional University Study Hub apply?**
- Yes. Existing Regional University Study Hubs operators **can** apply for funding for **new** Hubs that meet the specific eligibility requirements of the Suburban University Study Hubs program.
- All applicants must meet the eligibility requirements and will be assessed against the assessment considerations as detailed in the Program Guidelines and the Application Guide.

25. **Can a Suburban University Study Hub be co-located within an existing facility? E.g. a TAFE or Library? Will they be considered as New?**

- Yes. Suburban University Study Hubs are encouraged to leverage existing infrastructure when selecting a site. This could include establishing the Hub within an existing TAFE facility/campus, where appropriate.
- Consideration should be given to appropriateness of the proposed location, including accessibility requirements (for example, if the proposed space is accessible for students with disability and will enable after-hours access to students).
- Applicants should ensure that in any co-location, there is a dedicated space for the Suburban University Study Hub, and that facilities funded under the program are assured to be used for fulfilling the purpose of the Hub.

26. What is a 'new Hub only' and what is meant by 'similar or equivalent service'? Is my service eligible?
- Hubs which are not currently operational and/or do not meet the similar or equivalent service criterion below may be classified as new.
- With reference to the services list provided at *General Information: 1. What is a Suburban University Study Hub?*, a similar or equivalent service will include:
    - some, or all, of the facilities described as infrastructure; **and**
    - some, or all, of the services listed in administrative and academic skills support and/or student support services.
- Consideration should be given to the extent to which your service or facility provides for these aspects, and who is able to access your service.
- If unsure, an application may be submitted and assessed for eligibility by the department.

27. Can funding be used to improve an existing Hub?
- No. Funding is available for new Hubs only.
- Existing facilities providing similar or equivalent services are not eligible.
- Please refer to *26. What is a 'new Hub only' and what is meant by 'similar or equivalent service'? Is my service eligible?* for further information on similar or equivalent service.
- If unsure, an application may be submitted and assessed for eligibility by the department.

28. Does a Hub have to be set up by a library or council?
- No. Applicants must be a body corporate, or a Table A or Table B provider listed under *HESA* to be eligible for funding.
- While this does not preclude libraries or councils, all body corporates are welcome to apply. This may include partnerships, consortia, community organisations, businesses or tertiary education providers.
- The nature and structure of the body corporate entity is not prescribed.
- If unsure of the body corporate criterion relating to your specific circumstance, we recommend seeking independent professional advice.

29. Our organisation is in receipt of funding from the Australian Government, but not under the Regional University Study Hubs program, for a similar service. Are we eligible to apply?
- No. To ensure Suburban University Study Hubs are established in areas with the highest need, funding is only available for new Hubs.
- Existing facilities providing similar or equivalent services are ineligible to apply for funding for that location.

- Organisations currently in receipt of funding for similar services can apply for funding for a new hub (separate to the existing service) in an eligible location.

30. Our organisation is in receipt of government funding for a purpose unrelated to University Study Hubs. Are we eligible to apply?
- Yes. Organisations in receipt of government funding for a purpose unrelated to the delivery of University Study Hubs, or a similar or equivalent service, can apply for funding for a new Hub in an eligible location.

Application

31. Are you holding any application briefing sessions?
- A briefing session will be available on our website, accessible to applicants during the application period.
- The department will be holding a Q&A session on Tuesday 3 December. Please visit our website to register.
- Any questions asked during this session, which have not already been addressed in these FAQs, will be updated as soon as practicable.

32. What must be included in my application?
- You must complete and submit all required documentation as outlined in the Application Guide.
- Please note there is a strict limit of **15** A4 one-sided pages for supporting attachments to the online application that must be adhered to – any additional documentation beyond this page limit will not be considered by the panel or assessed as part of the application.

33. How do I apply?
- Please submit your application via the online application form on the department's website. You may access the portal as many times as needed before submitting.
- Once submitted you will not be able to amend your application. If you wish to make changes before the closing date of 20 December 2024, please email suburbanhubs@education.gov.au.

