

Skilling
Queenslanders
for **work**

First Start Program
Guidelines
for funding

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What is First Start?

The First Start Program forms part of the Government's *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* initiative. The program aims to provide young people and other disadvantaged job seekers with opportunities to gain a nationally recognised qualification and paid work experience through subsidised apprenticeships and traineeships in the public and community sectors.

For the next three years from July 2009, 1,400 positions are available under the program. A further 700 trainee positions are also available under Queensland's Green Army. There are separate guidelines and application processes for Queensland's Green Army. The First Start Program and Queensland's Green Army are managed by the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI).

Why is it needed?

As the global financial crisis continues, the outlook for the domestic economy is one of slowing economic growth and rising unemployment. The Queensland Government is committed to keeping people in jobs, creating new jobs and assisting those displaced through no fault of their own.

By assisting more people into work, *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* will play a critical role in maintaining skills development, increasing the labour force participation of marginalised members of the community and creating jobs designed around the needs of jobseekers and local labour markets.

By investing in our human and natural resources now Queensland will be ready to move forward with strength when the international economy stabilises.

Who can apply for funding?

Organisations eligible for First Start funding include:

- Local Government Authorities
- Aboriginal and Island Councils
- Incorporated not-for-profit community organisations – these organisations must be community-based rather than industry-based and must not operate in a commercially competitive environment.

Who will be assisted?

First Start primarily targets school leavers, unemployed and disadvantaged Queensland job seekers "at risk" of enduring prolonged periods of unemployment.

Groups considered "at risk" of enduring prolonged periods of unemployment and specifically targeted under the program include:

- young people aged 15 to 24 years
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Australian South Sea Islanders
- people with a disability
- people from a non-English speaking background
- older jobseekers (aged 45 years & over)
- women re-entering the workforce
- long-term unemployed people
- people who are employed 25 hours per week or less and who are unable to secure a full-time job because they lack the necessary skills
- recently retrenched workers who have been out of work for three months or more.

There is an overall objective that 50% of participants across the target groups will be women and 80% will be young people, who need a nationally accredited qualification to get their first start in the workforce.

Approval needs to be sought from the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation to employ trainees outside of these equity groupings. This approval will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and must be sought prior to any offer of employment.

Specific equity group allocations

Although the broad population groups outlined above are all eligible, the program also contains targets for specific equity groups. From 2009-10, the following equity groups have an annual participation target:

Table 1: Equity Group Participation Targets

Equity Group	Participation Target
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples	10%
People from a non-English speaking background	5%
People with a disability	5%

What type of assistance is available?

First Start apprenticeships and traineeships are a valuable employment assistance measure providing 12 months of paid employment and the opportunity to gain a nationally accredited qualification or progress towards one. Upon completion of the apprenticeship or traineeship, participants will have learnt new skills and gained experience and confidence in working in a real job.

What are the work conditions?

Organisations offering apprenticeships and traineeships are the employer. Apprenticeships and traineeships combine paid work with supervised structured training. Apprentices/trainees will be engaged in a registered training program, according to the terms and conditions of their training contract.

Wages and conditions for apprentices and trainees vary however, as a minimum, they must be paid a training wage as outlined in the award or agreement for their occupation or industry. The wage paid will depend on their selected apprenticeship or traineeship and the progress they make. For most apprenticeships or traineeships, the wage is calculated as a percentage of the wage paid to qualified workers, and depends on the year or level reached in the apprenticeship/traineeship.

What training is involved?

As well as being employed, apprentices/trainees will undertake a theoretical (“off-the-job”) component of their apprenticeship or traineeship called “supervised training” which will require the employer to engage a Registered Training Organisation. The Registered Training Organisation will work with the employer and the apprentice or trainee to develop a training plan, deliver training, assess the achievement of skills, and issue the qualification upon successful completion of the apprenticeship or traineeship. Training organisations may be TAFE Institutes or other training providers.

Generally, the supervised training should be delivered in an educational institution or an equally acceptable training venue by qualified workplace trainers or their equivalent. However, it is recognised that there are flexible learning arrangements available for some qualifications. Training options must be negotiated and delivered in accordance with the training plan.

Are there any specific requirements?

First Start apprenticeships and traineeships are specifically targeted at new employees to an organisation, not existing workers. Any First Start apprentices or trainees must be additional to the organisation’s existing workforce and cannot displace existing employees, including volunteers.

