

# Micro-credentialing Program

## Guidelines for Funding 2024 (Round 2)

### Introduction

The Queensland Government announced investment of \$5.5M for a 3-year Micro-Credentialing Pilot Program (MCP) as part of the 2019-20 State Budget. 18 successful projects provided support to changing workplaces by enabling provision of focused training for new or transitioning employees in specific skills. 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 MCP to provide increased access to industry-supported short courses.

The Queensland Government has committed \$5.9M to expand the MCP in 2023 and 2024. The first round of the expanded program was finalised in 2023, with 17 projects approved for funding. Go to the website to see a full list of approved

projects - [Micro-credentialing Program | Department of Employment, Small Business and Training \(desbt.qld.gov.au\)](https://desbt.qld.gov.au/micro-credentialing-program)

### 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 through investment in technical, digital, or other skills needs not addressed through existing VET products.

Applications for round 2 will open in 2024. Applications can be submitted for new projects that have not yet commenced, and will address the following mandatory project stages:

1. **Design stage** – design a micro-credential program in consultation with industry;
2. **Development stage** - develop micro-credential/s to meet industry and participant needs; and
3. **Delivery stage** - deliver the micro-credential program in a manner that encourages take-up and completion.

Successful applications will demonstrate how the project will connect to and benefit a range

of employers in the relevant sector/s. Letters (or similar) from employers indicating support for the proposed micro-credential/s are to be used to demonstrate recent consultation, validation of project proposal and recognition of micro-credentials within the target industry.

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 or accredited courses. For applicants, this means projects should not include any forms of accredited training. Nor should a micro-credential duplicate what already exists in current accredited training products. 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<sup>1</sup> 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. Successful projects will tailor training to suit the diverse needs of participants and will offer additional support to participants where needed.

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

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<sup>1</sup>Means a change that occurs when new or emerging digital or other technology is introduced to a sector, requiring workforce upskilling. For example, paper-based processes moving to digital technology.

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 the provision of 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, beyond the end of the funding period.

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 must 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 minimum of 50% 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 2024 funding round will open on 4 March 2024 and will close at 5.00pm on 11 April 2024. 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 \(desbt.qld.gov.au\)](https://desbt.qld.gov.au/micro-credentialing-program).

### **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. It is expected that service agreements will be executed, and projects commenced within three months of the department notifying organisations of their successful application for funding.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>financial viability of the applicant</li><li>relevant experience managing public funds and delivering similar projects</li></ul>
Addressing a skills need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>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</li><li>aligned to priority skills needs - digital, technical, regulatory, licensing, health, and safety, protecting vulnerable workers or community members or other emerging issues.</li><li>the proposed solution can be rapidly developed and implemented</li><li>demonstrated alignment between the industry skill need and outcomes from the project</li></ul>
Industry driven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>demonstrated links to and support from local employers, industry, and other stakeholders</li><li>clear articulation of known industry challenges (e.g., shift work, low engagement with formal training) and strategies to overcome these constraints</li></ul>
Accessible to participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>participant support mechanisms that address individuals' learning needs and barriers (including any past performance in achieving outcomes for participants in similar programs)</li></ul>



Assessment criteria	How this will be assessed — including but not limited to:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>accessibility of training for participants - ability to provide effective skills development in terms of method, location, and timing of delivery</li> <li>employment and other benefits for participants</li> </ul>
Portable and recognisable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrated industry commitment to recognise the credential</li> <li>system/processes to be implemented to verify learners identify and track outcomes</li> <li>system to provide participants with ongoing access to their electronic credential/s</li> </ul>
Cost, value for money and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>cost effectiveness (compared with mainstream skills programs)</li> <li>program reach (the number of enterprises and participants that will benefit from the project)</li> <li>value for money</li> <li>proposed skills solution complements government investment in VET qualifications</li> <li>level and nature of co-contribution from applicant, industry, participants, and other sources</li> <li>sustainability of skills outcomes after funding has ceased</li> </ul>

## More information

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

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