2023 Return to Work Pathways Program

Grant Guidelines

Introduction

Despite progress made over the last 50 years to improve outcomes for women, there are still ongoing barriers that limit women's opportunities throughout their lifetimes. While diverse cohorts of women have a range of strengths to make valuable contributions to their families, communities, and workplaces, many experience additional barriers to economic participation.

The NSW Budget 2022-23 Women's Opportunity Statement outlines a priority to provide additional wraparound support to women who are experiencing persistent difficulty in finding steady employment. The Return to Work Pathways Program (RTW PP) has been established by the NSW Government to support women from focus communities gain increased work readiness and to secure sustainable employment.

The RTW PP also delivers on NSW Government priorities including the NSW Women's Strategy 2023 - 2026.

Integration with the Return to Work Program

Women returning to the workforce after lengthy stints out of paid employment face barriers to re-entering the workforce. The NSW Government established the Return to Work Program (RTWP), which provides grants to support individual women to overcome these barriers. As part of the RTWP, one-off grants of up to $5,000 are provided to eligible women to purchase approved goods and services to support their return to work. Eligible women are supported by a Return to Work Coordinator to develop a Return to Work Plan, setting out resources that will assist them to gain employment.

The RTWP is administered by Service NSW and will continue to be delivered according to this current model.

The RTW PP builds on, and complements, the existing RTWP. Under the RTW PP organisations will be funded to deliver tailored wraparound supports to women experiencing persistent barriers to employment, connecting women to services, training and employment opportunities. As well as providing a suite of wraparound supports, organisations funded under the RTW PP will be required to assist women to access the RTWP grants.

The existing RTWP and the RTW PP will provide coordinated and comprehensive options to support women across all phases of their return to work process, and eligible women can access support from both programs, as required to meet their needs.

What funding is available?

The NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet will fund multiple projects, with total funding of $2 million. Funding for projects will vary within the range of $100,000 - $250,000 depending on the project model, the number of participants to be supported, and the level and intensity of services and supports provided to participants.

Key Dates

Date	Activity
Wednesday 1 March 2023	Grant applications open
Tuesday 11 April 2023 11:59pm (AEST)	Grant applications close
May 2023	Notification of outcome to all applicants
May / June 2023	Contracting with successful applicants
May / June 2023	Public announcement of grant recipients. Verbal feedback to all applicants
Mid-June 2023	Project implementation period commences

NB: The above dates are proposed only and are subject to change. The Department of Premier and Cabinet (Women NSW) will notify applicants of any changes to timeframes and deadlines.

Late applications will not be accepted.

Funding Objectives

The primary objective of the RTW PP is to reduce barriers for women wanting to enter or re-enter the workforce.

The RTW PP is seeking to fund a range of time limited projects, addressing the needs of women experiencing complex and persistent barriers to employment. A variety of bespoke and tailored projects will be funded, to provide wraparound supports including training, mentoring and pathways to employment. Projects will be targeted to focus communities, responding to their specific needs, life stages and circumstances.

Projects

RTW PP will fund a variety of models and funding will vary according to the proposed model and corresponding extent of services to be provided, in response to focus communities' needs. Projects should provide a model delivering some or all the following components. Supports can include, but are not limited to the following:

Key components	Examples of supports / services
Tailored wrap around supports	Supported referrals to services, career coaching and guidance, other activities, and programs to build confidence. Time-limited support following participant's employment.
Mentoring	Provide mentoring using a suitable mentoring model, this may include peer and volunteer mentoring.

Training	Provide appropriate training programs in a variety of formats responding to participants needs. Supported referral to other training and education options as required.
Work readiness	Pre-employment training, work readiness skills training and coaching to build participant's capability and confidence.
Pathways to employment	Facilitated employment opportunities using models such as work experience, job placement, paid traineeships and other programs that offer established pipelines to employment.
Engagement of employers	Partnering with employers to facilitate employment options for participants and for employers to create supportive environments.

