

GUIDELINES FOR ACT WOMEN'S RETURN TO WORK GRANTS PROGRAM

Introduction

These guidelines are designed to explain:

- The aims and objectives of the ACT Government's Return To Work Grants Program for Women
- Who is eligible to participate in the Program
- What the Program offers to eligible women
- How to apply for the Program

General information about the Program

Throughout these guidelines the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services is referred to as DHCS and the Women's Information and Referral Centre is referred to as WiRC. Similarly, the ACT Government Women's Return to Work Grants Program is referred to as the Program.

These guidelines will be updated as needed. All program information can be found on the Women's Return to Work Grants Program website at www.wirc.act.gov.au. Please remember to check the website regularly for any changes to ensure that your copy of these guidelines is kept up-to-date.

If you do not have access to the Internet or have any questions regarding the Program that are not covered in this document, please contact the Women's Return to Work Grants Program Coordinator on 6205 2885.

What is the Women's Return to Work Grants Program?

In 2007/08 an ACT Government Budget Initiative was announced, providing funding to establish a grants program for women on low incomes including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse, women with disabilities and young women requiring assistance in returning to paid work following caring for a child for more than twelve months.

The program will enable the provision of practical financial support to women returning to the workforce by providing funding for them to attend short courses, pay for child care to attend interviews as well as more formal training or education. It may also provide support for the purchase of equipment or clothing directly related to the woman's return to work.

Each grant provides up to \$1,000 in assistance for women enrolling in training that will improve their workforce skills.

What kind of training can I do?

The \$1,000 grant is to be used for training and job readiness skills which improves your prospects of successfully gaining paid work.

Training under the Program must be in courses that:

- increase work-related skills;
- improve future job prospects; and
- prepare you for re-entry to the workforce.

Such courses must be:

- accredited
- industry specific or non-specific
- module/s of an accredited course.

What is a Return to Work Plan?

A Return to Work Plan, designed to be completed by applicants, with assistance from the Project Coordinator, if required, has been developed to assist you to determine the best training for you to undertake, based on your skills, interests, life goals and values to achieve your desired employment goal. On completion of the training, the Return to Work Plan will provide you with clear direction on your next steps and future pathways.

Whilst use of the Return to Work Plan is not mandatory under the Program guidelines, DHCS has a strong preference for its use.

What costs can the grants cover?

Participants can use the grant to cover the costs of the following:

- accredited training;
- training related costs such as child care in a registered child care centre while undertaking the training;
- support materials required for the course;
- part payment of Commonwealth Supported Student Contribution Scheme (formerly HECS - Higher Education Contribution Scheme) fees for any new University course of study undertaken; or
- other items which the DHCS may approve if related to returning to work, such as clothing.

University training

The Grant may be used to offset Commonwealth Supported Student Contribution Scheme liability costs incurred for university study.

Who is Eligible?

To be eligible for a \$1,000 training credit under this Program, an individual must meet the following criteria:

- low income; (based on Centrelink means testing)
- have been caring for dependent child/children for twelve months or more;
- not worked for more than four months (full-time or part-time equivalent) during the past 12 months;
- have at least one dependent child that is of secondary school age, or below, ie, currently in secondary or primary school. The age criterion does not apply to parents caring for a child with a disability and/or development delay;
- not currently employed;
- plan to return to paid work within the next 12 months;
- has been a resident of the ACT for more than three months;
- is not receiving, or eligible for, Intensive Support – Customised Assistance through the Commonwealth funded Job Network and not receiving ACT Government assistance such as scholarships available for Canberra Institute of Technology courses while also participating in this program; and
- must not have previously received a training credit under this Program.

The Program has an employment focus. Training approved through the Program will therefore be in courses that increase work-related skills or improve job prospects.

How do I apply?

You can access an application on the ACT Office for Women website (www.women.act.gov.au), or the Women's Information and Referral Centre website (www.wirc.gov.au), which can be emailed back to rtw@act.gov.au or alternatively you may request an application form by contacting the Project Coordinator on 6205 2885.

Once you have submitted your application your eligibility will be assessed.

If you are successful the following will occur:

- You will receive confirmation that your application is approved;
- You will be required to meet with the Program Coordinator to discuss training options and complete the return to employment plan.(You will also be required here to provide all your supporting evidence documents); and
- You can now begin to enrol as an eligible Program participant in a course with an accredited Training Provider.

Following confirmation that your application is approved you will be required to sign a Letter of Offer is signed and provide payment details.

How many times can I apply for the Program?

You can only attract one grant for the life of the Program.

How long is the Grants approval valid for?

From the date you commence your training/course you have a further six months to spend your funding, unless the training/course undertaken is longer.

You can pay training fees directly

Providing the Program Guidelines are met, the ACT Government will provide a grant of up to \$1,000 for training as associated costs. Any costs in excess of this amount are the responsibility of the individual.

What about costs associated with the training?

The cost of training will have the “first call” on the funds available in the grant. Direct expenses associated with the training will only be reimbursed if there is a sufficient balance left in the training credit once training costs have been covered.

Part of the \$1,000 training credit may be used for:

- the purchase of support materials, where the materials are certified by the Training Provider as costs directly related to the training being undertaken under the Program;
- the purchase of text books directly related to the course; and
- child care at an accredited child care centre and after school care whilst you are attending training.

Examples of expenses not covered include cost of: computer hardware, printers, cameras, stationery, parking fees, student ID cards.

Child care

Particular requirements under the Program relating to childcare are that:

- participants will be responsible for arranging their own childcare;
- childcare must be at a registered childcare centre;
- the participant must retain original tax invoice receipts and submit these to the Program Co-ordinator.

Can I use the Grant for more than one course?

Yes. The training credit may be used for more than one training course, provided that:

- there is a sufficient balance remaining in the recipient’s grant to cover the cost of that training; and
- the training is commenced within six months of the date shown on the letter of offer for the grant.

How do you get in contact with me?

If you applied for the Program via email, information about the Program such as updates will be via your nominated email address. It is **your responsibility to check your email on a regular basis** as all communication about the Program will be directed to your email address. If you do not manage your nominated email, you **MUST** let us know so that alternative arrangements can be made. If you applied by completing a hard copy application then contact about Program updates will be made by your postal address. If you wish to change these arrangements please contact the Program Co-ordinator on **6205 2885**.

Contacts

Web site: www.wirc.act.gov.au

Phone: 6205 2885

Fax: 6205 1077

Email: rtw@act.gov.au

Postal: Women's Return to Work Grants Program Coordinator,
WiRC, PO Box 158, Canberra City, ACT 2601