34. Can the department provide relevant higher education student data to assist my application?
- Applicants may wish to consider Higher Education Statistics and ABS Census data for their area.
- If you require assistance or guidance with data, please contact the department at suburbanhubs@education.gov.au.
- You may also submit a data request to the department's University Statistics team at university-statistics@education.gov.au for specific higher education data. Please note there may be a cost associated with requesting this data.

35. **Where community partners are providing financial income/support to the project in the form of in-kind contributions, such as a Peppercorn Lease with no rent, are we able to represent the value of this in-kind support as its commercial equivalent?**
   - In-kind support refers to goods, services and transactions which do not involve money. Examples of in-kind contributions could include, but are not limited to, donations of equipment, premises or floor space, subsidised rent, information technology services and office equipment.
   - Where partners are providing support for the proposed Suburban University Study Hub in the form of in-kind contributions, applicants should represent this value as its commercial equivalent in their budget proposal and ensure there are adequate notes for the Panel
   - Applicants should ensure the value of these kind of contributions reflect their true market value as accurately as possible.

36. **Where a community partner provides a cash contribution, do we need to include this in our budget?**
   - Cash contributions should be included in the 'other income' section of the budget.
   - Please be sure to include adequate notes for the Panel.

37. **Can I change the line items included in the operational budget template to suit my own preferences?**
   - Please use the existing line items where relevant so the Assessment Panel can make consistent decisions.
   - Applicants may add additional line items where not already covered in the existing list.

38. **When completing the budget template, should furniture (chairs, desks, etc.) required to set up the proposed Suburban University Study Hub be considered operational or capital expenses?**
   - Please include the cost of furniture required to set up the proposed Suburban University Study Hub in the 'Furniture, storage and other furnishings' line item under *operational costs* in the budget template.

39. **Why are line items such as furniture/storage and ICT equipment included in the operational budget, rather than the capital works budget?**
   - For this program, capital works refers to activities required to fit out a premises to make it suitable for the proposed Suburban University Study Hub. This may include works such as installation of interior walls, secure swipe card access to support after-hours use, access for students with disability, painting, floor covering and ICT infrastructure (Software e.g. CRM).
   - If the proposed Hub is successful, applicants will be required to develop a Capital Works Plan for Delegate Approval to ensure sufficient planning and oversight of these activities.
   - As the purchase of furniture and ICT equipment (Hardware e.g. computers, printers, Zoom room equipment etc) does not require the same level of oversight (compared to the activities described above), they are not considered part of capital works and should instead be listed as operational expenses.

40. **Does the application portal have a save function?**

- The application portal has an auto-save function; however, it is recommended applicants complete the application submission process in one session to avoid any issues with the auto-save function.
- Applicants may use the [Application Guide](#) to support preparation of their application responses.
- Please note that only the person who commences the online application form will be able to view its content.

41. **Who can I contact if I have questions about the application process or submitting my application?**
- For assistance, please contact suburbanhubs@education.gov.au.

42. **What is the closing date for applications? What if I miss the deadline, can I submit a late application?**
- Late submissions may be accepted at the sole discretion of the department. Applicants must provide details of the exceptional circumstances for late submission. Please contact suburbanhubs@education.gov.au if you wish to be considered for an extension.
- Requests for extensions should be sent prior to applications closing (12pm noon AEDT, 20 December 2024).

Funding and payments

43. **How much funding can I apply for?**
- It is up to each applicant to determine the amount of funding they need and are seeking to establish a Suburban University Study Hub.
- The Assessment Panel will carefully consider applications in respect of:
  - the total amount applied for and the total program funding available
  - level of planning in developing the proposed budget
  - demonstrated co-contributions, in-kind support or other funding sources
  - demonstrated value for money.
- Funding amounts vary based on the local context and service offering (for example, a Suburban University Study Hub connected with another local service, such as TAFE or local council library) and contributions from other sources, including in-kind contributions.
- Where capital works are required, applicants should aim to keep the requested government contribution to less than 25% of the total funding requested.
- Final funding amounts will be determined by the Program Delegate following the announcement of successful applicants. Applicants should be aware, even if their application is successful, the funding amounts they propose may not be the final amount of the grant.

