



FRESH IDEAS FOR WORK AND FAMILY GRANTS

FREQUENTLY
ASKED
QUESTIONS
MARCH 2009

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

1. What is the Fresh Ideas for Work and Family grants program?

The Australian Government has established the Fresh Ideas for Work and Family grants program to assist Australian small businesses to implement family friendly work arrangements that help employees balance their work and family obligations as well as improve employee retention and productivity. Under the program, funding of between \$5,000 and \$15,000 is available to successful Applicants.

In addition, as the program progresses it will support small businesses by:

- developing and distributing business and industry specific information to assist in implementing family friendly work arrangements
- having experts within Fair Work Australia from January 2010, to provide assistance in setting up family friendly work arrangements.

The program is administered by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations in accordance with the *Guidelines for Applicants* which can be found on www.deewr.gov.au/freshideas.

2. What are family friendly work arrangements?

Family friendly work arrangements are practices or resources that make the workplace more flexible and help employees balance work and family life. Family friendly work arrangements are meant to support employees balance their work and family responsibilities, including dependent children and family members who have disabilities or are elderly.

3. Why is assisting employees to have a good work-life balance beneficial for small business?

Studies in **Australia** and in the **United Kingdom** have shown that helping employees create a good work-life balance leads to:

- better productivity as workers have reconciled their work and family obligations
- better retention of workers resulting in lower costs for employers
- better workplace health and safety
- better work environments
- businesses attracting workers in a tight labour market
- increased perception of organisations as 'employers of choice'
- increased staff morale and improved culture
- reduced absenteeism caused by staff illness and stress.

4. What sort of family friendly work arrangements can I use the grant for?

You are encouraged to develop a family friendly work arrangement that is tailored to suit the specific needs of your business and create work and family life balance solutions for your employees. Some examples of family friendly work arrangements include:

- establishing rosters based on school terms and alternative core hours, for example, 10 am to 3 pm
- establishing quality part-time work or job-sharing
- developing policies on unpaid leave for employees who care for children with disabilities, elderly relatives or people with other special needs
- providing facilities for employees with young children such as family rooms
- setting up workplace mentoring programs.

Information about the Fresh Ideas for Work and Family grants program including information on work-life balance strategies and case studies can be found at www.deewr.gov.au/freshideas.

5. What is a small business?

For the purposes of the Fresh Ideas for Work and Family grants program, a small business is defined as a business with fewer than 15 employees (including those in any associated entity of the employer). Each full-time and part-time employee will count as one employee. Casual employees will also be counted as one employee if they are employed on a regular and systematic basis.

6. Is there a limit to the amount of funding for which I can apply?

Applicants may apply for funding of between \$5,000 and \$15,000. The amount of any funding provided to successful applicants will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

7. What can't I use my grant for?

Funding can only be used for setting up the family friendly work arrangement as specified in your application. Arrangements which are not Family Friendly Work Arrangements for the purposes of the program include, but are not limited to, arrangements which are proposing to use the funding for capital expenditure such as purchasing equipment or machinery which is unrelated to the Family Friendly Work Arrangement; employment of new staff; staff wages not directly related to the Family Friendly Work Arrangement; unforeseen emergencies; expenses associated with employee absences; operating expenses such as lease and interest payments; salary subsidies; and leave payments.

8. Who can I contact for queries relating to the Fresh Ideas for Work and Family grants program?

More information about the program is available on our website www.deewr.gov.au/freshideas, by calling the Workplace Infoline on 1300 363 264 or by emailing FIWF@deewr.gov.au.

ABOUT THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

9. Who is eligible to apply for funding?

Small businesses that are interested in implementing family friendly work arrangements, may apply for funding under the Fresh Ideas for Work and Family grants program to assist in the implementation of those arrangements. All applications will be assessed against the eligibility criteria as set out in section 5 of the *Guidelines for Applicants*.

10. Are franchise businesses eligible?

Yes, franchise businesses are eligible to apply for funding.

11. Am I eligible to apply if I am currently receive apprentice/training funding?

Yes. Apprentice/trainee funding does not affect your application.

12. Am I eligible to apply if my business has previously been found to have breached the *Workplace Relations Act 1996*?

Yes, however the Department may have regard for the applicant's compliance with the *Workplace Relations Act 1996* and any relevant State or Territory legislation, award or other industrial instrument when determining whether the applicant

satisfies the "good work practices" requirement. Funding will only be provided to applicants who are currently engaged in good work practices.

