Micro-credentialing Program

Guidelines for Funding 2023

Introduction

The Queensland Government announced investment of $5.5M for a 3-year Micro-Credentialing Pilot Program (MCPP) as part of the 2019-20 State Budget. The MCPP provided support to changing workplaces by enabling provision of focused training for new or transitioning employees in specific skills. Since that time, 18 pilot programs have been funded through this initiative. These pilots demonstrated how innovative, modern and flexible pathways can be used to address current, emerging and future skills needs.

The *Good people. Good jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022-2032* reflects the commitment from government, industry and the community to work together to tackle skills and labour shortages by addressing the different needs of our diverse population, businesses and regions. Supporting the Strategy is the first 3-year action plan to strengthen partnerships between industry, community and government to deliver a range of initiatives. Initiatives include:

- development of a Queensland Vocational Education and Training (VET) Strategy to build on the strengths of Queensland's VET system, by ensuring Queensland's annual investment in skills and training is tailored to meet current and future workforce needs; and
- extension of the MCPP to provide increased access to industry-supported short courses.

The Queensland Government has committed an additional $2.9M to expand the MCPP in 2023.

Overview and objectives

The Micro-credentialing Program is administered by the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) and is a mechanism to identify and support life-long learning and just-in-time training responses. The Program aims to:

- support a range of approaches to micro-credentials targeting priority industry skills by industry and through regional partnerships;
- improve employability of participants by providing skills in demand from industry; and
- increase labour productivity of enterprises though investment in technical, digital or other skills needs not addressed through existing VET products.

Funding is only available on the basis of a co-contribution (financial or in-kind) 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.

Successful applications will align to the following Micro-credentialing Program principles:

Principle 1 - Complementary to the VET system

For the purposes of this program, the skill outcomes to be targeted will not be nationally recognised (i.e. VET) as these outcomes can be supported under existing VET investment programs. Micro-credentials developed for this program should seek to address skill requirements for industry or enterprises that

are not covered in national Training Packages. Micro-credentials should complement the in-depth knowledge and skills available or obtained through VET qualifications to support individuals with lifelong skills and employment opportunities and industry to address skills gaps.

Principle 2 - Aligned to workforce skills need

Micro-credentials developed for this program must be a clearly defined and timely training solution developed in response to:

- digital or technical disruption that requires skills bridging or updating;
- regulatory, licensing or other compulsory requirement that imposes new requirements on industry and workers;
- emerging health and safety issues and/or protecting vulnerable workers; and/or
- other emerging issue/s that are not addressed through existing VET products.

Principle 3 - Industry driven

Micro-credentials developed for this program should be industry driven and supported by employers in the applicable sector. Micro-credentials will need to demonstrate:

- learning outcomes for the relevant program of study, including knowledge, skills and context;
- learning and assessment approaches that suitably verify the achievement of learning outcomes;
- how the credential would be widely recognised and accepted by employers; and
- inclusion of strategies to address known industry challenges.

Principle 4 - Accessible to participants

The micro-credential design should consider the learning needs of participants. There should also be evidence of employer commitment to worker participation in the micro-credential. This will include considering how workers can undertake training within the specific industry or workplace, accessibility of required learning and support, and motivational factors such as career benefit.

Principle 5 - Portable

While not nationally recognised, micro-credentials need to be recognised by the industry, accepted by employers and be able to be accessed by the participant in the future. Successful applicants will need to develop or utilise a learning platform or management system that will support the delivery, issue and retention of the credential, including:

- verification of the learner's identity, participation in learning activities and contribution to assessment;
- tracking of outcomes such as participation, completions, skills needs being met, employment outcomes and/or further training benefits to individuals; and
- ongoing access to an electronic credential or badge.

Principle 6 - Sustainable

The primary focus of government investment in micro-credentials is on seed or gap funding, to enable demand for an industry-based credential to be tested and then self-funded if viable, or to address an emerging skills issue that will either be addressed through the delivery of the micro-credential, or be incorporated into future products developed through the VET or higher education sectors. Funding applications should address the sustainability of the micro-credential or the skills need it addresses.

Applications for the Micro-credentialing Program should address each of these principles and provide sufficient supporting information and evidence to substantiate claims and capacity to achieve project objectives.

