

# Rural and Remote Pilot 2024

## Funding and Application Guide

### Introduction

The Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (the Department) is opening a targeted and limited Rural and Remote Pilot ('Pilot') in 2024 focused on increasing vocational education and training (VET) delivery in rural and remote Queensland.

The purpose of this Funding and Application Guide ('Guide') is to provide information on the Pilot's objectives and funding parameters, including the selection and application process for eligible Queensland Skills Assure Suppliers (SAS) and non-SAS Registered Training Organisations (RTOs).

This Guide will outline:

- Pilot objectives including eligible qualifications and delivery locations, student eligibility, training provider obligations and expected outcomes;
- the two-stage assessment framework and how it applies to:
  - existing Queensland SAS providers;
  - RTOs that have never held a SAS Agreement or Pre-qualified Supplier Agreement with the Department. It is important to note that RTO applications which do not meet Queensland's mandatory Skills Assure framework eligibility criteria (**Phase 1**) will not be progressed for further consideration (**Phase 2**).

### Overview and objectives

The Department has received consistent feedback from a range of VET stakeholders regarding the challenges in accessing suitable training delivery in rural and remote Queensland. SAS providers have raised the high costs associated with servicing these locations even with the additional loadings that are paid for face-to-face training delivery in rural and remote areas.

This Pilot will trial a managed approach to deliver more face-to-face training in rural and remote Queensland, to increase access to quality training provision aligned to local employer and industry skills needs. Most importantly, the Pilot will help to inform the real costs associated with enabling face-to-face delivery in rural and remote Queensland.

Additional aims of the Pilot include:

- supporting individual student needs and well-being throughout the training journey, with a particular focus on assisting First Nations people, people with a disability, and people from diverse multicultural backgrounds to successfully participate in training;
- the requirement for training proposals to reflect strong collaborative relationships with local employers, industry and community organisations, to facilitate training responses that directly address local skills needs and deliver job outcomes for residents (helping to grow connected and vibrant communities).

The Pilot will target selected locations in Central Queensland and North Queensland and operate for a period of 12 months from early 2024 (with no new student enrolments three months prior to agreement completion date).

The Pilot will be implemented using the Department's existing core VET programs, namely Certificate 3 Guarantee (C3G) and Higher Level Skills (HLS) and the related Skills Assure framework. As such, RTO applicants must ensure they read all documents listed below before submitting an application, to ensure they understand the Pilot details and can meet all program and SAS policy requirements:

- [Certificate 3 Guarantee Program Policy 2021-24](#)
- [Higher Level Skills Program Policy 2021-24](#)
- [Skills Assure Supplier Policy 2021-24 \(for Queensland VET Investment programs\)](#)
- [Skills Assure Supplier Audit Evidence Requirements \(VET Investment Programs 2023-24\)](#)



## Delivery locations

The following Local Government Areas (LGAs) within the Central Queensland and North Queensland regions have been identified for the Pilot. Note: delivery outside these locations will not be permitted, nor funded.

### Central Queensland

Banana Shire Council, Barcaldine Regional Council, Barcoo Shire Council, Blackall Tambo Regional Council, Boulia Shire Council, Central Highlands Regional Council, Diamantina Shire Council, Isaac Regional Council, Longreach Regional Council, Winton Shire Council, Woorabinda Aboriginal Shire Council.

### North Queensland

Burdekin Shire Council, Burke Shire Council, Carpentaria Shire Council, Charters Towers Regional Council, Cloncurry Shire Council, Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council, Flinders Shire Council, Hinchinbrook Shire Council, McKinlay Shire Council, Mornington Shire Council, Mount Isa City Council, Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council, Richmond Shire Council, Whitsunday Regional Council.

## Qualification list

Following analysis of key industries, skills needs, training supply and labour market data in each region, the following qualifications were identified as suitable for the Pilot. Delivery under the Pilot is confined to the below qualifications and there will be no further qualifications added to the Pilot.

