



Australian Government
Department of Education

Needs-based Funding and Outreach Funding

Information session – 23 March 2026





We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community.

We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to their Elders past and present.



Today's outline

1. Needs-based Funding overview
2. Outreach Funding overview
3. Guidance on NBF and Outreach reporting
4. Questions



NBF and Outreach Objective

The government's target is **80 per cent** of working aged Australians having tertiary qualifications by 2050

Achieving this requires more people from underrepresented backgrounds going to university and attaining higher education qualifications.



Pre-Access



Access



Participation



Completion

Outreach

Needs-based Funding

Needs-based Funding – overview

- 2 NBF components
 - **Equity**
 - **Regional**
- 2026 is a transition year for NBF.
 - Fixed grant based on 2024 data and students (latest verified data).
 - No reconciliation or top up of funding.
- For 2027 and beyond, NBF will be enshrined as a permanent feature of core Commonwealth funding (subject to legislation).
- For further information, see the [NBF Guidance document](#).



2026 NBF contribution amount – equity component

Equity component		
Cohort	Contribution rate	Contribution amount
Low SES (High preparedness >80)	Baseline (A)	\$1,535
Low SES (General Preparedness <80)	(A) x 2.69	\$4,125
First Nations	(A) x 3.17	\$4,860
First Nations & Low SES (either level of preparedness)	(A) x 3.79	\$5,819

- Commencing students paid on headcount and receive full rate regardless of study load
- Continuing students paid on EFTSL
- CSP places – undergraduate for low SES, undergraduate and postgraduate for First Nations

2026 NBF contribution amount – regional component

Regional component		
Student studying at a regional campus	Internal and multimodal	External (50%)*
Inner regional (Baseline A)	\$1,398	\$699
Outer regional (A x 2)	\$2,796	\$1,398
Darwin region (A x 3)	\$4,195	\$2,097
Remote and very remote (A x 4)	\$5,593	\$2,796

- Commencing students paid on headcount
- Continuing students paid on EFTSL
- CSP places – enabling, undergraduate and postgraduate

*external study only payable for a regionally headquartered provider

What can NBF be used for?

NBF equity

- Academic tutoring and mentoring
- Culturally appropriate inclusion and belonging activities
- Direct financial assistance (scholarships, emergency grants)
- Systemic changes to teaching and learning

NBF regional

- Flexibility in how to use regional component contributions to meet local needs and priorities.
- Use of regional component contributions are expected to align with the objective of offsetting the higher costs associated with operating regional campuses.
- Payable for each enrolment, not based on the student's first address.

What can the equity component of NBF not be used for?

- Infrastructure
- Enabling Loading Program/FEE-FREE Uni Ready courses
- Activities not principally for the benefit of students from low SES backgrounds and/or First Nations students
- Activities that are funded through other government programs
- Pre-access and outreach initiatives*

*In 2026, a portion of a provider's NBF can be spent on outreach activities if 2026 Outreach funding is lower 2025 delivered activities – see guidelines for details



Outreach Funding – overview



The objective of Outreach Funding is to increase the number of people from underrepresented backgrounds considering and accessing higher education.



Outreach Funding is to deliver and build aspiration and pathways for target cohorts to enrol in and attend higher education.



For further information, see the [Outreach Funding Guidance document](#).

Outreach Funding – target cohorts

- Funding must only be used to deliver outreach activities which target:
 - **First Nations peoples**
 - **People from low SES backgrounds**
 - **People from regional or remote areas**
- Providers should take reasonable steps to confirm that participants are part of the target cohort or that activities are appropriately targeted at target cohorts.
 - How this is verified is up to each provider.



Defining Outreach Funding activities

Outreach activities

Reducing and/or removing barriers to accessing higher education

Informing participants about the benefits of higher education

Informing participants about the potential pathways to higher education and/or available supports that may be accessible to them

Supporting participants to navigate the higher education system, including the application process

Providing support to prepare for higher education studies through academic tutoring or guidance (excluding delivery of pathway/preparation courses)

What can Outreach Funding not be used for?

- General marketing and recruitment activities designed to encourage participants to attend a specific university.
- Support services which are targeted to students already enrolled in higher education (e.g. academic tutoring, scholarships).
 - NBF is available to support these activities.
- Delivery of Fee-Free Uni Ready courses.
- Activities which target people who are not part of a defined equity target cohort.



NBF and Outreach Funding – reporting

- NBF and Outreach reporting package was emailed to equity practitioners on 18 March 2026.
- If you did not receive this package, please email equityprograms@education.gov.au.
- We will be holding an information session in the coming weeks which will focus on the reporting process for NBF and Outreach Funding.
- Reporting due back to equityprograms@education.gov.au by **27 March 2027 (AEST)**.



What will reporting arrangements look like for NBF?

- NBF (equity component) and Outreach Funding reporting is combined and aligns with HEPPP reporting arrangements.
 - The reporting table has been simplified to make reporting easier.
 - NBF and Outreach are separate programs and need to be acquitted separately.
- NBF (regional component) will be reported on through a letter of assurance to confirm regional contributions have been spent appropriately.



Questions?

[Email: equityprograms@education.gov.au](mailto:equityprograms@education.gov.au)

Upcoming sessions (TBC)

NBF and Outreach: reporting information session

NBF and Outreach: policy discussion and early feedback