Projects funded under this grant program complement the RTWP administered by Service NSW. Organisations funded under the RTW PP will be required to assist women to access the RTWP.

Focus Communities

The target group for the RTW PP is women who face enduring and complex barriers to enter or re-enter the workforce. In addition, projects that specifically target and support one of the following focus communities of women will be prioritised for funding:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls

- Women and girls from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities

- Women of diverse sexualities and genders including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer and/or asexual (LGBTIQA+)

- Women and girls with disability

- Women and girls living in regional, rural, and remote areas

- Women and girls experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage

- Women and girls who have a history of, or are currently experiencing domestic, family or sexual violence

- Women and girls facing homelessness

- Carers

- Older women

- Young women (18 – 24 years)

- Women veterans

- Women and girls in contact with the criminal justice system

- Girls and young women living in, or who have lived in, out of home care

Intended outcomes

Outcomes for participants will include:

- Entry or re-entry into the workforce within six months of participating in the program
- Sustained employment, after 12 months of participating in the program
- Increased skills to enter the workforce
- Improved levels of work readiness and confidence
- Improved mental health and wellbeing because of job security; reduced financial stress.

Application limits

Only one application for funding will be accepted per organisation per project.

Eligibility

Applicants must be a legally constituted Australian-based entity. This includes:

- Not-for-profit organisations, including community organisations

- Industry bodies and the private sector working in partnership with the community or government on projects directly supporting women and girls.

- Local councils and shires, including regional organisations of councils and consortia of councils

- Social enterprises, defined as a business that trades primarily for a defined social purpose consistent with a public and/or community benefit

Not-for-profit bodies are organisations that are registered and approved as not-for-profit bodies by NSW Fair Trading, Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) or Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC). They can include:

- charities, trusts, and cooperatives that are registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC)
- organisations with Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) or Public Benevolent Institution status
- not-for-profit companies limited by guarantee and registered in NSW (these must have ACNC registration and or DGR status)
- associations (registered under the Associations Incorporation Act 2009 and with NSW Fair Trading)
- Local Aboriginal Land Councils
- religious organisations
- organisations established under an Act of Parliament.

Note: organisations listed on the ACNC Register must have a current and up to date record.

An application must be made by a single organisation that will accept responsibility for the delivery of the project if the application is successful.

Section 355 committees must submit applications under the relevant local council name.

Who is not eligible to apply?

Funding will not be provided to:

- Individuals or groups of individuals

- Unincorporated organisations

- For profit organisations

- Sub-contractors – either for program management or for project delivery on behalf of non-eligible organisations

- NSW Government or Australian Government agencies or their entities

Location of applicants and activities

If an organisation is based outside of NSW they are ineligible to apply unless they can demonstrate that core business objectives already include that the project will be run in and benefit the women and/or girls in NSW and that the organisation meets all regulatory, business requirements.

Permitted use of funds

Grant funding can only be used for expenses directly related to the delivery of your project in NSW.

You must clearly outline your proposed expenditure in your application and demonstrate how your project will demonstrate value for money.

The 2023 RTW PP provides recipients with a two-year non-recurrent grant. You must spend the funding and complete the project within 24 months of receiving grant monies.

Restricted use of funds

Funding is not available for the restricted uses outlined in the table below:

Table 2: Restricted uses of funds	
Restricted item	**Details**
Projects located outside of NSW	
Business capital or start-up funding	
Conferences/workshops	You cannot use the funds to organise/hold a conference or workshops, or to pay for an individual or group to attend a conference. Any project which includes a conference or workshop component as part of a wider project must fund it from an in-kind contribution. For the purposes of these guidelines, a conference or workshop is a meeting of a group of people primarily for the purposes of discussing and sharing information on a particular subject or project. This does not include structured, time-limited courses, with practical and clear outcomes, such as a training program or educational course.
Operating costs or recurrent expenses	Insurance, leases, bills (mobile phone, electricity), consumables (office supplies, fuel, supplies of food, spare parts) and disposables