Industry Training Group (ITG)	Eligible qualifications
Community Services - Childcare	CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care
	CHC50121 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care
	10983NAT Certificate III in Outside School Hours Care
Community Services - General	CHC33021 Certificate III in Individual Support
	CHC32015 Certificate III in Community Services
	CHC30221 Certificate III in School Based Education Support
	CHC40321 Certificate IV in Child, Youth and Family Intervention
	CHC43121 Certificate IV in Disability Support
	CHC40221 Certificate IV in School Based Education Support
	CHC43315 Certificate IV in Mental Health
General Education and Training - Foundation Skills	FSK20119 Certificate II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways
Health - General	HLT33021 Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance
	HLT33115 Certificate III in Health Services Assistance
Hospitality - General	SIT20421 Certificate II in Cookery
	SIT30622 Certificate III in Hospitality
Primary Industry - Agriculture	AHC30122 Certificate III in Agriculture
	AHC32822 Certificate III in Rural Operations
Tourism - General	SIT30122 Certificate III in Tourism

## Pilot-specific conditions

Providers approved to deliver training for the Pilot must comply with existing C3G and HLS program and SAS policies which still apply including student co-contribution fees, with the exception of key differences for the Pilot.

Key Pilot differences include the following:

- eligible students must permanently reside in the LGA;
- school students and adult prisoners are not eligible to participate in the Pilot;
- the only Foundation Skills qualification that may be delivered (in conjunction with eligible vocational qualifications) under the Pilot is the Certificate II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways (FSK20119). All other lower-level qualifications and skill sets on the Priority Skills List are not subsidised under the Pilot;
- third party/sub-contractor delivery is not permissible. Exceptions may be considered following submission of a detailed business case (a template can be requested from the Department) which clearly identifies the third parties (by individual full name and contact details) and what training and/or assessment services each will deliver;
- a minimum of 60% of training and assessment services provided must be delivered through face-to-face delivery in the LGA;
- the Pilot does not include funding for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), or a combination of RPL and credit transfer, where this represents the predominant activity for achievement of the qualification. Prospective students seeking to achieve their qualification primarily through one of these options are not the target cohort for this Pilot (there are other available Departmental programs to address such).

SAS obligations for the Pilot include (but are not limited to):

- specific contractual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) related to student training and support plans; increased participation by priority cohorts; industry workplace exposure and job outcomes. These will be measured by the Department including by direct contact with students to obtain feedback on their training experience and outcomes achieved (employment, career advancement, or transition to further education and training);
- quarterly qualitative reporting as well as standard monthly AVETMISS data submissions;
- supporting each student through a pre-training interview and tailored training and support plan that features employment goals, negotiated support arrangements, and inclusive delivery strategies aligned to individual learner needs;
- arranging local vocational placements when mandated under the training package for successful completion of the qualification, or when not mandated – providing the student with industry exposure (e.g., workplace/field visits) and/or on-job learning opportunities;
- actively helping students post-training to transition to the workforce, advance in their career, or transition to higher-level education and training (student outcomes will be measured by the Department).

## Funding

Funding paid will reflect three components – current training subsidies and location loadings will be paid under the Pilot, supplemented by a funding contribution to assist face-to-face delivery costs.

### 1. Current training subsidy:

- Applicable training subsidies and any student eligibility restrictions (industry and/or training package requirements) for the Pilot qualifications – will be exactly the same as those stated for the identical qualifications on the existing [Priority Skills List](#).

### 2. Current location loadings:

- As well as the training subsidy, the Department pays location loadings that acknowledge there are extra costs incurred by providers when delivering training outside of South-East Queensland. Refer to the existing [Priority skills localities and location loadings list](#), noting that only the locations (LGAs) listed in this Guide are applicable.

