ACE Information Session 8 March 2019: Questions and Answers

The following questions were asked by participants at the information session. The written answers are a close approximation of the verbal answers provided at the session or are answers to questions taken on notice.

Q: If I cannot meet the application deadline for the current funding round, is there an opportunity apply for a future round?

A: At this stage, only one round has been planned for the 2019 ACE Grants Program. It is not anticipated that there will be any funding left over from this round.

In previous years there has only been one application round per year.

The date for the application round for the 2020 ACE Grants program has not yet been set.

Traditionally, ACE Grants application rounds opened in September/October, with successful applicants announced in December for a March/April project commencement date the following year. Grants were not be paid to new projects until the final acquittal reports from the previous years' projects were submitted in March.

If ACE stakeholders are interested in proposing an opening date for the 2020 ACE Grants program (for example, opening in September 2019, closing in November 2019, with project commencement by February 2020), preferences can be emailed to skills@act.gov.au Attn: Anita

Q: What and how are employability skills/core skills for work embedded in the FSK Training Package units of competency (UoC)?

A: Non-technical skills, knowledge and understandings that underpin successful participation in work—such as problem solving, collaboration, self-management, communication and information technology skills—are:

- described in the essential outcomes of the FSK UoC and/or
- incorporated in the performance criteria that are required for competent performance of the FSK UoC

The document Mapping of National Curriculum General Capabilities to the Core Skills for Work Developmental Framework and the Australian Core Skills Framework describes in more detail employability skills that can also be found embedded in the FSK UoC. This document may be a useful additional resource for applicants designing ACE Training and Learning Plans for non-accredited and accredited training courses.

Skills Canberra will endeavour to provide some more examples of the mapping of non-accredited employability skills to elements within FSK units.

Q: Must all non-accredited training be mapped to the FSK Training Package?

A: Yes**.**

Q: Can projects deliver non-accredited courses in vocational skills, such as manual handling, wound care, brain structure and behaviours, First Aid and CPR, food safety, pain management or medication management?

A: No. Only accredited vocational units from a nationally recognised Certificate I, II or III qualification can be offered (noting that full qualifications, or skill sets funded under Skilled Capital, are not eligible for ACE funding).

Q: To submit a competitive application, how many modules should a non-accredited project propose to deliver to participants over the two year project duration? Is there a minimum number of hours to complete each module?

A: We do not suggest a minimum or maximum number of modules or hours your project should be designed to deliver. The number depends on the needs of your target ACE participants and how quickly or slowly you expect they will progress through the modules you propose.

It is expected that ACE Providers know the needs of their clients and choose the number and duration of modules that may best meet their clients' needs.

Applicants should also be cognizant of the value for money principle by which their application will be judged. Value for money does not always mean delivering the most modules, to the most participants, in the shortest amount of time, for the least amount of money. It is reasonable to assume that a highly targeted and tightly tailored project may cost more to deliver than a one-size-fits all project. However, non-RTO applicants are advised to do some research to compare their planned number of modules, module duration and cost to what is available in the market.

Q: When working with marginalised ACE participants, there can be quite a few barriers that the applicants may need to overcome. How can projects incorporate the assistance that the applicants need to overcome those barriers?

A: Some ACE participants need more support than others to engage successfully in an ACE course and achieve the desired outcome. Applicant organisations should determine the additional assistance their participants need to achieve the planned training outcomes and determine the additional cost per participant per year.

An average cost for the average ACE participant has been suggested in the ACE Application Guidelines i.e.:

- $600 per participant per year for non-accredited training
- $1000 per participant per year for accredited training.

These amounts are provided for general guidance only and are not intended to be prescriptive. You may anticipate that your costs per participant per year will be higher than the suggested amount, due to the complexity of the barriers your participants face. In this case, consider providing a sound rationale to assist the Evaluation Panel to judge whether your project constitutes value for money. You may also wish to include evidence that a high cost-benefit ratio can be anticipated from a project that provides high levels of additional assistance to overcome barriers to successful ACE participation, and transition to further training and employment.

Applicants may consider using the Skilled Capital Skill Sets funding model as a guide to determine the amount they will budget, per participant, for additional wrap-around services. Skilled Capital provides an additional loading of $150 per person per skill set for participants in certain categories.