44. **What can Suburban University Study Hubs Program funding be used for?**
- Funding can be used for costs associated with the establishment and ongoing operation of the Suburban University Study Hub for the life of the Conditions of Grant.

- o In the establishment stage, funding could be used for capital works and/or to acquire electronic and physical resources. Capital works may include installation of interior walls, secure swipe card access to support after-hours use, painting and floor coverings. The program does not fund large-scale capital works.
  - o For ongoing operations, funding can be used for staffing costs, rent, IT support, utilities, marketing, teaching resources and administrative expenses.
- Funding cannot be used to purchase property or land.
- Applicants intending to undertake capital works (including internal fit outs) must complete the capital works section of the online Application Form, including expected costs and any associated quotes.
- If you are uncertain whether activities you are planning to undertake with program funding are capital works, please contact suburbanhubs@education.gov.au.
- Information on funding purposes will be outlined in Conditions of Grant with each Suburban University Study Hub.

45. **In addition to the Commonwealth grant funding, what types of funding agreements are Suburban University Study Hubs expected to have with other organisations?**
- Applicants **must not** already be in receipt of funding from the Australian Government through the Regional University Study Hubs program **or** from a State or Territory Government for the proposed Hub.
- Funding or in-kind contributions from other sources such as local government, industry or education partners is considered favourable for the additional support it provides the Suburban University Study Hub.
- The funding model and ability to establish partnerships varies depending on the local community and location of the Suburban University Study Hub. There is no requirement for organisations to match grant funding.
- Applicants are required to set out how other sources of income (if any) will be used as part of their budget proposal and include the funding status (i.e. pending or confirmed). If funding has been confirmed or received, you must supply evidence of that funding source and amount in the budget in your application.

46. **Are financial contributions provided by other parties a key factor in determining successful Suburban University Study Hubs?**
- Financial contributions are one of several factors considered in assessing Suburban University Study Hubs applications. Applications will be assessed for suitability against all assessment considerations.

47. **What is the period of funding for this round of Suburban University Study Hubs?**
- As outlined in the Program Guidelines and Application Guide, funding will be provided to successful applicants to establish and operate a Suburban University Study Hub for the period 2024-25 to 2026-27.
- The budget in 2024-25 should reflect the anticipated operational period within the financial year, including part years. To do this divide your annual budget by the number of months in the part-year to determine your monthly budget and adjust your spending and savings accordingly.

- Funding for capital works is generally for one-off expenses likely to occur during the establishment phase.

48. Will there be more rounds for the Suburban University Study Hubs?
- Initial funding of $32.5 million over 4 years from 2023-24 has been committed to support the establishment of up to 14 Hubs.
- As the result of a recent application process, 10 hubs have been identified for funding.
- A targeted round will open on 18 November 2024 and close on the 20 December 2024. The Commonwealth will use the remaining funds from its initial commitment to support up to 4 additional hubs.
- The targeted round aims to address local educational barriers and support equitable resource distribution across Australia.
- Funding for future rounds has not been considered at this early stage.

49. Will there be ongoing funding for successful Hubs?
- There is ongoing program funding available under the Suburban University Study Hubs program, however continued funding of existing recipients will be a matter for government.

50. Does sustainable for the long-term mean beyond the 3-year funding timeframe?
- Yes. While the program has ongoing funding, it is expected that Hubs will be sustainable.
- Applicants should consider alternate funding sources, co-contributions and in-kind support.

51. Has the initial funding of $32.5 million been reduced now that the 2023-24 period has passed?
- No. The funding attributed to the 2023-24 period has been rolled over.
- The program has ongoing funding.