Fundraising events designed specifically for the purpose of fundraising for charities or for the organisation	This includes prizes and awards.
Activities which require participants to pay more than a nominal amount to attend	Any fee or cost to project participants should consider the resulting benefits for each individual, and their capacity to pay. For example, it may not be reasonable to expect a target group of unemployed women to contribute to even a discounted fee or contribute to a fee for a course, even if the qualification is valued at significantly more.
General equipment	Such as computers, iPads, or other items not specific to the project.
Capital works	The purchase of, or costs of repair, extension, or renovation to, buildings or any form of capital works.
Non-essential costs	Costs that are not essential or not related to the proposed core activity.
Retrospective costs	Funds will not be provided for events that have already taken place or costs incurred prior to the project starting.
Overseas travel cost	Such as the cost of travelling overseas to attend a conference.
Events/projects that are run for solely commercial purposes or benefit	Projects must directly benefit women and/or girls, and not have a commercial focus.
Internal staff/ organisational development	Funds cannot be used to provide staff training for the successful applicant's organisation. Funds may be used to provide staff training / organisational development activities for participating employers, in order to build their capability in creating supportive environments for women returning to work.
Research	

Program reach

Proposals should clearly set out their project model, including the types, level and intensity of supports to be provided to participants and the method of program delivery. A clear rationale and costings should be provided for the model.

Proposals must clearly set out the minimum number of participants that will be supported, and the corresponding cost per participant to deliver the service model.

Assessment

The assessment process is competitive. Your application must clearly demonstrate how your project addresses the assessment criteria and compares to other applications. The assessment panel will consider all elements of your project equally.

Please note that there can be no assumed knowledge. The assessment panel can only consider the information provided in your application. Successful applications will be assessed based on a scoring system drawn from the assessment criteria in the Grants Guidelines. Consideration is made based on a distribution of projects across focus areas, priority groups and location.

Subject to the quantity of applications received in these categories, individual scores will be collated, score variances resolved, and a weighted scoring system will be applied if required.

Applicants must provide a budget for their project, or the application will be deemed ineligible.

If the project budget exceeds the requested grant funding, all financial contributions and in-kind supports from all sources must be indicated on the project budget table

Assessment stages

You will receive an automated email via the [SmartyGrants portal](#) when Women NSW receives your application.

All applications are assessed through a two-stage process as outlined below:

Stage 1

- Women NSW staff will undertake an eligibility check of all grant applications.
- Applications will be considered for eligibility against the eligibility criteria outlined in the funding guidelines – see **Table 3: Assessment criteria.**

Stage 2

- An assessment panel will assess all eligible applications against the criteria outlined in **Table 3: Assessment criteria**. The panel consists of qualified and experienced representatives, and may include Women NSW staff, representatives of Government agencies, and representatives from the private sector.

Stage 3

- The assessment panel will then make their recommendations to the decision maker, the NSW Minister for Women, who then makes the final decision.
- The Minister for Women is the final decision maker in determining the successful grant recipients.
- Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of the assessment process.

Conflicts of Interest and Risk Management

Any real or perceived conflicts of interest that may arise during the assessment process are effectively managed and disclosed.

Risks are managed in accordance with DPC's systems for risk management. Risk is also mitigated through the guidelines. Fraud controls are in place around conflicts of interest management. Any conflicts of interest are required to be declared and managed in accordance with the DPC Code of Conduct. Risk management will occur throughout the grant life cycle.

Assessment criteria

Applications will be considered for eligibility against the eligibility criteria below in Table 3: Only those applications that demonstrate eligibility against the criteria outlined will proceed to the next stage of assessment.

Your application will be assessed against the following criteria:

Table 3: Assessment criteria		
Criteria		**How your application will be assessed**
1.	Eligibility	- You meet the applicant legal status requirements. - You have appropriate and current insurance in relation to the proposed project - You have no outstanding acquittals due to the Department of Premier and Cabinet - You are not seeking funding for activities already completed, or due to be completed before the funding period commences. - You do not already receive NSW Government funding for the project - You are not seeking funding for any of the restricted items as per **Table 2**. - All applications must include ten percent income from other sources (cash or in-kind).

