Australian Government
Department of Education and Training

Regional Study Hubs Program 2018
Improved Support for Regional Tertiary Education

Frequently Asked Questions

July 2018

The purpose of this document is:
a.   to inform applicants about the 2018 Regional Study Hubs Program Expression of Interest (EOI) process.
b.   to answer questions that have been frequently asked by the stakeholder on the Application Guide for the Regional Study Hubs Program.

Disclaimer: This document should be read in conjunction with the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* and the department's Regional Study Hubs Application Guide published in May 2018. In the event of ambiguity, the aforementioned prevail over this document.

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1. Eligibility

1.1: Are Table A and B universities and non-university higher education providers eligible under the Regional Study Hubs Program (the Program)?

- Higher education providers (registered with Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency) and Table A and B universities may partner with community-owned body corporate entities that meet the eligibility and assessment criteria (see Application Guide at 5. Assessment Criteria) to apply for funding.
- The level of collaboration with one or more higher education providers may be relevant in awarding funding.

1.2: Is a trust eligible to apply for funding under the Regional Study Hubs Program?

- Only a body corporate is eligible to apply for funding.
- If the trustee of a trust is a body corporate, that trustee body corporate may apply for funding. An individual who is the trustee of a trust is not eligible to apply.

1.3: Can a partnership or consortia apply for funding under the Program?

- The applicant must be a body corporate (see Application Guide 2.1 Body corporate requirement) and must be community owned (see Application Guide 2.2 Community-owned requirement). The nature and structure of the body corporate entity is not prescribed.

1.4 If I am successful will I become eligible for Commonwealth Grant Scheme support?

- Receipt of funding under the Program will not change a higher education provider's eligibility for Commonwealth Grant Scheme support under Higher Education Support Act 2003.

1.5: Can pre-existing regional hubs apply?

- Pre-existing regional hubs can apply for funding under the Program. Like new applicants, pre- existing study hubs must meet the eligibility and assessment criteria and submit a business case demonstrating the need for funding and value for money (see Application Guide at 4.5 Business Case).

2. Preparing an application

2.1: What is the difference between a traditional university campus and a Regional Study Hub?

- The term '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 work spaces; 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.
- The Program will provide infrastructure support such as study spaces, video conferencing, computing facilities and internet access, as well as pastoral and academic support for students. The Program funding is not intended to replicate the existing traditional university campus model, but to improve access to higher education for regional students by providing flexibility to them if they choose to study locally for part or all of their degree via distance education.

2.2: How is size, location or distance assessed?

- The Government has not specified any size constraints or locations of communities except that Hubs must be located in regional or remote locations (see Application Guide at 1.1 What will a regional study hub do and 4.5 Business Case and 5 Assessment Criteria).

2.3: Can the Department of Education and Training provide me with relevant higher education student data to assist me with my business case?

- Yes. The Department of Education and Training can supply you with higher education student data in relevant postcodes upon request.
- Please email equity@education.gov.au in the first instance to clarify what data you need to help with your business case.

2.4: Can an application be made for multiple projects which together meet the eligibility criteria?

- Yes. Your proposal may include a number of strategically linked projects which together form a Package of Works that will deliver economic and educational benefits to a region or regions.

2.5: Can a project span multiple locations?

- Your project may include multiple site locations but all funded sites must be located in regional and/or remote Australia.

2.6: Are there restrictions on the disciplines, fields of study and course levels Hubs can support?

- The Program can support students across all disciplines and all fields of study.
- To be eligible for funding a hub must deliver at least one undergraduate Commonwealth supported course of study from any registered higher education provider.

2.7: Are there any course delivery requirements?

- One of the objectives of the program is to support students from different backgrounds and disciplines in ways which meet their specific needs. Hubs should aim to facilitate students' engagement with teaching and learning, and in so doing improve the likelihood of their retention and success.
- Provided your organisation can demonstrate the needs of your students are met, course(s) can be delivered face-to-face by lecturers and tutors, online, via virtual labs, or through a combination of delivery modes.

2.8: What are the ongoing Program reporting requirements?

- Successful applicants will be required to enter into a Conditions of Grant with the Commonwealth. This arrangement will include an ongoing reporting requirement. Reporting is likely to include:
  - o annual financial statements
  - o annual information on the number of students supported, as well as the higher education providers and courses that are supported through the Regional Study Hubs
  - o evidence of student success and retention against agreed performance targets
  - o feedback from students and higher education providers
  - o an annual report outlining activities undertaken by the organisation in the previous year.

2.9: What is in-kind support?

- 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.

2.10: How can I demonstrate financial and/or in-kind support from third parties?

- Evidence of financial or in-kind support from third parties could include a letter of commitment, a memorandum of understanding, a partnership agreement or a sponsorship agreement.