Apprentices or trainees should be employed on a full-time basis however a more flexible work pattern may be available to:

- people with a disability that precludes them from working full-time
- women re-entering the workforce
- people whose personal circumstances impact on their employment arrangements.

Approval for part-time work arrangements must be sought from DEEDI prior to any amendments to the training contract.

Funding will only be provided once for each individual undertaking a First Start apprenticeship or traineeship. However, there are exceptions and full funding will still be available where:

- a trainee has completed a lower level traineeship and articulates into a higher level traineeship with the same organisation within 12 months
- school-based trainees employed under the Youth Training Incentives Program (also delivered under *Skilling Queenslanders for Work*) articulate into a full-time traineeship

Funding only applies to Certificate levels II, III and IV of the Australian Qualification Training Framework for traineeship programs.

In assessing requirements for traineeship models, organisations should consider their capacity to provide training opportunities that are generic in nature and will lead to ongoing employment in either the public or private sectors.

Where an organisation wishes to use the Public Sector Training Package, or an agency specific training program, it should only do so where there is a commitment to provide ongoing employment to the individual after completion of the traineeship.

What is post participation support?

Post participation support refers to assistance or support that the apprentice/trainee may require either nearing or following the completion (or exiting) of the apprenticeship/traineeship to obtain further employment, retain employment or undertake further education and/or training.

The level of support will vary for each individual participant and may include:

- assistance with resume and job application writing
- interview techniques
- allowing time for job search activities.

It is expected that all organisations funded under First Start will provide post participation support to apprentices and trainees employed.

What are the expected outcomes?

Organisations will be required to specify employment and further education or training targets to be achieved through First Start. Outcome targets will be negotiated as a condition of the grant and include:

- full-time employment more than 25 hours per week in a permanent, temporary, casual or self-employed capacity
- part-time employment less than 25 hours per week in a permanent, temporary, casual or self-employed capacity
- enrolment in an accredited vocational education and training course to gain a qualification
- retained in employment with the organisation.

What is the application process?

Local Government Authorities

Local Government Authorities or Councils are requested to submit an annual bid for apprenticeship and traineeship positions (including a bid for positions under Queensland's Green Army). This process involves the council requesting the number of positions required for the following financial year. Councils will usually be required to provide information on proposed equity participation and proposed locality for positions.

These bids are assessed by DEEDI based on the individual council's previous performance under First Start and Queensland's Green Army. Performance indicators include, but are not limited to, the council's:

- ability to fulfil their allocations
- ability to meet their equity group targets
- support of the Youth Training Incentives Program demonstrated by a commitment to engage school-based apprentices/trainees
- commitment to securing ongoing employment and/or training/further education opportunities
- meeting all contractual and reporting obligations of the funding agreement
- commitment to the provision of post participation support.

Community Organisations

Not-for-profit community organisations are required to submit a completed First Start Application Form to their local DEEDI regional office. Only information contained in the application will be considered when making a final determination. DEEDI will not infer missing or incomplete information into an application.

Organisation must develop their draft proposal in consultation with their local DEEDI regional office.

In assessing eligibility for funding, not-for-profit community organisations will be evaluated on a number of criteria including:

- ability to employ, train and supervise trainees
- the organisation's ability to either retain the individual on completion of the traineeship, or provide assistance into further employment
- the position is in a locality or is for an activity where the capacity of the public sector is limited
- the employment of the trainee is for activity that is community-based and will result in public benefit
- preference for funding will be given to organisations that have an expertise in working with and training disadvantaged job seekers
- project activities should contribute to a government priority or result in a significant community or social benefit
- where the organisation has received funding under the First Start Program and Queensland's Green Army previously, prior performance will also be taken into account.

Appeals

Organisations may request a review of a decision made by DEEDI in relation to the provision of grant funding under the First Start Program.

Appeals must be lodged in writing to:

Director
Policy, Coordination and Support
Employment and Indigenous Initiatives Division
Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation
GPO Box 69
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Organisations will be notified in writing of the outcome of the appeal within 15 working days from receipt of the appeal.

What funding is available?