Table 3: Assessment criteria		
Criteria		**How your application will be assessed**
2.	Relevant and evidence based	Your proposal clearly outlines how the proposed project will deliver RTW PP outcomes. Your proposal has a clear and well-refined problem statement, that identifies the needs of the nominated focus communities of women that will be addressed through your project. Your project approach and service delivery model are supported by evidence and / or leading practice. Your project provides a relevant, feasible and evidence-based proposal for how the project will respond to the needs of women experiencing complex barriers to employment.
3.	Effective service delivery model	The project has a well-developed service delivery model for the nominated focus community.

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		The proposal sets out the types, level, and intensity of supports to be provided to participants and provides a rationale and costings for the model.
		You demonstrate established expertise and experience in supporting women and / or focus communities of women and the employment sector.
		Your project outlines identifiable outcomes and how they will be measured and evaluated.
		The proposal outlines an evaluation strategy with metrics for measuring success in achieving identified program outcomes.
4.	Project partnerships and engagement	Your project outlines the partnerships and community engagement required to support the project, and clearly outlines partner contributions. Your project demonstrates effective collaboration, partnerships and referral pathways with relevant services and community organisations. Your project demonstrates an approach or framework to establish and manage partnerships with employers and businesses. The proposal demonstrates well-established connections with the nominated focus community.
5.	Clear project plan and outcomes	You provide a clear project plan for delivering the project. The project must demonstrate: • specific timeframes/milestones for each activity/task, and • clearly defined outcomes.
6.	Organisational capacity	Applicants must demonstrate that your organisation has the appropriate skills and expertise to deliver the project, including prior experience delivering similar project activities and outcomes. Projects must also demonstrate capacity to provide ongoing value beyond the funding provided under the RTW PP.
7.	Value for money	Projects must represent value for money in terms of both overall costs, and the value of the outcomes and benefits that will be delivered. The proposal must outline how many women will benefit from the project and how the proposed service model represents value for money. Applications will receive a higher score for this criterion if your project delivers a benefit to a greater number of women compared to a project with similar delivery costs, that provides a similar level of benefit, but to a smaller number of women. Recognition of women with complex needs: Higher cost models for women with complex needs should be clearly outlined and costed, including evidence that supports the model.

Evidence requirements

Projects must be evidence-based. Applicants must be able to demonstrate the evidence defining the problem, that the proposed model is fit for purpose, will effectively addresses barriers to employment for the focus community, and will achieve program outcomes.

The evidence for both the problem and intervention should be:

- Relevant**:** the evidence is directly related to the problem and intervention.

- Reliable: the evidence is from a source or person that has knowledge and/or experience related to the problem and intervention. The reliability of evidence is strengthened when it can be supported through different information-gathering methods.

- Current: the evidence is up to date (to provide a baseline against which change can be measured).

- Adequate: there is enough evidence to verify the existence and size of the problem, as well as the rigour and effectiveness of the intervention.

The specific problem should be articulated in terms of extent, demographics, and location.

Evidence of the problem can be demonstrated through:

- published data

- peer-reviewed published research, and/or

- independent program evaluations.

It is recognised that some innovative solutions may lack a strong evidence base, however, applicants should demonstrate and apply relevant experience, practice wisdom, and correlations with evidence from other areas.

Appendix A contains a non-exhaustive list of sources of evidence.

Project evaluation

You must include in your application how you will evaluate your project. Projects should be evaluated in terms of both processes and outcomes.

A process evaluation looks at how a project works and whether the project activities have been implemented as intended. An outcome evaluation seeks to evaluate the extent to which a project meets its goals or objectives.

To conduct an evaluation, successful recipients will need to collect and analyse data. **Appendix B:** Guidance for preparing applications and evaluation.