What assistance is available?

The Micro-credentialing Program aims to improve employability of participants by providing skills in demand from industry and increasing the labour productivity of enterprises through investment in priority skills. Projects funded by the Micro-credentialing Program <u>must</u> deliver skills development for existing workers or jobseekers that align with the principles outlined above.

DESBT will provide up to $250,000 (GST exclusive) for each project through the Micro-credentialing Program funding round.

Funds can only be expended on costs directly associated with an approved Micro-credentialing Program project, which may include development of the micro-credentials and associated resources, delivery of the micro-credentials, or other project development, implementation and evaluation activities. Applications should target a <u>minimum of 50%</u> of total funding sought on delivery costs to support a focus on skills development.

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; and
- learning resources, other materials and equipment.

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

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

Who can apply?

Eligible applicants must be registered for GST and fall into one of the following categories:

- Queensland's public VET providers (TAFE Queensland and CQUniversity);
- industry peak bodies;
- regional industry bodies;
- unions;
- employers (on behalf of their industry); or
- Industry Skills Advisors (approved by the Department).

An application submitted by eligible organisations should demonstrate their capacity to manage the project as well as how the micro-credential:

- complements (does not duplicate) existing VET products;
- addresses current or future workforce skills needs;
- is industry driven;
- is accessible for participants;
- is supported by employers and portable for participants;
- is sustainable; and
- represents value for money.

Who will the funds support?

In terms of delivery of the micro-credential, the Micro-credentialing Program will upskill Queensland existing workers, new entrants or job seekers in industries, regions and enterprises targeted by programs.

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; and
- meet any additional eligibility requirements identified through approved program 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 is to be sought from DESBT prior to the participant commencing the micro-credential.

What is the application process?

The funding round will open on 3 April 2023 and will close at 5.00pm on 11 May 2023. Applications, including supporting evidence, are to be submitted via the online application which can be found at Micro-credentialing Program | Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (desbt.qld.gov.au).

Late applications will not be considered.

A panel will assess the applications against the selection criteria detailed in this document. The funding round is expected to be very competitive. The assessment panel will seek to recommend projects that best meet the objectives of the Micro-credentialing Program and address industry and regional priorities.

DESBT reserves the right to fund projects addressing emergent needs or government priorities outside of this funding stream 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 are the funding conditions?

Organisations approved to deliver projects will be generally offered funding of up to 12 months duration. Longer durations will be considered by the panel on a case by case basis.

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.

A Micro-credentialing Program 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. Regular reports are required throughout the life of the project.

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

How will applications be assessed?

An assessment panel will assess the applications against the selection criteria detailed below. 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	• financial viability of the applicant • relevant experience managing public funds and delivering similar projects
Addressing a skills need	• why the project is needed — clear articulation of how the project will address current and/or future skills needs in the industry sector or regional economy • aligned to priority skills needs - digital, technical, regulatory, licensing, health and safety, protecting vulnerable workers or community members or other emerging issues • the proposed solution can be rapidly developed and implemented • demonstrated links to and support from local employers, industry or other stakeholders
Industry driven	• demonstrated alignment between the industry skill need and outcomes from the project • clear articulation of known industry challenges (e.g. shift work, low engagement with formal training) and strategies to overcome these constraints
Accessible to participants	• participant support mechanisms that address individuals' learning needs and barriers (including any past performance in achieving outcomes for participants in similar programs) • accessibility of training for participants - ability to provide effective skills development in terms of method, location and timing of delivery • employment and other benefits for participants
Portable and recognisable	• demonstrated industry commitment to recognise the credential • system/processes to be implemented to verify learners identify and track outcomes • system to provide participants with ongoing access to their electronic credential/s
Cost, value for money and sustainability	• cost effectiveness (compared with mainstream skills programs) • proposed skills solution complements government investment in VET qualifications • level and nature of co-contribution from applicant, industry, participants, and other sources • sustainability of skills outcomes after funding has ceased

More information

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

Guideline owner:	Deputy Director-General Investment
Approval date:	17 February 2023
Effective date:	3 April 2023
Related documents:	Micro-credentialing Program 2023 FAQs Micro-credentialing Program 2023 Factsheet
Version control:	1.0