

Micro-credential Pilot Program Policy 2019-22



Micro-credentialing Pilots

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Policy owner:	Deputy Director-General Investment
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Related documents:	1. Micro-credentialing Pilots Program Application form
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Overview and objectives

Micro-credentials provide an opportunity to support changing workplaces by enabling the provision of focused training for new or transitioning employees in specific skills to better support businesses and industries to adopt innovations and improve productivity.

These pilots will test how modern and flexible pathways can be used to address current, emerging and future skills needs. The pilots will also serve as a mechanism to identify life-long learning approaches through shorter, just in time training responses.

Pilots will aim to support a range of approaches to micro-credentials targeting priority industry skills, developed by public providers of nationally recognised training (TAFE Queensland and CQUniversity), by industry and through regional partnerships.

The term micro-credential is increasingly being used by industry to define priority skills that are not currently being addressed through post-schooling education pathways, but there is no consistent definition of this outcome.

“Credential” suggests a level of certification or recognition attached to this skill outcome, possibly derived from the provider issuing the credential (e.g. universities) or a relevant industry or regulatory authority. These pilots will provide an opportunity to test the level of industry recognition required for a skill outcome to constitute a “micro-credential”.

For the purposes of these pilots, the skill outcomes to be targeted will not be nationally recognised (i.e. vocational education and training or VET), as these outcomes can be supported under existing VET investment programs.

The Micro-credentialing Pilots program is administered by the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT).

Who will the funds support?

The Micro-credentialing Pilots will upskill Queensland existing workers, new entrants or job seekers in industries, regions and enterprises targeted by pilots.

Eligible participants must:

- be aged 15 years of age or over
- be no longer at school
- permanently reside in Queensland
- be an Australian citizen, or a New Zealand citizen, or hold an eligible visa as identified by DESBT at <https://desbt.qld.gov.au/training/providers/inclusive/visa-eligibility>
- meet any additional eligibility requirements identified through approved pilot projects.

The selection of participants is at the discretion of the funded organisation, subject to the above eligibility criteria. Permission to recruit participants outside of the above criteria needs to be sought from DESBT.

What assistance is available?

Micro-credentialing Pilots aim to improve employability of participants by providing skills in demand from industry, and increasing the labour productivity of enterprises through investment in technical, digital and soft skills.

Pilots are expected to provide funding support for the delivery of the micro-credential skills program. In addition, individual pilots may also support activities relating to the development, implementation and evaluation of pilots.

Who can apply for funding?

Queensland’s public VET providers (TAFE Queensland and CQUniversity) will deliver pilots under the program.

Other organisations will be eligible to apply for funding through direct engagement in priority industries or funding rounds, and must be registered for GST.

Eligible organisations will include industry peak bodies, regional industry bodies and unions. Employers may be able to apply to deliver a pilot on behalf of industry.

An application submitted by eligible organisations must:

- demonstrate the job or occupational need that will be addressed through the micro-credential
- confirm capacity to manage the proposed pilot, including provision of the required services
- outline the provider that will deliver the micro-credential, including justification for their selection and the cost of delivery
- where the pilot includes training of existing workers, a clear commitment from employer(s) to support workers’ participation and co-contribution.

What is the application process?

Micro-credentialing Pilots will be implemented through a number of targeted streams and funding rounds, to provide an opportunity to explore different priorities and types of micro-credentials.

Stream 1 – Public Providers

TAFE Queensland and CQUniversity will be funded to deliver a range of micro-credentials, developed to respond to priorities identified by industry and to support improved outcomes for existing VET students.

These pilots will be funded for the full term of the Micro-credentialing Pilots program, and will be reviewed annually to reflect effective modes and emerging skills.

Stream 2 – Strategic Partnerships in Priority Industries

Micro-credential pilots will target workforce development priorities within the Tourism and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) sectors.

These initial industry pilots will be negotiated with key industry stakeholders to address the identified skills priorities in workforce plans or research undertaken by Jobs Queensland for these sectors.

Stream 3 – Funding Round

A funding round will provide an opportunity for market-led proposals from industry and other eligible organisations.