### 3. Additional funding contribution:

- The Department will provide funding to contribute to the extra costs associated with the Pilot including increased face-to-face training and support delivered in the Pilot locations. This funding contribution will be considered (as part of the assessment process) based on each provider's itemised and detailed budget submission. Note: A student co-contribution fee is required.
- The '[Qualification, Location and Budget Template](#)' available on the Department website must be used for this purpose, with evidentiary documents attached to substantiate additional Pilot costs (i.e., extra costs above existing training subsidies and location loadings paid). Note: eligible expenditure is stated in the template.
- Note: The Department is under no obligation to fund the total additional costs sought and may determine (as part of the assessment process) to offer to fund only a proportion of the additional costs.
- Eligible activities and/or expenditure to support the Pilot delivery may include:
  - additional staff costs to deliver face-to-face training and assessment services in the eligible LGA (e.g., new or extra roles to directly support delivery);
  - educational resources or materials;
  - travel, accommodation, and venue hire costs within the LGA.
- Funds cannot be used for:
  - the purchase of significant assets (e.g., buildings or vehicles);
  - existing staff member salaries/wages;
  - interstate and overseas travel;
  - ongoing business operational and maintenance costs such as utilities (e.g. gas, water, electricity);
  - any other recurrent costs such as established positions within the organisation;
  - services delivered in-kind;
  - retrospective payments for expenses incurred or for work undertaken, prior to funding approval;
  - fees for any activities or equipment provided by related parties (such as companies with common shareholdings or directorship with the applicant, and employees or immediate family of the applicant).
- Funding must have a direct link to supporting the Pilot delivery.

## Existing Students

The Pilot is aimed at new student enrolments in the designated locations participating in face-to-face training. It is recognised that current SAS may have existing funded students located in identified LGAs who may benefit from increased face-to-face training delivery.

While the pilot is not intended to give providers additional funding for existing students, there may be circumstances which are beneficial to include existing students providing increased opportunities to attend face-to-face training, and it may make class size/costs more practical for existing providers.

SAS must identify any existing students they wish to include in the Pilot and how the inclusion will benefit the students. SAS must also identify any additional costs associated with existing students they wish to include, as part of the selection process.

This only applies to current SAS selected to participate in the Pilot.

## SAS provider – selection process

The Department will work with existing SAS providers that have previously demonstrated a strong record of delivering face-to-face training for the eligible qualifications in the Pilot locations and/or other remote areas of Queensland. This will reflect an invitation and expression of interest process.

The Department will identify applicable SAS providers through analysis of training outputs and student outcomes in rural and remote areas of Queensland and will initiate contact directly to discuss the Pilot. This will include information on User Choice apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities under the Pilot which may apply to those SAS providers with experience delivering in these locations.

Existing SAS not directly contacted by the Department will also be able to apply to participate in the Pilot if they have the approved qualifications on their Queensland VET Investment (QVI) delivery schedule. Note: This pilot does not enable existing SAS with a User Choice agreement to apply for a QVI agreement.

SAS providers will be required to complete an application form for Phase 2 of the assessment framework, that is, provide responses to key Pilot questions which will be assessed and ranked against the assessment criteria listed in **Attachment 2**.

## RTO (not a SAS) – application process

There will be one application under a transparent and contestable process for RTO applicants, with the online application form and closing date available on the Department website.

It is important that external RTO applicants still meet the same Skills Assure framework eligibility standards mandated for current Queensland SAS providers, to assure high quality training and positive student outcomes under the Pilot.

RTO applicants approved as a SAS for the Pilot are only able to deliver training in the qualifications and LGAs stated on their Pilot Delivery Schedule. These SAS will not be approved to deliver training beyond the Pilot scope and no funding will be paid by the Department for any delivery outside the remit of the Pilot.

The assessment framework for external RTOs will be a two-step process:

- Phase 1 entails the assessment of applications against the mandatory SAS eligibility criteria listed in **Attachment 1**;
- The application must include three (3) employer support letters on letterhead (employer/industry contacts) that confirm the RTO's recent quality training delivery and industry connections in each qualification being applied for under the Pilot. Letters from labour hire companies and/or schools will not be accepted as industry evidence. **Note:** these should not be form letters;
- RTO applications that do not meet the mandatory eligibility criteria will be declined;
- Eligible qualifying applications will then progress to Phase 2 of the assessment framework to have their responses to key Pilot questions assessed and ranked against the assessment criteria listed in **Attachment 2** (consistent with existing SAS providers).

