

ACT WOMEN'S RETURN TO WORK GRANTS PROGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Women's Return to Work Grants Program

The ACT Women's Return to Work Grants Program is an ACT Government initiative, which provides women returning to the paid workforce with assistance in reaching this goal. Whilst the program is funded through the ACT Office for Women, of the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services, the Women's Information and Referral Centre (WIRC) will administer it.

The primary objective of the program is to assist women in receipt of low incomes including women who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, young and with disabilities to achieve increased financial independence by helping them prepare for, obtain and maintain employment. The program is designed to provide funding for basic job readiness training, facilitate acquisition of job search skills and funding for women to access related support(s) with regard to potential job placements.

It will enable the provision of practical support to women returning to the workforce by supporting them to attend short courses, pay for childcare to attend interviews as well as more formal training or education. It may also provide support for the purchase of equipment or clothing related to a woman's return to work.

2. Who should apply

Women who have been out of the paid workforce for an extended period due to raising a child or children. The following eligibility criteria will apply for women who:

- Are on a low income (based on Centrelink means testing);
- Have been caring for dependant children for more than twelve months;
- Have a child of secondary school age or younger (Please note this age criteria does not apply if a woman has a dependant child with a disability and/or development delay);
- Plan to return to work within the next twelve months;
- Have resided in the Australian Capital Territory for the previous three months;
- Have not worked in paid employment for more than four consecutive months (full time or part time equivalent) during the past twelve months;
- Are not currently in paid employment, or on maternity or unpaid leave;
- Are not receiving, or eligible for, Intensive Support – Customised Assistance through the Commonwealth funded Job Network; and

- Must not have previously received assistance under this scheme.

3. When does the first funding round open

The program will be launched on 5 February 2008 and the first funding round is available from this date onwards.

4. How much is available

Total funding of \$200,000 is available for each calendar year. Individual grants of up to \$1000 will be offered on a quarterly basis with funding rounds being announced in February 2008, March 2008, June 2008 and September 2008.

5. What are the objectives of the program

The program targets women who have been absent from the workforce due to child care responsibilities and are shaped by the following objectives:

- Increase the employability of women returning to the workforce
- Training qualifications
- Employment

6. What can I spend the grant money on

Individuals can spend their grants on training and training related costs such as child care, supporting course material, clothes for interviews or uniforms once training has been completed.

7. Is there any other options available for me if I am not eligible?

- Career Information Sessions will be developed and conducted at WiRC for those women who know that they would like to re-enter the workforce, but have not considered the type of work that they would like to do or which would be suited to them, or need some guidance on what course/s they should undertake to do so. The career information sessions will be available to assist in determining these issues, and in assisting women to prepare a return to employment plan. Women not eligible for grants may also attend these sessions.
- The following Scholarships are available for Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) students:
 - ACT Government Scholarships. Available to students experiencing financial difficulties to assist with fees, books/equipment.

- CIT/CITSA Grants. Grants up to \$1,000 for students who are experiencing financial difficulties and have successfully completed one semester of study at CIT.
- Smith Family CIT Scholarship Scheme. Up to 25 scholarships of \$500 per semester available to vocational students, preferably 18-25 years of age, experiencing financial hardship and have two semesters to complete their studies.
- Indigenous Scholarships. Available to Indigenous CIT students and waives program fees.
- CITSA Loans. Interest free loans are available for paying program fees.

8. How do I apply

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

Successful applicants will then meet with the Program Coordinator to discuss training options, and their return to employment plan.

The application will be available on the Office for Women and the WiRC websites. www.women.act.gov.au and www.wirc.act.gov.au from 5 February 2008.