Application assessment and decisions

52. What is the assessment process?
- The assessment process will be done in three stages:

Stage 1	Assessment of expression of interest responses against the eligibility criteria outlined in the Program Guidelines and the Application Guide.
Stage 2	Assessment against the 4 weighted key assessment considerations: • community need • community involvement • readiness to operate • appropriate and sustainable budget These aspects will be taken from applicants Hub Proposal and Presentation.

	Moderation of assessment and application of unweighted key assessment consideration:
	• geographic spread
Stage 3	Where applicable financial viability will be conducted.
	The Panel will rank applicants applying a category of Highly Suitable, Suitable or Unsuitable based on the outcomes of stages 2 and 3.

- The department may request advice on applications from local councils, state and territory governments, other Australian Government agencies, other independent experts, and other external parties on a range of matters, including but not limited to:
  - the history of the applicant in delivering projects
  - the financial viability of the proposal and applicant
  - the extent to which the proposal aligns with or delivers priorities in state/territory/local community plans
  - confirmation of funding contributions
  - impact of the proposal on the local area, including the most appropriate location.
- The Assessment Panel may contact applicants and seek clarification on specific questions in relation to the application.

53. Who will assess Suburban University Study Hubs applications?
- Initial Eligibility for program funding will be assessed by the Suburban University Study Hubs Team.
- Assessment of applications will be conducted by an Assessment Panel established by the department.
- Assessment of Suburban University Study Hubs applications will include a review of financial viability to be conducted by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations on behalf of the department. Applicants who have applied for funding through this program in the past 12-months and Table A providers under *HESA* are exempt from this process.
- The department will make recommendations to the Minister for Education. The Minister will make the final decisions regarding successful funding recipients.

54. How will eligibility criteria be assessed?
- All eligibility criteria, as outlined in the Application Guide, must be met from the outset to apply for the Program.

55. Does the assessment process consider travel distance between a proposed Suburban University Study Hub and an existing tertiary campus?
- Applications for Suburban University Study Hubs will be assessed by the Assessment Panel against the criteria outlined in the Program Guidelines and the Application Guide.
- Travel times to major tertiary campuses, will be considered when assessing the relative needs of Hub locations.
- During moderation, the assessment panel will assess any sites that appear to be in close proximity to one another or major campuses, as well as the relative needs of the area. The

Panel may endorse a higher ranked applicant over another if they believe over servicing is possible.

56. When will I find out if my application was successful?
- It is anticipated that successful recipients of Suburban University Study Hubs 2024 targeted funding may be announced in the first quarter of 2025.
- The department will contact successful applicants to discuss next steps, including funding arrangements and establishing Conditions of Grant.

57. Will I get feedback if my application is unsuccessful?
- If you are unsuccessful, you may seek feedback on your application from the department at suburbanhubs@education.gov.au

58. When does the Suburban University Study Hub have to be established?
- Successful Suburban University Study Hubs from the 2024 Funding Round are expected to commence operations during Semester 1, 2025.
- Successful Suburban University Study Hubs from the 2024 Targeted Round are expected to become operational in the second half of 2025.
- The exact timing of establishing and commencing operations will depend on the specific context of each applicant, including potential capital works requirements.
- Applicants are required to provide details about the timeframes for establishment and expected operations in their application.

59. How is it feasible to be operational by Semester 1, 2025 when successful applicants weren't announced until November 2024?
- Hubs are expected to be operational during Semester 1, 2025.
- Generally, Semester 1 ends in June.
- A key assessment consideration is readiness to operate.

60. We will be using a 3rd party provider to undertake operations within our Hub although we do not yet know who the provider will be. Do we need to let the department know who our provider will be?
- Applicants should mention any proposed partnerships in your application.
- Where a fee for service exists, applicants must include details in their proposed budget within the application.
- Where a Hub operator engages a 3rd party provider, it is the responsibility of the Hub operator to manage any associated risk of that engagement. This should be included in your risk plan.