## Assessment panel

- An assessment panel will be established by the Department and may include representatives from both within and outside the Department with relevant regional and industry skills and training experience.
- The role of the assessment panel relates to stage 2 of the assessment framework and applies to both existing SAS providers and RTO applicants. The panel will discuss, prioritise and recommend applicants to be approved to deliver training under the Pilot (this will include endorsing a final recommended order of merit).
- The application/selection process and assessment criteria may be varied or discontinued by the Department as required at any time and for any reasons, in its sole discretion.
- Without limitation, the Department may, in its sole discretion:
  - apply such criteria and weightings as the Department sees fit;
  - for applications considered ambiguous, erroneous or incomplete, refuse to consider the application or request further information from the applicant, as the Department sees fit;
  - not accept any application.
- Applicants should note:
  - the order of the list of assessment criteria is not to be taken as an order of precedence or an indication of the weighting which will be given to any particular criteria;
  - the list of assessment criteria is not necessarily exhaustive and the Department may also consider such other criteria as it considers appropriate in its sole discretion. This may include consideration of the current market profile for the LGA and prioritising applications for fair

distribution across LGAs.

- The Department, in its sole discretion, will determine the number of providers required to participate in the Pilot.

## Outcome advice

If the Department **does not approve** an application, the decision will be final, and the provider will receive correspondence from the Department advising of the outcome and reasons for the decision.

Reasons may include failure to complete all questions and/or attach all requisite evidentiary documents. Any questions about the decision can be emailed to the address supplied within the outcome letter.

If the Department **does approve** an application, the Department will offer SAS status (SAS Agreement) for the Pilot only. More information will be sent at this time.

Note:

- Once approval is granted, the SAS cannot request any variations or changes to their Pilot Delivery Schedule (i.e., no adding or removal of any qualifications);
- The Department reserves the right to terminate any Pilot SAS Agreement if Pilot terms and conditions are not met.

## Appeals

RTOs and SAS may request a review of a decision made by the Department in relation to the provision of funding under the Pilot.

The appeals process has been established to help identify any problems in the application process, ensuring these processes continue to improve, and to assist with future applications.

Appeals must be lodged in writing to:

Attn: Appeals Officer, Skills Investment  
via email [corroskillsinvestment@desbt.qld.gov.au](mailto:corroskillsinvestment@desbt.qld.gov.au)

Organisations will be notified in writing of the appeal outcomes within 21 business days from receipt of the appeal.

## Attachment 1: RTO assessment for SAS eligibility

Eligibility criteria	How this will be assessed
RTO head office location in Queensland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head office address is in Queensland as recorded on training.gov.au.</li> <li>• For RTO companies – the principal place of business address is in Queensland on the ASIC Current and Historical Company Extract.</li> <li>• For RTO registered charities – the address/State is Queensland on the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) website.</li> <li>• For RTOs that are not companies or registered charities – ABN information for the main business location must be in Queensland (and other information as determined by the Department to confirm a Queensland head office).</li> </ul>
RTO registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current and active RTO registration status on, or prior to, 1 July 2021 (as indicated on training.gov.au) to satisfy the Department's requirements relating to financial viability and training history.</li> </ul>
Relevant scope of registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registration to deliver (train and assess) in the full qualification in Queensland under the RTO's scope of registration (as verified on training.gov.au) for Pilot qualifications listed in the application.</li> <li>• Note: an RTO cannot apply to deliver only the eligible Foundation Skills qualification; an eligible vocational qualification must also be delivered under the Pilot given its focus on skills needs and job outcomes.</li> </ul>
RTO quality and compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department will closely examine – RTO compliance history in Queensland and nationally; its subcontracting arrangements; and previous training and assessment activity in Queensland through review of information such as AVETMISS data.</li> <li>• The RTO must supply the most recent audit report under the VET Quality Framework as conducted by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) or under the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) conducted by a State Training Authority. The report must also confirm any previous non-compliances identified are now rectified.</li> <li>• Note: if the RTO does not have a recent audit report or is waiting for the report and/or rectification report from the authorising body, the RTO must advise the Department of this in their application.</li> </ul>
Training delivery history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum of twelve (12) months delivery of training and assessment services and outcomes in Queensland in the full vocational qualification(s) or industry area (ITG) being applied for in the application.</li> <li>• To determine 12 months of training history in Queensland, the Department requires AVETMISS files for all Queensland student enrolments by the RTO since 1 January 2022. This data must be submitted using the Queensland Government's secure site for reporting VET data – <a href="#">Partner Portal</a>.</li> <li>• Note: delivery of 100% RPL, or a combination of 100% RPL and credit transfer, is not considered as suitable evidence of training delivery and assessment services, nor is delivery of units of competency only with no qualification outcome.</li> </ul>
Financial viability and trading history <i>(current SAS have met this criterion)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to meet the Department's benchmarks for financial viability. Note: independent confirmation of financial viability will be undertaken at Phase 2 (determined through an external assessment process), contingent on the application meeting all Phase 1 criteria.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RTO must advise of any history of bankruptcy, disqualification, legal action or outstanding judgements relating to their organisation, key personnel or company officeholders.</li> </ul>
Data submissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity to electronically report training and assessment services activity to the Department using the most current AVETMISS release. Note: this excludes NCVET's AVETMISS Data Entry Tool as it does not meet state reporting requirements. For information on AVETMISS, visit <a href="http://www.ncver.edu.au">www.ncver.edu.au</a>.</li> </ul>
Employer / industry relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employer (referee) letters provided clearly support the RTO's training quality and industry connections in the qualifications being applied for under the Pilot. All contacts must be independent from the RTO and RTO legal entity. Generic letters of support will not be accepted.</li> <li><b>Note:</b> confirmation/assessment of industry connections will be undertaken at Phase 2, contingent on the RTO meeting all Phase 1 criteria.</li> </ul>