This funding round will be for eligible organisations, and may target specific industry sectors or regional priorities.

The funding round will open on 23 March 2020, and will close at 5pm (AEST) on 8 May 2020 (extended from 24 April).

DESBT reserves the right to fund projects addressing emergent needs or government priorities outside of these funding streams, and is not bound to accept any application and reserves the right to discontinue or change the application and selection process and vary the selection criteria as appropriate.

What level of funding is available?

DESBT will directly negotiate funding levels as part of Streams 1 and 2 outlined above.

DESBT will provide up to \$250,000 for each pilot project through the Micro-credentialing Pilots funding round.

Applications should target a minimum of 50% of total funding sought on delivery costs, to support a focus on piloting the impact of micro-credentials.

Funding is only available on the basis of a negotiated co-contribution for all projects, which may be from industry, enterprises or participants. The extent and nature of the co-contribution will be taken into consideration when assessing applications against the selection criteria.

What can project funds be used for?

Funds can only be expended on costs directly associated with an approved Micro-credentialing Pilots project, which may include delivery of the skills program, or other project development, implementation and evaluation activities.

The costs relating to the delivery of the skills program may support traditional training delivery models, workshops delivered by content experts, or costs associated with access to software for online delivery.

Eligible costs within project budgets include:

- wages and on-costs for project coordinator and/or other delivery staff
- administration costs such as rent, accommodation, venue hire, office supplies, advertising, travel costs, vehicle hire/lease
- learning resources, other materials and equipment.

Pilots may also consider costs of promoting, issuing or managing a credential system, such as a skills passport or licenses to use existing learning platforms.

Where a management fee is included in the project costs, this must not exceed five percent of project funds sought through the Micro-credentialing Pilots program.

Funding from other sources must also be disclosed to DESBT. To avoid duplication of services, funding is not available for the same services being delivered through other initiatives or programs. Funding will also not be provided for capital costs or IT development.

What are the funding conditions?

Organisations approved to deliver pilot projects will be generally offered funding of up to 24 months duration.

A Micro-credentialing Pilots Services Agreement that outlines the standard terms and conditions of the funding will be entered into with successful applicants.

A pre-payment will be made once the Services Agreement has been executed and no sooner than 30 days prior to the start of the project.

Subsequent payments are made upon lodgement of the reporting requirements of the funding agreement and acquitting expenditure of the previous payment. Monthly reports are required throughout the life of the project.

All projects must be fully acquitted and any unexpended or surplus funds returned to DESBT.

More information

Organisations seeking information on the Micro-credentialing Pilots program or funding round should contact DESBT by email programdesign@desbt.qld.gov.au.

How will applications be assessed?

An assessment panel will assess the applications against the selection criteria detailed below. The successful applicants will be those that score the highest total points against all criteria and represent the best value for money.

The panel will also draw on local knowledge and experience and may reference other information held by DESBT, Jobs Queensland and/or other Government departments.

Assessment criteria	How this will be assessed — including but not limited to:
Capacity to manage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial viability of the applicant • relevant experience in managing public funds and delivering similar services • experience of managing and coordinating projects
Servicing industry and employer needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • why the project is needed — clear articulation of how the project will address skills needs in the industry sector or regional economy • links to local employers, industry or other stakeholders to identify skills for the identified workforce • demonstrated industry demand and benefit
Recognition of Micro-credential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrated alignment between skill need and micro-credential outcomes • level of endorsement and recognition of the skill outcome by industry • portability of the credential for participants
Strategies to assist participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participant support mechanisms that specifically address individuals' learning needs and goals • ability to provide effective skills development in terms of method, location and timing of delivery • demonstrated performance of the identified provider of the skills program in achieving outcomes for participants and meeting industry skill needs
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • capacity to address identified skill need through proposed micro-credential • employment benefit for participants • productivity benefit for enterprises and industry
Cost/value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cost effectiveness (compared with mainstream skills programs) • level of co-contribution from enterprises and participants • extent and nature of financial and in-kind co-contribution from industry and other sources