Contact Women NSW

If you have any questions about the grants that are not covered in the funding guidelines, please contact Women NSW:

Email: WNSWGrants@dpc.nsw.gov.au

SmartyGrants

The application, the funding and letter of agreement, and acquittal for the grants will be managed using the SmartyGrants management system created by the Australian Institute of Grants Management.

Please do not email additional attachments such as support letters or references – only your response to the application form will be used to assess your application.

Terms and conditions

Public Liability Insurance

All grant-funded events and activities must be covered by Insurance.

Your organisation is required to provide a valid Certificate of Currency for Public Liability Insurance with a minimum cover of $10 million in the name of the applicant before funding can be released.

Your organisation is responsible for ensuring that it has appropriate insurance coverage in place for the project, equipment or activities, and its day-to-day operations. Organisations that employ staff must comply with relevant industrial relations, and workplace health and safety requirements.

In all sponsored grant applications, Women NSW primary relationship is with the sponsoring body, as they are responsible for the management of the grant.

Advertising and promotion

Successful grant recipients are responsible for the promotion and advertising of their project. Successful applicants will be sent a communications pack, which includes the Return to Work Pathways Program social media tiles, poster image and email/webpage banner to use in their promotions.

Grant recipients should not make public announcements about their project without prior approval from Women NSW. Grant recipients agree to information about the project being used for evaluation, promotional and media purposes. Should your application be successful, the Department of Premier and Cabinet (Women NSW) may need to provide certain information to the media and Members of Parliament for promotional activities.

Grant recipients agree to obtain consent from Project Participants for all still and moving images of participants captured by project organisers during the course of the Project and provided to the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Appropriate consent documentation will be provided to successful grant recipients.

Grant recipients acknowledge that the information provided in the application, and any images of the project provided to the Department of Premier and Cabinet, may be used by the Department of Premier and Cabinet in media and promotional activities such as publishing case studies, social media and website content, and/or media releases.

Successful applicants are required to acknowledge the financial support by the NSW Government.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet may also publish the following overarching information about grants awarded including the name of the grant or a description of the grant, the number of grants recipients, the total value of the grant opportunity and the decision-maker.

NSW Government Brand Guidelines

Grant recipients are required to acknowledge the contribution and support of the NSW Government in accordance with the NSW Government Brand Guidelines.

Funding requirements

Only one application for funding will be accepted per organisation per project. Organisations must not use the money provided for the project, nor any interest earned on the money, for any other purpose beyond what is specified in the approved project description.

The grant recipient will take sole responsibility for the project. All projects must be located within NSW and must conclude within 24 months of commencing or an agreed project period.

It is a program requirement that any changes or variations to the approved project scope, project location, and completion time frames outlined in the original 2023 RTW PP application form on SmartyGrants must be formally requested in writing for approval from Women NSW before any related work takes place. Failure to do so may result in the withdrawal of the grant offer. Successful applicants are required to pay back any unspent funds or those not spent in accordance with the funding agreement.

Successful organisations are encouraged to consider advising local MPs of events and inviting them to the event and any associated media opportunities.

Reporting requirements

Grant recipients are required to enter into a funding agreement with the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Organisations funded by the Department of Premier and Cabinet must operate in accordance with their contract and with legislation, policies and guidelines relevant to their program funding. An example of the funding agreement is at **Appendix C.**

Grant recipients will be required to evaluate their project within 24 months of commencing or agreed project period, and to submit a project acquittal and report within one month of completing the project.

Disclaimer

Submission of an application does not guarantee funding.

Department of Premier and Cabinet accepts no responsibility for your project, irrespective of the funding provided by the agency to support the project, and irrespective of its listing on the Women NSW website or other Department of Premier and Cabinet publications.

Organisations are responsible for meeting their duty of care and all other obligations to project participants and other stakeholders.

Privacy Policy

The NSW Government will collect and store the information you voluntarily provide to enable implementation of this grant program. Any information provided by you will be stored on a database that will only be accessed by authorised personnel and is subject to privacy restrictions. The information will only be used for the purpose for which it was collected.

