



Australian Government  
Department of Education

# Frequently Asked Questions

2023 (Cohort 4) Regional University Study Hubs Program



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# 1. General information on the Regional University Study Hubs Program

## a. What is a Regional University Study Hub?

- A Regional University Study Hub (formerly Regional University Centre) is a facility that regional students enrolled at any Australian tertiary institution can use to seek support to study tertiary courses delivered by distance. Regional University Study Hubs provide:
  - i. Infrastructure such as study spaces, break out areas, video conferencing, computing facilities, and high-speed internet access.
  - ii. Administrative and academic skills support services such as developing writing and researching skills and managing administrative processes.
  - iii. Student support services including pastoral support, study advice and assistance with accessing tertiary education student services.

## b. What is the difference between a traditional university campus and Regional University Study Hub?

- The term 'traditional university campus' typically indicates co-located physical facilities (as appropriate to the location, disciplines / degrees taught and the students enrolled); teaching facilities, including laboratories, studios, lecture theatres, and tutorial rooms; research facilities; library; student study and work spaces; leisure spaces; staff offices; and student accommodation. It also connotes that a full range of services is delivered at that co-location: lectures; tutorials; academic and student support services (including academic advisement); and administrative services. Traditional campuses are also generally limited to the one provider which operates that campus.
- Regional University Study Hubs are not education providers themselves. They provide a range of support to students that are studying at various tertiary education institutions, including infrastructure support such as study spaces, video conferencing, computing facilities and internet access, as well as administrative, pastoral, and academic skills support for students.
- The Program funding is not intended to replicate the existing traditional university campus model, but to improve access to higher education for regional students by providing flexible support to them if they choose to study locally for part or all of their degree.
- A Network has been established to provide support for all Regional University Study Hubs, share best practice resources, and provide training opportunities to Regional University Study Hub staff. More information about the network is available at [www.rucnetwork.edu.au](http://www.rucnetwork.edu.au)

## c. Do Regional University Study Hubs deliver courses locally?

- Regional University Study Hubs are funded to provide a supporting role for students studying by distance with any Australian tertiary institution.
- There are some existing Regional University Study Hubs that deliver courses locally in collaboration with university partners, however this is not typically supported by core operational funding provided by the program and requires sufficient local student numbers and strong university partnerships to be established.

- Additionally, Regional University Study Hubs may choose to offer professional learning or short courses to support their local community. The courses delivered by each Regional University Study Hub depend on community need. Courses offered by existing Regional University Study Hubs include English language, first aid and barista courses.
- d. What is the difference between a Regional University Centre, Country Universities Centre and a Regional University Study Hub?**
- Regional University Study Hubs were formerly known as Regional University Centres. Some publicly available information may still refer to the former program name, however there is no difference between a Regional University Study Hub and a Regional University Centre.
  - Country Universities Centre (CUC) is a not-for-profit umbrella organisation that supports Regional University Study Hubs, including through the Network (see below), and has formal affiliation with a number of Regional University Study Hubs.
    - i. Note: not all CUC-affiliated Centres are funded by the Commonwealth Regional University Study Hubs program.
- e. What is the Network?**
- Established in April 2021, the Network is being led by the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) in collaboration with two Regional University Study Hub partners: Geraldton Universities Centre and Country Universities Centre.
  - The Network aims to provide support to Regional University Study Hubs across Australia and foster collaboration through a community of practice. The activity of the Network is informed by the needs of Regional University Study Hub staff, guided by the Network Advisory Committee, and funded by the Australian Government Department of Education (the department).

## 2. Eligibility

- a. Who is eligible to apply for the Regional University Study Hubs Program?**
- Community-owned organisations are eligible to apply for the Regional University Study Hubs Program funding.
  - To be eligible, applicants must be a body corporate or be able to demonstrate that they are a prospective body corporate.
- b. What is a community owned organisation?**
- Community owned organisations are established and operated for the wellbeing and benefit of others. An eligible community owned organisation will have a governing body that draws members from the local community in which it operates or from the local community that it serves. A governing body may include local government, tertiary and school representatives, key individuals with relevant expertise based in the region (e.g. legal, finance, governance), and local industry and business.
  - Several factors are considered in determining whether an organisation is community owned. These include:
    - Does the governing body of the organisation draw most of its members from the local community where it operates or the local community it would serve?

- How are community members involved in the governance and decision making of the organisation?
  - Is the organisation prevented from distributing its assets or profits to individual members, both while the organisation is operating and if it ceases to operate or is wound up?
  - Applicants can make a self-assessment as to whether they are a community owned organisation based on the above factors and will need to provide appropriate documentation as evidence.
- c. Why can only bodies corporate apply for funding under the program?**
- The Regional University Study Hubs program is a grants program established under Division 41 of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA), for the purpose of supporting open access to higher education across Australia. Under section 41-10 of the HESA, eligibility for grants for this purpose is limited to Table A providers (i.e., public universities) and bodies corporate.
- d. Can a partnership or consortia apply for funding under the program?**
- Applicants must be a body corporate and must be community owned. The nature and structure of the body corporate entity is not prescribed.
- e. A group of community members are interested in pursuing and applying for this funding – are they eligible if they have not yet formed a registered organisation and/or have no financial records or history?**
- Applicants must provide sufficient evidence to satisfy the department that they are, or will be capable of becoming, a body corporate. Information on how to register a body corporate is available on the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) website: [asic.gov.au/regulatory-resources/forms/forms-folder/202-application-for-registration-of-a-body-corporate-as-a-company/](https://asic.gov.au/regulatory-resources/forms/forms-folder/202-application-for-registration-of-a-body-corporate-as-a-company/).
  - If a group is not yet incorporated, a declaration must be submitted with the application, indicating that the group understand it must become a body corporate to be eligible for funding. If the group become a successful applicant for funding, execution of the funding agreement is contingent on the group successfully incorporating.
  - Financial history is not the only determinant of an applicant’s ability to achieve financial viability and sustainability. Having a well-researched plan for establishing and operating a Regional University Study Hub that has involved relevant consultation and includes detailed expected income and expenditure is also relevant.
  - There are a range of materials and tools online that may be helpful if you are planning to apply for funding to establish a new Regional University Study Hub, including: [www.business.gov.au/planning](https://www.business.gov.au/planning).
- f. Can a local government (i.e., a city or regional council) apply for funding under the program?**
- A local government may apply if it is a body corporate. This will usually be set out in the Local Government Act of the State or Territory in which the local government is located. It is the responsibility of a local government to provide evidence that it is a body corporate.
  - A local government that is not a body corporate is not eligible for funding under the program but may be able to establish a body corporate (such as a company or