The ACT Standards Compliance Guide for Skilled Capital (pp. 51-52) defines these categories as:

> *"Category One*
> *a) identify as having a disability, and/or*
> *b) identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin*
> *Category Two*
> *a) are identified as being youth at risk, and/or*
> *b) are identified as long term unemployed…*
>
> *…Individual students may be eligible for multiple loadings across both categories."*

Under the Skilled Capital Skill Sets funding model, the loading is an additional payment applied to base cost of the training delivery.

The Skilled Capital Skill Sets loadings are intended to be used for the following services:

> *"Wrap around services*
> *Approved wrap around services include, but are not limited to:*
> *a) life skills education*
> *b) travel or food expenses for the students to attend training*
> *c) mentoring*
> *d) career advice*
> *e) specialist support services.*
>
> *Work experience placement co-ordination*
> *A loading is available for the co-ordinating costs of organising and supervising additional work experience placement activities for students identified as:*
> *• youth at risk or,*
> *• long term unemployed.*
>
> *Work experience placements give students in the identified categories time at a workplace to learn about an occupation or industry. They provide an opportunity for these students to develop transferrable employability skills, apply the skills gained through the Skilled Capital training and to develop networks with potential employers. Such work experience placements are additional to the industry placements required as part of a training package qualification [or skill set] and are intended to provide additional support for students in the identified categories.*
>
> *The duration of a work experience placement must be a minimum of 5 days and a maximum of 10 days in one workplace."*

Q: Is volunteering counted as being employed?

A: A volunteer can be considered to be 'employed' under certain circumstances. Volunteers working in a recognised institutional unit (e.g. a business, government agency, not-for-profit organisation) engaged in economic activity can be considered as employed (either part-time or full-time) for the purposes of the ACE Grants program. Unpaid workers in a family business would also be considered as 'employed'.

Volunteers providing services to groups of other individuals, such as coaching a children's sports team, without any associated infrastructure (i.e. not a school, for example), are not regarded as being 'employed' for the purposes of the ACE Grants program, but may be considered as 'unemployed but seeking work'.

For more information see the following definition provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 6102.0.55.001 - Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods, Feb 2018: ABS LABOUR STATISTICS EXPLAINED FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

> *"I am a volunteer - would I be counted as employed?*
>
> *"If staff are purely voluntary, with no remuneration at all, not even in kind, but are working in a recognised institutional unit (business, government agency, not-for-profit organisation) engaged in economic activity, then these individuals are still regarded as being economically active in the System of National Accounts. Individuals providing services to groups of other individuals, such as coaching a children's sports team, without any associated infrastructure, are not regarded as being economically active but rather engaging in a leisure pursuit."*

Q: How can you determine whether an organisation is not for profit?

A: A not-for-profit organisation has rules that prevent remuneration, material and property benefits from being distributed to individual members and members of its governing body. For verification that your organisation complies visit https://www.ato.gov.au/Non-profit

Q: Who has the responsibility of reporting and completing the outcomes-based assessment if you are partnering with an RTO?

A: It is recommended that the applicant organisation negotiates the roles and responsibilities of the RTO prior to submitting their application.

Q: Must successful grant recipients use an observation checklist to assess project participants, such as the example provided in the "Additional resources for applicants" on Skills Canberra's ACE Grants webpage?

A: No, using the observation checklist template provided is not mandatory.

Skills Canberra intends to publish observation checklist templates for all of the FSK units before ACE projects commence in June. ACE Providers are welcome to use, or adjust, these templates as needed. For example, the templates can be used for a range of assessment approaches, including peer assessment, self-assessment and trainer assessment, depending on the unique needs of each participant. In fact, combining all three approaches is highly recommended as a reliable and valid method of assessment.

Skills Canberra will also soon publish a template that can be used to take a baseline assessment of a participant's FSK levels before they begin training.

Q: Could you create a bespoke non-accredited course by combining one element from one FSK unit and another element from a different FSK unit?

A: Yes. This can be a highly valid approach, depending on the combination of elements selected and the relevance to participant needs and rates of progress.

Q: Are the questions on the application form mapped closely to the evaluation criteria?