2.11: I am using my existing staff to prepare my business case. How should this contribution be identified in the application?

- Where your organisation already incurs costs such as salaries and wages, these can be included in the application as in-kind contributions to the total project cost.

2.12: I have applied for or have received funding for my Hub from another government grant program. Can I still apply under the Program?

- Yes. You can submit an application for funding under the Program if you have applied for, or received, Australian Government funding from a separate funding stream.
- If so, you will need to identify this in your application and include the funding status (i.e. sought or confirmed). If funding has been confirmed or received, you must supply evidence of that funding source and amount.

3. Forms and submissions

3.1 What must be included in my application?

- You must provide appropriate documentation as outlined in the Application Guide (see section 4.5 Business case and Appendix 2 Order of material to include in your application).

3.2: Who can I contact if I have questions about the application process or if I have technical problems?

- For assistance, please contact equity@education.gov.au.
- Please note that this email address is only monitored during business hours (Australian Eastern Standard Time).

3.3: When is the closing date for submissions? What if I miss the deadline, can I submit an application later this year?

- 5 pm Friday, 27 July 2018 is the closing time and date for submissions.
- There is no guarantee that late submissions will be considered.

4. Funding

4.1: What can Program funding be used for?

- The Program will fund costs associated with establishment and ongoing operation of the hubs.
  - In the establishment stage, funding could be used to lease and fit-out a facility; or to acquire electronic and physical resources.
  - In the ongoing operational phase, funding could be used to support human resources, teaching infrastructure and administrative expenses.

4.2: What funding can pre-existing study hubs receive?

- Each proposal will be considered in its context. For example, an existing hub may seek funding to improve/add services and facilities or investigate new Programs which will improve long-term sustainability.

4.3 Is there a minimum and/or maximum amount of funding available to applicants for the Regional Study Hubs?

- The total funding for the Program for the next four years is $16.7 million to establish up to eight hubs, as outlined in the Australian Government's Portfolio Budget Statements 2018–19:

2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22
$9.974 million	$2.199 million	$2.249 million	$2.302 million

- There is no specific minimum or maximum amount of funding available per project. Funding decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

4.4: Are Program funding and payments based on a calendar year or financial year?

- The Program funding and payments are based on a calendar year and will be provided in staged payments. Continuing payments are dependent on satisfactory progress reports.
- For the 2018 calendar year, a total amount of $8.886 million is allocated for the eight hubs. Program funding and payments for calendar years from 2019 and onwards will average over $2 million per year.

5. Assessment and decisions

5.1: Are different weightings applied to the assessment criteria?

- The assessment criteria are not weighted. Each individual proposal will be assessed on the overall merit of its application.

5.2: What is the assessment process?

- All eligible applications will be assessed against the assessment criteria outlined in the Application Guide.
- The department will clarify grant conditions with prospective applicants if necessary before making recommendations to the Minister on the successful applicants.
- The Minister will determine, and is expected to announce, the successful recipients in September 2018.
- Conditions of Grant will be drawn up and payments will be made as soon as feasible to successful applicants.

5.3: What is the department's role in the assessment?

- The department will establish an internal expert panel to assess all applications against the assessment criteria.
- The department may request advice on applications from local councils, state and territory governments, other Australian Government agencies, independent experts and other external parties, on a range of matters, including but not limited to:
  - o the history of the applicant in delivering projects
  - o the financial viability of the proposal and applicant
  - o the extent to which the proposal aligns with or delivers priorities in state/territory/local community plans

- o   confirmation of funding contributions
- o   impact of the proposal on the region, including the most appropriate location.
- The department will make recommendations on the successful applications to be funded to the Minister.

5.4: Will the department contact me with questions relating to my application?

- The department may contact you to clarify information provided in your application.
- The department will only seek or accept additional information during the assessment of your application where necessary to clarify details of your application.

5.5: Who determines which projects are successful?

- The Minister for Education and Training will determine successful applicants following assessment of applications by an expert panel established by the department.

5.6: When will I be advised about the outcome of my application?

- It is expected that the Minister will announce the successful recipients of Regional Study Hubs Program funding from September 2018.
- The department will contact successful applicants to discuss the Conditions of the Grant and arrange payments from October 2018.

5.7: Will I get feedback if my application is unsuccessful?

- If you are unsuccessful, you may ask for feedback on your application from the Equity Policy team at the Department of Education and Training.

6. Useful contacts and resources

- Please visit the Department of Education and Training website to access the most relevant information on the implementation of the Regional Study Hubs Program at https://www.education.gov.au/access-and-participation.
- To help us help you in a timely manner, please direct all your questions and submissions to equity@education.gov.au.