## Attachment 2: Pilot assessment criteria

Assessment criteria	How this will be assessed (but not limited to)
Experience in rural and remote VET delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of current and past performance in successfully delivering VET in the region (CQ or NQ) and/or other remote areas of Queensland (either government funded or FFS), which demonstrates the provider's ability to enable delivery in the Pilot locations.</li> <li>• Training history confirms a high proportion of face-to-face delivery, and high participation and completions by priority (equity) student cohorts.</li> <li>• Clear description of the training proposal including a breakdown of the key activities and articulation of a reasonable delivery schedule (timeframe) to complete the proposal.</li> <li>• Details of how the provider will sustain a physical presence in the region to support face-to-face delivery in the LGA (this may include access to local training spaces/hubs).</li> <li>• Explanation of how the proposal will contribute to future availability of VET in the region (e.g., assisting to build local VET workforce capability including First Nations trainers where possible).</li> </ul>
Servicing local community and industry needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear description of why the proposal is needed including how it will enhance individual, social and economic opportunities, participation in any related regional planning processes.</li> <li>• Details of how the proposal will address identified gaps and barriers and complement (not duplicate) other local programs/initiatives.</li> <li>• Evidence of initial proposal scoping undertaken to confirm demand upfront, including links to local employers/industry, community organisations and other stakeholders to identify skills needs, job outcomes and potential training participants (e.g., local jobseekers).</li> <li>• Details of how the proposal reflects collaboration and co-design with local employers, industry bodies and community representatives, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO) where possible.</li> </ul>
Supporting the student journey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear description of how the training and assessment methodology will be tailored to individual learner needs (e.g., culturally sensitive and respectful learning environment; inclusive practices; delivery of foundation and digital literacy skills if required).</li> <li>• Range of assistance strategies and support mechanisms described to encourage and support increased participation by priority student cohorts, with a particular focus on First Nations people, people with a disability, and people from diverse multicultural backgrounds.</li> <li>• Details of how student transitions will be facilitated (e.g., secure rewarding job outcome), including how employers may also be supported to recruit and on-board participants in the workplace.</li> </ul>
Capacity to deliver Pilot outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrated capacity to meet local skills shortages and workforce needs – extent of connections with local employers/industry to enable work experience/exposure or mandated vocational placements, effective skills development and job outcomes.</li> <li>• Details of how the training and learning pathways will be effective and realistic in terms of delivery method, location and timeframes proposed.</li> <li>• No significant compliance or performance issues.</li> <li>• Employer (3) letters of support/testimonials verified by the Department – referee checks confirm prior quality training provision. <b>Note:</b></li> </ul>

	Employer support letters must be on company letterhead and include a contact phone number. Form letters will not be accepted. <i>(current SAS have met this criterion)</i>
Cost effectiveness / value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost per participant and expected outcomes represent fair comparative costs above the training subsidy and location loading to be paid (based on submission of a detailed and itemised budget using the 'Qualification, Location and Budget Template').</li> <li>• Level of complementary funding and assistance from other sources including in-kind and direct contributions.</li> <li>• Relevant experience in managing public funds.</li> </ul>