Other Questions

Who will use a Hub and What will they study

61. **Are there restrictions on disciplines, fields of study and course levels Suburban University Study Hubs can support?**
    - Suburban University Study Hubs operate an open access regime and <u>must</u> provide support to all students in their local area who wish to access the Suburban University Study Hub and are undertaking studies at a registered Australian tertiary education provider.

62. **What can students' study at Suburban University Study Hubs?**
    - Students can study their course of choice, in any field of education, through a registered Australian tertiary education provider.
      - A list of all registered higher education providers and courses is maintained by TEQSA and is available online at www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register
      - A list of registered Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers and courses is available online at training.gov.au
    - Suburban University Study Hubs may also support students temporarily located in their area who are undertaking placements, examinations, or other course-specific training.

63. **What type of students are expected will use Suburban University Study Hubs?**
    - Any student studying at an Australian publicly funded tertiary institution.
    - This could include full-time, part-time, Face-to-Face, online or hybrid mode students.
    - Student may choose to use a Hub rather than a university campus for various reasons, such as distance from campus, financial hardship, facilities on offer, in-person support, personal safety, the need for quiet spaces, caring responsibilities or work commitments that make a longer commute difficult.

64. **How do I calculate student load for my application?**
    - There is no set calculation for determining the expected student load for your Hub.
    - It is recommended that applicants consult with their community including councils and universities.
    - Understanding students' use of university peripheral services or the way in which the local community engages with local libraries may provide insights into how many students may use Hub services.
    - Applicants should also consider any peak periods such as exam periods or where applicable, placement blocks.

Engagement with tertiary providers

65. **How do Suburban University Study Hubs engage with education providers (including secondary schools) in their area?**
    - Suburban University Study Hubs typically engage with education providers such as public and private VET providers and secondary schools.

- Each Suburban University Study Hub should develop their own plans and goals for engaging with secondary schools and education providers in the area.
- Services and engagement in school-related activities provided by Suburban University Study Hubs could include visiting secondary schools to provide information about the Suburban University Study Hub and tertiary education opportunities, offering homework programs, providing career advice/support to students and in some cases, with appropriate arrangements in place, allowing final year students to study in their facilities.

66. Will the Government consult with universities located in areas where Hubs are proposed?
- No. Applications received by the government are commercial-in-confidence.
- It is expected that applicants will have consulted with their community, including any tertiary providers to strengthen the community need and community involvement aspect of their application.
- Universities should consider how they can foster partnerships with successful applicants.

Program reporting requirements

67. Are there ongoing Program reporting requirements?
- Yes, Suburban University Study Hub funding is subject to ongoing reporting requirements. Specific reporting requirements and agreed milestone reporting linked to payments will be detailed within Conditions of Grant for successful applicants.
- The types of information and data you will need to be able to provide to the department will be outlined in your Condition of Grant, if successful.

Number of Hubs and supports

68. Will there be a set number of Suburban University Study Hubs in each state or territory?
- The 2024 round of funding is to establish up to 14 Suburban University Study Hubs.
- There is no set number of Suburban University Study Hubs for each state and territory.
- Geographic spread of existing/establishing Regional University Study Hubs and new Suburban University Study Hubs will be considered when assessing applications.

69. What else is the Australian Government doing to support the Suburban University Study Hubs Program?
- To support the Suburban University Study Hubs Program, the department will establish a Hub network providing an opportunity for Suburban University Study Hubs to come together, share information and make connections.
- The department will communicate regularly through media and social media channels to promote the program, as well as collecting and analysing program data to build an evidence base in support of the program's effectiveness.
- The department Suburban University Study Hubs team is available to provide ongoing, regular support to Hubs. All enquiries can be directed to suburbanhubs@education.gov.au.

Infrastructure/Facilities

70. Can we make some of the larger study spaces bookable by universities to allow for student groups to participate in online lectures and tutorials?
- Yes. Hubs should consider the needs of their community and how their facilities can best support their individual needs.
- Consideration should be given to ensuring the Hub remains provider agnostic.