The funding available under the First Start Program depends on the organisation type as follows:

Table 2: Funding Levels by Organisation Type

Organisation Type	Funding level (excluding GST)
Aboriginal and Island Councils	\$10,000
Local Government Authorities	\$10,000
Not-for-profit community organisations	\$19,000

- Funding for all positions is for 12 months only and capped at the above specified levels for each individual apprentice or trainee.
- Funding is for 12 months of employment.
- Funding received from other sources must also be disclosed.

What are the funding conditions?

If the grant application is successful, the following funding conditions will apply:

- organisations must enter into contract arrangements with the Queensland Government (represented by DEEDI) and adhere to the terms and conditions of the agreement

- funds for community organisations must be spent as described in the application
- payments are made to the funded organisation only.

Funding for the program is provided on the basis that the training contract is successfully registered with the Department of Education and Training (DET). The training contract must be forwarded to DET via an Australian Apprenticeship Centre.

Organisations are also required to take out and maintain appropriate insurance prior to the commencement of the apprentice/trainee and during their period of employment, including:

- Public liability insurance for a sum of not less than \$10,000,000 arising from any one event in respect of death, injury, loss or damage howsoever sustained to any person or property
- Accident insurance in accordance with the *Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003*.

Not-for-profit organisations are required to supply certification from the insurers confirming coverage.

How are payments made?

Generally, grant funds are made in either one or two instalments. All first payments are made once the contract is executed.

Second payments for councils (if required) will be made either in the current or next financial year following a reconciliation process to confirm all apprentice or trainee commencements, completions and cancellations and periods of employment for previous contracts.

Second payments for not-for-profit community organisations will generally occur after the trainee has been employed for six months full-time or 12 months part-time; however these may be paid earlier at the discretion of DEEDI.

DEEDI will recover funds paid in advance for any apprentices or trainees who terminate their employment prior to the completion of the training contract and 12 months of employment.

If you require further information, please contact your local DEEDI regional office on 1300 369 925.

Additional Information

Apprenticeship and Traineeship Information

General information regarding apprenticeships and traineeships can be found at:

www.training.qld.gov.au

Funding for training

Training delivered by a supervising registered training organisation (SRTTO) may be funded under the Queensland User Choice program. As User Choice funding is subject to eligibility conditions, organisations should check a trainee's eligibility for funding under User Choice by visiting the DET website at:

www.training.qld.gov.au/partners/funding_and_tenders/user_choice/06_10/index.html

If an organisation employs a trainee who is not eligible for funding under User Choice then the organisation will be required to pay the SRTTO for the supervised training under a "fee for service" arrangement.

Other incentives available

Organisations are eligible to also apply for incentives offered under the Australian Government's Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Programme. For more information contact the Australian Apprenticeships Centre referral line on 13 38 73 or visit:

www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/employer/incentives.asp

Suitability Notice (Blue Card)

Organisations are required to ensure that any apprentices/trainees delivering services to young people aged under 18 years hold a positive suitability notice (blue card) as required by the *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000*. Similarly, organisational staff delivering services to young people under 18 years of age must hold a positive suitability notice (blue card). For more information on blue card requirements visit:

www.ccyipcq.qld.gov.au/index.html

Glossary

Department of Education and Training: refers to the Queensland Government agency responsible for managing Queensland's apprenticeship and traineeship system.

Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation: refers to the Queensland Government agency responsible for managing the *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* initiative.

Existing worker: means a person who has been employed by the applicant organisation continuously for more than three months full-time or twelve months casually or part-time (or a combination of both), immediately prior to the commencement of the Training Contract.

Local Government Authority: means a local government authority established under the *Local Government Act 2009*.

New employee: refers to an apprentice/trainee engaged by a council or not-for-profit community organisation under the *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* initiative.

Not-for-profit organisation: an organisation is not-for-profit if its activities are not carried on for the profit or gain of its individual members. The constitution or governing documents of the organisation should prohibit distribution of profits or gains to individual members.

School-based apprentice/trainee: is an employee who is studying towards their Senior Certificate or equivalent while working towards the achievement of an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Supervised training: is defined in section 392 of the *Industrial Relations Act 1999* as training, up to the maximum period required under the *Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000* to be delivered by a supervising training organisation during the apprenticeship or traineeship.

Training contract: is a legally binding contract that allows an employer and prospective apprentices or trainees to enter into an apprenticeship or traineeship.

User Choice: is a national program that provides public funding to registered training organisations and works in conjunction with the apprenticeship and traineeship system. The program is managed in Queensland by the Department of Education and Training.