

Workforce Connect Fund

HR Support for Small Businesses

Workforce Connect Fund

The Workforce Connect Fund is a key initiative under the *Good people. Good jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022-32* and aims to increase investment in industry and community-led projects that address attraction, retention and participation issues with the workforce.

There are two components under this \$20 million initiative:

- Up to \$18 million is available to industry bodies and community peak organisations to deliver large-scale, sector-wide, projects that aim to address systemic attraction, retention, and participation issues within specific industries; and
- Up to \$2 million is available to provide identified human resources (HR) support and advice to eligible small businesses.

HR support for small businesses

Applications for this component will be demand driven. This department will accept applications on an ongoing basis throughout the life of the Fund or until funds under this component are exhausted.

Under this component, up to 400 eligible small businesses who identify, through Industry Workforce Advisors, an immediate need for HR solutions to support their business operations may be eligible to receive up to \$5000 in funding to address this need.

HR solutions, support, and advice that lead to adopting new and innovative approaches to addressing workforce issues for small businesses will be considered eligible for funding.

Small businesses are strongly encouraged to rethink their employment practices and the way they attract and retain staff.

Eligible small businesses

Small businesses must work with Industry Workforce Advisors to determine eligibility, however, the below outlines the minimum requirements of a small business to receive funding for HR support under the Workforce Connect Fund.

Small businesses must have:

- an active Australian Business Number (ABN) and be able to demonstrate their principal place of business is in Queensland;
- is registered for GST;
- have a minimum of one paid employee (excluding the business owner);
- fewer than 20 employees (by headcount);

- an annual turnover of less than \$10 million and can demonstrate that at least 50% of the business's income is generated directly from the business; and
- owners/directors that are not insolvent or undischarged bankrupt.

Multiple applications from businesses with one or more common directors/owners will be assessed for eligibility by the department on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the type of business, the HR services to be provided and the potential benefit of services to each business.

What is an Industry Workforce Advisor?

Industry Workforce Advisors have been established to provide tailored assistance to small to medium employers by developing workforce plans to address gaps in their workforce.

Industry Workforce Advisors, through development of the workforce plans, identify and connect employers with existing available support from Queensland Government programs, grants, and initiatives relevant to their particular workforce challenges.

How will an Industry Workforce Advisor connect my business to HR support?

After a workforce plan has been developed, an Industry Workforce Advisor may identify new or innovative HR solutions that will address an immediate need within your small business.

Industry Workforce Advisors will work with you to identify suitable options, provide recommendations to address these needs, and support you to apply under the Workforce Connect Fund to the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT).

How do I find an Industry Workforce Advisor?

The complete list of Industry Workforce Advisors is published on DESBT's website.

To find an Industry Workforce Advisor, please visit: <https://desbt.qld.gov.au/training/employers/engage-government/industry-workforce-advisors>



What types of HR support can be funded?

HR solutions, support and advice that leads to adopting new and innovative approaches to addressing workforce issues can be funded. This can include:

- Engaging with HR specialists to receive advice and coaching to improve workforce issues relating to attraction, retention and/or participation.
- Developing and implementing specialised recruitment strategies or practices to attract and retain underutilised or specific cohorts.
- Implementing new workforce systems or tools that promote human resource support and resources accessible to employees and change the current workforce operations of your business.
- Other new and innovative approaches that support workforce attraction, retention or participation.

What can't be funded?

The following activities and costs are ineligible for funding:

- new HR systems for startup businesses
- salaries and associated oncosts.
- everyday operational costs (i.e., utility and telecommunications charges, building lease costs).
- the purchase of assets/capital equipment, or significant assets (buildings or vehicles).
- retrospective payments for expenses already incurred prior to grant funding approval or for work already undertaken.
- costs for consultants/contractors or other suppliers of services that are associated entities with the applicant.
- any other costs deemed ineligible by DESBT.

What is the application process?

Your Industry Workforce Advisor will submit your completed workforce plan to DESBT on your behalf and if eligible, request an application form for the HR Support Grant be sent directly to you via email.

Once DESBT has verified the request and confirmed eligibility, you will receive a link to the application form along with information to assist you through the application process. Quotes for HR services to be delivered, up to the value of \$5000, must accompany your online application.

Submitted online applications will be assessed by DESBT.

Applications will be assessed within 10 business days of submission, subject to demand.

Note: only one application per business will be accepted.

What are the funding conditions?

Successful applicants will enter into a formal agreement with DESBT before engaging the Approved Service Provider/s to deliver the Approved Services as outlined in the successful application.

Successful applicants must submit invoices from Approved Service Providers to DESBT when payment for Approved Services are due.

It is the responsibility of the successful applicant to notify their nominated HR service provider that the conditions of this grant require services to be delivered **before payment**.

Additional evidence to confirm Approved Services have been delivered may also be required to accompany invoices.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that HR services have been delivered to the applicants' satisfaction prior to submitting invoices for payment to DESBT.

All Approved Services must be delivered within six months from the date of approval. All invoices must be submitted to DESBT within this period.

Appeals process

Applicants may request a review of a decision made by DESBT in relation to the provision of funding under the Workforce Connect Fund.

The appeals process has been established to help identify any problems in the application process, ensuring these processes continue to improve, and to assist with future applications.

Appeals must be lodged in writing within 21 days of being notified of a funding decision to:

Appeals Officer
Program Delivery
Department of Employment, Small Business and Training
PO Box 15483
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Applicants will be notified in writing of the appeal outcome within 21 business days from receipt of the appeal.

More information

For more information on the Workforce Connect Fund please contact 1300 654 687 or email at: wcf@desbt.qld.gov.au.