71. How much space is required for a Hub?
- This will depend on the needs of the local community.
- Applicants should consider their on-site staff and anticipated student load during peak periods to ensure the proposed building size and planned facilities are appropriate.

72. Does it need to be existing infrastructure and what sort of building could be used?
- Hubs do not need to be established in existing infrastructure, however applicants should consider:
    - any capital works needed to get the Hub operational. The program does not fund large-scale capital works or the purchase of land or property.
    - when Hubs are expected to be operational (during Semester 1, 2025)
    - leveraging existing community and social infrastructure, such as libraries, community/recreation centres, etc. as a viable option
    - the building size, including the ability to deliver proposed services during peak periods and the potential for future growth or expansion.

73. What if the building we are considering using for a proposed hub will not be completed until Semester 2, 2025? Should we set up a temporary location?
- A key assessment consideration is readiness to operate.
- Successful applicants from the initial 2024 funding round are expected to commence operations during Semester 1, 2025.
- Applicants are required to provide details about the expected timeframes for establishment and operation in their application.
- Consideration should be given to the budgetary impact of setting up a temporary Hub.

74. Does the site need to be open after hours?
- The hours of operation and after-hours access will be considered as part of the 'access for all tertiary students' component of the assessment process.
- Applicants should consider how they will meet this aspect in their application.

75. What sort of services and facilities nearby will help in identifying a good location for a Hub?
- Applicants should consider service such as public transport, childcare and medical facilities when identifying a Hub location.

76. If our proposed site is currently leased by someone else how will this impact on our application?
- A key consideration of the application is a Hub's readiness to operate.
- Successful applicants from the initial 2024 funding round are expected to commence operations during Semester 1, 2025.

- Successful applicants from the 2024 targeted funding round are expected to commence operations during the second half of 2025.
- Applicants are required to provide details about the expected timeframes for establishment and operations in their application.

77. **Our proposed site has restricted access due to it being in a hospital setting, is this an issue?**
- Not necessarily. Applicants will need to articulate the constraints of any site within the application and how the Hub will address accessibility to any student enrolled with an Australian publicly funded tertiary provider.
- Innovative solutions are welcomed.
- The assessment panel will consider all proposed solutions when reviewing applications, and will evaluate each based on their feasibility, innovation and potential impact.

78. **If we opt for a Hub and spoke model, can we apply for more than 2 staff?**
- Hubs may apply for whatever they deem fair and reasonable to establish and run a Hub. Final funding amounts will be determined by the Program Delegate following the announcement of successful applicants.
- Applicants should be aware, even if their application is successful, the funding amounts they propose may not be the final amount of the grant.

79. **Can funding be provided for a hub space (using a hub and spoke model) where the spoke site is a partial hub operating for only 30 hours a week – as the space also provides other community services the remainer of the week?**
- It is a requirement of funding that recipients ensure that the facilities and services provided using the grant primarily support Commonwealth-assisted students. Where capacity allows, facilities and services may be used to support other students undertaking VET or other qualifications.
- There must be dedicated space for the Hub. The space will also be required to maintain signage to easily identifying it as a study Hub. It is possible to maintain bookable space for the purpose of student learning.
- Applicants may apply for what they believe to be fair and reasonable amount for the operation of their Hub/s in the context of their community, taking into account that one of the assessment considerations will be the hub's ability to support open access to tertiary students.
- Innovative solutions are welcome.

Regional Hubs

80. **What are the outcomes of the regional Hubs? Has there been an increased participation in target groups?**
- The Regional University Study Hubs program is focused on improving access in regional and remote areas with limited to no access to tertiary study.
- An early evaluation of the program conducted in 2021 found there was evidence Regional University Study Hubs have a positive impact on student retention and support access to tertiary education in under-represented groups, including those who are first in family, from low socio-economic status households and First Nations Students.
- As of November 2023, Regional Hubs supported almost 4,000 students

- o 43% of students reported being first-in-family to attend university
- o 12% of students identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- o 69% of students were studying bachelor level or above and 31% studied VET and other courses
- o 56% of students were over 25 years old.