13. Am I eligible to receive funding if I want to modify a family friendly work arrangement currently in place?

Yes. Small businesses currently implementing a family friendly work arrangement are eligible to apply for funding relating to that arrangement, provided the small business satisfies the eligibility criteria in section 5 of the *Guidelines for Applicants*.

However, some exclusions do apply. If you have previously received funding from the Fresh Ideas for Work and Family grants program, you must complete the previous project and fulfil all obligations under the *Terms and Conditions* before you are eligible to receive another round of funding.

Additionally, funding is not available if you have already received Commonwealth and/or State Government funding for the same family friendly work arrangement you are seeking funding for under the program.

ABOUT THE FUNDING

14. What can the funding be used for?

Funding can only be used to assist small businesses to implement family friendly work arrangements to suit the specific needs of the small business and help employees balance work and family life.

15. How much funding will I receive?

Funding of between \$5,000 and \$15,000 (GST inclusive) is available to each successful applicant under the program.

In your application, you will need to specify the amount of funding you are applying for. However, the amount of funding to be provided to each successful applicant is determined on a case-by-case basis.

For consortia applying for funding:

- each member of the consortium can apply for funding of between \$5,000 and \$15,000 for each member to fulfil a common purpose for all consortium members, or
- all members of the consortium can apply together for combined funding of between \$5,000 and \$15,000 for the entire consortium.

16. How will the funding be paid?

Funding will be paid in two instalments and is subject to funding recipients satisfying the requirements of clause 2 of the *Terms and Conditions*. 75 per cent of the funding will be paid up front and the remaining 25 per cent will be paid once your family friendly work arrangement has been implemented.

17. If I contribute to the cost of the family friendly work arrangement will this affect whether my application is successful?

Funding of between \$5,000 and \$15,000 (GST inclusive) is available under the program. If your family friendly work arrangement costs more than the funding amount, you are encouraged to contribute the difference.

18. Is the funding subject to GST?

The funding payments will be GST inclusive.



ABOUT APPLYING

19. How do I apply?

To apply for the Fresh Ideas for Work and Family grants program, you must complete all sections of the *Application form* which is available from the website www.deewr.gov.au/freshideas, by calling the Workplace Infoline on **1300 363 264** or by emailing **FIWF@deewr.gov.au**. You must submit your application on or before the closing date of the relevant funding round. You may submit the form by either:

Fax: **(02) 6123 5413**

Post: Fresh Ideas for Work and Family Program
(LC 10M33)
Department of Education, Employment
and Workplace Relations
GPO Box 9880
CANBERRA ACT 2601

20. What are the Selection Criteria?

Each application will be assessed against the selection criteria contained in section 6 of the *Guidelines for Applicants*. The selection criteria are:

- a. the extent to which Applicant demonstrates that they engaged in discussions and meetings with their employees, and the Family Friendly Work Arrangement is supported by the Applicant and its employees,
- b. the extent to which Family Friendly Work Arrangement can be tailored to suit the specific needs of the business and create Work-Life Balance solutions for its employees,
- c. the extent to which Family Friendly Work Arrangement will benefit the business and its employees having regard to the objectives of the program set out in section 3 of the *Guidelines for Applicants*,
- d. the extent to which Applicant demonstrates their commitment to the ongoing support and development of the Family Friendly Work Arrangement after the funding has ceased, including financial and other support.

21. What documentation do I need to attach to the application form?

You must provide at least one written quote for each proposed activity in the implementation of your family friendly work arrangement.

Where you are proposing to use external service providers to implement your proposed arrangement, the Department must approve the providers. You will need to provide at least two written quotes that you have obtained from separate service providers.

You may also attach any additional relevant information about the project or your business to the *Application form*.

22. Do multiple applications need to be submitted if I operate more than one small business or will one application apply to them all?

If you operate more than one small business, you may apply separately for funding under the Fresh Ideas for Work and Family grants program for each small business or you may apply as a consortium.

23. What are the cut off dates for the funding rounds?

The Fresh Ideas for Work and Family grant program will be administered in funding rounds. The opening and closing dates of each funding round are available at www.deewr.gov.au/freshideas. The closing date of the current funding round is 24 April 2009.