The NSW Government is required to comply with the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998. The NSW Government collects the minimum personal information to enable it to contact an organisation and to assess the merits of an application.

Applicants must ensure that people whose personal details are supplied with applications are aware that the NSW Government is being supplied with this information and how this information will be used.

Disclosure of Project Information

Should the grant application be successful, the NSW Government may wish to provide certain information to the media and Members of Parliament for promotional purposes. This information will include your organisation and event name, project description, electorate town and grant amount.

By disclosing information about your organisation and/or sponsoring organisation in this application, you give permission for the information to be used by the NSW Government for the promotion of projects and programs to the public, events, and related activities.

Grant recipients agree to information about the project being used for evaluation, promotional and media purposes. Grant recipients should not make public announcements about their project without prior approval from Women NSW.

Grant recipients agree to obtain consent from Project Participants for all still and moving images of participants captured by project organisers during the Project and provided to the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Women NSW will provide the appropriate consent documentation to successful grant recipients.

Grant recipients acknowledge that the information provided in the application, and any images of the project provided to the Department of Premier and Cabinet, may be used by the Department of Premier and Cabinet in media and promotional activities such as publishing case studies, social media, and website content, and/or media releases.

Data collection

Successful applicants must collect data for the purposes of both contract performance monitoring and evaluation. Before the project starts, you will need to consider what data to collect, how you will collect the data, both at the start of the project and on an ongoing basis. During the contracting stage, and prior to projects commencing, successful applicants will need to develop a written Data Collection Plan. The Plan must specify what data is needed, when and how the data will be collected, and who will collect the data.

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

Information received in applications and in respect of applications is treated as confidential. All funding decisions and assessment outcomes are to be kept confidential until announces and applicants notified. However, documents in the possession of the Government are subject to the provisions of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009. Under some circumstances a copy of the application form and other material supplied by the applicant may be released, subject to the deletion of exempt material, in response to a request made in accordance with the Act.

Publishing grant information

The Department of Premier and Cabinet is required to publish information about grants awarded including the name of the grant or a description of the grant, the number of grants recipients, the total value of the grant opportunity and the decision-maker on the NSW Government Grants and Funding Finder at https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding, within 45 calendar days after the grant agreement takes effect.

Appendix A: Sources of evidence

Below is a non-exhaustive list of resources which can be used as a starting point to gather evidence for specific problem (i.e. the need for the intervention), as well as the evidence that the specific intervention (your project proposal) is fit for purpose and will address the identified problem.

[Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Gender Indicators, Australia](#)

[Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)](#)

[NSW Women's Opportunity Statement](#)

[Towards 2025: Boosting Australian Women's Workforce Participation.](#)

[NSW Gender Equality Dashboard](#)

Appendix B: Guidance on preparing application and evaluation

Below is a non-exhaustive list of sources of guidance and information to assist in developing ideas for the 2023 RTW PP funding program and preparing applications.

Office for Social Impact Investment Technical Guide: Outcomes Measurement for social impact investment proposals to the NSW Government

[The Technical Guide](#) was created to support social impact investment proposals, however, it includes guidance relevant for applications under the RTW PP funding program.

At a minimum, applicants should read:

Section 2.2.1 Identifying the target population

Section 2.2.2 Expected effect of the intervention

Section 2.3.1 Defining program logic

Section 2.3.2 Key principles of program logic

Section 2.4 Outcomes

Project evaluation

Applicants should refer to the below guidance when preparing their application:

NSW Department of Premier & Cabinet Evaluation Toolkit

[The Evaluation Toolkit](#) provides advice and resources for planning and conducting a program evaluation.

NSW Government Program Evaluation Guidelines

[The Program Evaluation Guidelines](#) outline best practice principles to plan and conduct program evaluations.

Appendix C: Example Funding Agreement

Links to example funding agreements and governance requirements are on the NSW Governments Grants Guide:

[Grants Administration Guide | NSW Government](#)