81. Will CSPs be allocated to partnering universities like the regional Hubs?
- No. There are no CSPs associated with the Suburban University Study Hubs program.

82. Are any regional Hubs self-stainable and if so, how?
- There are currently no Regional University Study Hubs which are fully self-sustainable, without commonwealth grant funding.
- Most Regional Hubs have additional sources of income to help support their operations, such as university partnerships, state government funding, other grant funding, and income from renting out their spaces for exam invigilation, community events etc.
- While the Suburban University Study Hubs program has ongoing funding, the department will be looking for applications which have carefully considered sustainability and what other sources of income may be available as a matter good business practice. Any funding to Hubs beyond 2026-27 will be a decision for the government.

83. What student loads do the regional Hubs have?
- The current average across the program for a Regional Hub is about 125 registered students. It should be noted that for Regional Hubs, only a fraction of registered students use the Hub at any one time.
  - o For example, a Hub with 125 registered students, would likely only have 20 to 30 students simultaneously using the Hub, noting we do not currently have a mechanism to measure student usage.
- It should also be noted that student loads in regional areas may be substantially different from those that can be reasonably expected in metropolitan areas with higher population density.

84. What are the average operational costs for running a regional Hub?
- Based on our analysis of Cohorts 1, 2 and 3, the median Commonwealth grant funding provided to Regional Hubs is $292,850 per year. Whilst we do not have comprehensive data on this, we understand that many Hubs have alternative income sources, and that typically Commonwealth grant funding covers about three quarters of annual operating costs, however this varies significantly across the program and different Hub operating models.
- It should be noted that while the figure provided above is the median, operating costs vary significantly across the Regional Hubs program, which many Hubs being substantially cheaper or more expensive to operate than the media. A fundamental strength of the program is its flexibility to support the distinct needs of different communities, and that it does not hold all communities to one standard operating model.

Hub Governance

85. Should universities use their existing governance structures, or would a local advisory committee suffice along-side the university-level ownership/governance?

- It is up to the applicant to determine what governance arrangements will be most effective for their Hub.
- This may take the form of an advisory committee or other.
- A key aspect of the application and assessment process is a focus on community involvement. Any board or advisory committee should contain a good mix of skills, diversity and local representation. Universities should consider this when determining the appropriate governance structure for their Hub.
- Hub operators should also ensure that any governance arrangements have an active role in the operations and decision-making of the Hub.

86. **Should local governments use their existing governance structures, or would a local advisory committee suffice along-side the university-level ownership/governance?**
- It is up to the applicant to determine what governance arrangements will be most effective for their Hub.
- This may take the form of an advisory committee or other.
- A key aspect of the application and assessment process is a focus on community involvement. Any board or advisory committee should contain a good mix of skills, diversity and local representation. Councils should consider this when determining the appropriate governance structure for their Hub.
- Hub operators should also ensure that any governance arrangements have an active role in the operations and decision-making of the Hub.

Hub Services and Staffing

87. **Should Hubs use existing university services or provide their own?**
- This will depend on the Hub and the students it will serve.
- Hubs are not intended to replicate what universities already offer.
- The Hub may act as a broker for students to access the services which already exist at their institution.
- Where there are identified gaps in services or a cohort need, a Hub may choose to offer a service.

88. **Would a librarian be considered appropriate staff for a Hub?**
- Yes, however it is up to the applicant to determine if the librarian possess the right skills, experience and capacity to undertake the duties required of them in a Hub context.
- In any co-location, there must be dedicated space for the Hub and funds must be used for the establishment and ongoing operations of the Hub only. This should be a consideration when thinking about staffing your Hub.

89. **Where co-locating with a library, would it be appropriate to have library staff support Hub service after hours?**
- Yes. It would be a decision for the library as to whether their staff have capacity and if they are willing to provide this service to the Hub either in-kind or fee for service.
- We are looking for innovative ideas.
- Hubs may wish to consider volunteers as well as paid staff.