A: Yes. Applicants should pay close attention to the mandatory questions in the "Organisational Effectiveness", "Activity Effectiveness" and "Value for Money" sections, as these map directly to the evaluation criteria. Non-mandatory questions in these sections are intended to provide applicants with the opportunity to provide additional evidence to support their claims against the evaluation criteria.

The non-mandatory questions also provide additional guidance to applicants about how to work towards a potential evaluation panel judgement of "Met the evaluation criterion to a highly-satisfactory/excellent level" rather than simply "Satisfactorily addressed the evaluation criterion."

Q: Are there any word limits on the application?

A: No. We recommend that you provide as much coherent, credible, up-to-date, and concise evidence as you can to support your claims and ensure a competitive application.

Q: In a joint project, do the questions in the 'Capacity' section of the application form relate to the 'Lead Organisation' only, or do they also relate to the 'Project Partner Organisation/s'?

A: Capacity relates to the Lead Organisation (who is also the Applicant), in the first instance. However, if the Project Partner/s will provide additional capacity, filling gaps in the Lead Organisation's current capacity, then it would be relevant (and recommended) to discuss this in this section of the application.

Q: Are project CVs mandatory?

A: No. This item in the application form is not marked as a 'mandatory response'. It has been included to enable applicants to provide additional supporting evidence of staff capacity if they wish to do so.

Q: Is the "extra funding of up to $5,000 per year for individual projects and up to $10,000 per year for joint projects to support successful applicants to implement the strengthened quality framework for ACE projects" integrated into the funding caps of $20,000 per year for individual and $50,000 per year for joint projects?

A: Yes. The extra funding is not additional to the funding caps. It is "extra" in comparison to the 2018 ACE Grants funding cap of $20,000 per year.

Q: Can the development of educational materials to target marginalised groups be integrated in the project budget?

A: A number of considerations have to be taken into account:

1. It is expected that the delivery of training will commence shortly after receipt of the first grant payment. Therefore, it is not anticipated that there will be time to develop educational materials between the first payment and the expected commencement of the first participants.
2. Grant funding does not cover expenses incurred prior to signing the deed of grant. This includes the cost of developing educational materials prior to the signing of the deed of grant.
3. It is expected that training materials have already been developed prior to project commencement.

4. Whether or not an ACE Provider has educational materials suitable to their proposed project relates to the Evaluation Panel's assessment of an applicant's "Organisational Effectiveness"; particularly the evaluation criteria relating to "Capacity", "Past Performance" and "Adult Education Focus."

5. It is anticipated that high quality applicants will have a good idea—at the time of submitting their application—about whether their current educational materials will be suitable for their proposed ACE project participants because:

    a. they will have already identified and engaged with the community of interest to determine their needs

    b. they will have past experience of having delivered adult community education courses and applied learnings about the suitability, or otherwise, of their educational materials.

Given these considerations, the development of educational materials would only be eligible for funding in the case of continuous improvement to existing materials i.e. for the purpose of adjusting activities to flexibly meet the unique, and often changing, needs of project participants. Any items in the project budget for the cost of continuous improvement of educational materials for the purposes of tightly tailoring activities to participant needs should be included in the budget allocated to capacity building/implementation of the new quality framework.

Q: Does the funding cap include money for ongoing evaluation of the project outcomes, such as following-up participants once they have left the project?

A: No. However, Skills Canberra intends to conduct the following evaluation of project outcomes:

1. analysis of the detailed half-yearly reports provided by successful ACE Grants recipients about individual participant outcomes across a range of parameters

2. analysis of responses to the ACE Participant Outcomes Survey. The survey will be published by Skills Canberra for ACE participants to complete at the end of a project (or course). Participation in the survey is voluntary and participant anonymity will be assured. The de-identified results of any analysis relevant to the performance of an individual ACE Provider can be provided only to that ACE Provider, upon their request.

3. the Observation Checklist template includes a "Pathways information" section for collecting a participant's further training and employment outcomes/intentions upon completing an ACE course. ACE Providers are welcome to send these completed forms to Skills Canberra for collation and analysis at the end of their project. The results will be provided back to the ACE Provider, upon their request.