24. Where can I obtain assistance to complete the application form?

You should refer to the *Guidelines for Applicants* when completing the *Application form*. If you require any further assistance, visit our website www.deewr.gov.au/freshideas, call the Workplace Infoline on **1300 363 264** or email **FIWF@deewr.gov.au**.

25. Can an agent complete the form on my behalf?

You may use an agent if you provide the Department with a signed statement authorising the agent to act on your behalf. You are not able to use any funding providing under the Fresh Ideas for Work and Family grants program to meet any costs incurred through the use of an agent.

ABOUT THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

26. Who will assess my application?

All applications will be assessed by a three person external Panel.

27. Does the industry or location of my business affect the assessment of my application?

The Fresh Ideas for Work and Family grants program aims to provide funding to small businesses in a wide range of industries and locations. When determining which applications to provide funding for, the Panel will also have regard to the following (in addition to the eligibility criteria and the selection criteria):

- the Department's aim to provide funding to small businesses in a wide range of locations around Australia, and
- the location and/or industry of the small business.

28. When will I know the outcome of my application?

The Department aims to notify you of the outcome of your application in writing within seven weeks of the closing date of the funding round in which you applied.

ABOUT ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES

29. What happens if my application is incomplete?

Incomplete applications will be returned to you. You may re-submit a completed application in either the same funding round in which you already applied (if it has not closed) or in a subsequent funding round.

30. If my application is unsuccessful, can I submit a new application in the next funding round?

Yes. If your application is unsuccessful you may submit a new application in a subsequent funding round.

31. What happens if I'm successful?

The Department aims to send letters of offer to successful applicants within seven weeks of the closing date of the funding round. The letter will detail the next steps in obtaining funding for your family friendly work arrangement. You will be advised at this time of the amount of any funding offered by the Department.

32. If my application is successful, is there a time limit within which my project must be started and/or finished?

Successful applicants must complete their projects within the timeframe specified in the Department's letter of offer.



ABOUT SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

33. Will the funding be paid into a bank account?

Yes. Successful applicants will need to provide details of an account held in their name, and which they solely control, with a bank or credit union carrying on business in Australia.

34. What documents will I be required to submit prior to receiving the first instalment?

Within 20 business days of the Department signing the endorsement page of the *letter of offer* (clause 2 of the *Terms and Conditions*) you must provide the following to the Department:

- a completed Vendor Information Request Form (provided by the Department) containing details of a bank account held in your name, and
- an invoice to the Department for the first instalment of funding.

35. When will the first instalment of funding to be deposited into my bank account?

The first instalment of funding will be deposited into the nominated account within 30 days of the Department receiving the documents referred to in question 34 (in accordance with clause 2.3 of the *Terms and Conditions*).

36. What documents will I be required to submit prior to receiving the final instalment

Within 30 days of completion of the family friendly work arrangement, you must provide the following to the Department to receive the final instalment of funding:

- the proforma completion report as required by clause 8.3 of the *Terms and Conditions*,
- copies of any paid invoices, receipts or other documents verifying expenditure of the first instalment of the funding,
- any other evidence that the family friendly work arrangement has been completed, and
- an invoice for the second instalment of funding.

37. What if I am granted funding, but over estimate the cost of my project?

If at any time an overpayment occurs, or at the project completion date, some or all of the funding has not been acquitted to the Department's satisfaction, this amount must be repaid to the Department within 20 business days of a written notice from the Department, or dealt with as directed in writing by the Department.

38. What if I am granted funding, but under estimate the cost of my project?

You are responsible for any additional costs if your project exceeds the amount of funding provided to you under the Fresh Ideas for Work and Family grants program. The Department will only provide the amount of funding as specified in the *letter of offer*.

WHAT IF I AM NOT HAPPY WITH THE OUTCOME OF MY APPLICATION?

39. What is the complaints process?

If you are dissatisfied with the way in which your application was handled by the Department, you may wish to raise your concerns with the Commonwealth Ombudsman. Before you approach the Commonwealth Ombudsman, you are encouraged to resolve your concerns with the Department. The Ombudsman will usually not investigate a complaint unless the matter has first been raised with the Department and the Department has been provided with a reasonable opportunity to respond.

For more information on Fresh Ideas for Work and Family

visit www.deewr.gov.au/freshideas

call 1300 363 264

email FIWF@deewr.gov.au

or fax 02 6123 5413