90. **What type of staff would be appropriate staff for a Hub?**

- This will depend on the services the Hub will provide, and the anticipated cohort of students expected to use the service.
- Applicants may wish to consider administrative staff who have a solid understanding of the tertiary sector and the complexity of student needs.
- Roles could include Hub manager, student support officer, learning support assistant, first nations engagement officer.
- The Hub may wish to bring in other consultants/specialists from time to time depending on student needs/demand.
- The department anticipates funding for successful applicants will support up to 2 full-time equivalent staff per Hub. Noting applications including 2 sites in the one application will be treated as 1 Hub and applicants should consider economies of scale.

91. How can a Hub operate all hours with only 2 staff?
- Hubs are not required to be open or staffed all hours.
- Each Hub will be different and should meet the needs of the community it will serve. This may mean that Hubs need to operate on a different schedule to a regular 9am – 5pm.
- Hubs may wish to consider if swipe card access is feasible for their location.
- Student safety should be front of mind when determining hours of operation and staffing.

92. What safety measures should Hubs have in place?
- Each Hub will need to consider the safety of the staff and students who utilise the Hub and address this within their risk plan.
- Each Hub will be different and will have different needs with regards to safety.
- Hubs should consider if:
  - After-hours access is feasible
  - Additional security is required
  - Hours of operation need to be modified
  - Staff are required to be onsite during all hours of operation.

93. Can we request security as part of our funding proposal?
- Yes, you may include security within your budget proposal and your explanation on community need.
- Any requests will be assessed and negotiated when entering the Conditions of Grant with the department.

94. Can we request guest speakers or facilitators as part of our funding proposal?
- Yes, you may include guest speakers and facilitators within your budget proposal and your explanation on community need.
- Any requests will be assessed and negotiated when entering the Conditions of Grant with the department.

Marketing and Promotions of Hubs

95. What are the guidelines on signage for Hubs? Can a university/TAFE/council/organisation use their own logo on signage and promotional materials?
- As per the Application Guidelines, the proposed Hub name should reflect the community and area it services (for example, Catchment Suburban University Study Hub).

- To ensure open access for all tertiary students, the Hub name should not mention any specific education provider.
- The Program delegate (Assistant Secretary, First Nations Engagement Branch) must also agree to the Hub name as part of the Conditions of Grant.
- Hub signage and branded materials may include logos in acknowledgement of contributions to the Hub by other organisations, including universities where applicable.
- Where promotional material contains the logo of any other organisation the Australian Government logo must also be used. Any logos used in acknowledgement of support must include the nature of that support i.e. Supported by, sponsored by, in partnership with, etc.
- University signage should not be used in isolation or in any way which could cause confusion about the intent of the hub to welcome all students from all providers.
- Further information on branding and promotional activities will be provided to successful applicants upon announcement by the Minister.

96. **Are Hubs able to issue press releases or highlight supporting organisations on public websites if successful?**
- Yes. Promotional activities or events will be permitted.
- The department must be notified in advance of any such activities.
- Further information on branding and promotional activities will be provided to successful applicants upon announcement by the Minister.

97. **Can universities run specific activities such as student recruitment and information events, or promote access to university-specific services like careers advice or counselling offered to their students at specific times from the Hub?**
- Hubs should consider the needs of the community they will serve. This is where you may wish to get creative about how your Hub will support **all** students and ensure that all students are getting the **same level of service regardless of their institution**. For example, if you are offering careers advice sessions, could this be supported by the specific University, and be offered to all Hub registrants. If you are wanting to run recruitment, information evenings or study clubs, can this be offered to other institutions to have booths.
- If you wish to make spaces within the Hub bookable by universities, that's ok, but think about how you will make this type of service available to all institutions who may wish to use it.
- Hubs must provide open access to any student enrolled at any tertiary education provider in Australia. Where a tertiary education provider is operating a Hub, they are expected to meet this requirement and offer provider-agnostic services. You will be required to outline how you will do this within your application.