incorporated association) to apply for funding. A local government should seek its own financial, legal, and other advice before doing so.

**g. Can existing Regional University Study Hubs apply?**

- Existing Regional University Study Hubs can apply for funding for new offerings, for example a satellite site or hub-spoke location.
- Existing Regional University Study Hubs cannot apply for grant funding in this round for a site or expenses already funded by the Regional University Study Hubs program.
- All applicants must meet the eligibility requirements and will be assessed against the assessment criteria as detailed in the Application Guide.

**h. Can Higher Education providers apply for the Regional University Study Hubs Program?**

- Higher education providers (registered with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency [TEQSA]), including Table A and B universities, may only apply for the Regional University Study Hubs Program as a partner of a community owned organisation that meets the Program's eligibility requirements.
- Partners that include in-kind and financial support as well as other models of collaboration between higher education institutions and Regional University Study Hubs are strongly encouraged, however applications for the program must be from eligible community owned organisations.

**i. Is a trust eligible to apply for funding under the Regional University Study Hubs Program?**

- Only a body corporate is eligible to apply for funding.
- If the trustee of a trust is a body corporate, that trustee body corporate may apply for Program funding.
- An individual who is a trustee of a trust is not eligible to apply.

**j. Can a proposed Regional University Study Hub span multiple locations?**

- A proposed Regional University Study Hub may include multiple sites or locations; however, it is recommended careful consideration be given to the capacity to deliver across more than one site, and the associated financial and administrative requirements. All funded sites must be in regional and/or remote Australia. All locations must be specified in your application.
- Applications which present innovative models will be favourably considered.

**k. Where can Regional University Study Hubs be located?**

- Regional University Study Hubs must be in a regional or remote Australian location based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Australian Statistical Geographic Standard Remoteness Areas (ASGS) classification.
- To be regional or remote, Regional University Study Hubs must be located in one of the following remoteness area classifications:
  - Inner Regional Australia (RA1)
  - Outer Regional Australia (RA2)
  - Remote Australia (RA3)
  - Very Remote Australia (RA4)
- Please note: announced in July 2023, the new Suburban University Study Hubs program will build on the success of the Regional University Study Hubs Program, but in an outer metropolitan/peri-urban context. For more information on Suburban

Hubs, please visit the departments website at [www.education.gov.au/higher-education/support-students/suburban-university-study-hubs](http://www.education.gov.au/higher-education/support-students/suburban-university-study-hubs).

**I. How do I determine the remoteness area classification of my proposed Regional University Study Hub?**

- The ASGS classification of current or anticipated Regional University Study Hub locations can be determined using this online interactive map: [maps.abs.gov.au](http://maps.abs.gov.au).
  - In the ‘**Choose boundary type**’ (the first drop down menu) field, please select “**2021 Remoteness Area (RA)**” under the “**ASGS Edition 3 ABS Structures**” heading.
  - Search for your chosen location or address in the ‘**Find address or place**’ search bar.
  - Click the map on your searched location. The tool will provide you with the resulting ASGS classification for your potential Regional University Study Hub location. Please enter those details in your Application Form.

**m. When does the Regional University Study Hub have to be established?**

- Successful Regional University Study Hubs are expected to have Conditions of Grant in place by mid-2024.
- New Regional University Study Hubs should aim to be established and open by mid-late 2024.

**n. What type of operating models does the Regional University Study Hubs Program support?**

- The department welcomes applications from all community owned organisations including those with proposed new operating models.
- It is recommended that you explore the Network website ([www.rucnetwork.edu.au](http://www.rucnetwork.edu.au)) and/or contact existing Regional University Study Hubs to develop a greater understanding of the models that currently exist.
- Applications which present innovative models or support specific cohorts of under-represented students (e.g. First Nations students) will be favourably considered.

**o. Does the assessment process consider driving distance between a proposed Regional University Study Hub and a University Campus?**

- Applications for Regional University Study Hubs will be assessed by the Assessment Panel against the criteria outlined in the Application Guide.
- While driving distance between a proposed Regional University Study Hub and a University Campus or existing Regional University Study Hub is not an assessment criterion, a key objective of the program is to expand access to support for tertiary education. The Assessment Panel will consider distance from education facilities and relative geographic distribution of all Regional University Study Hubs as part of the assessment process.
- If a proposed Regional University Study Hub is near an existing site, the applicant should consider potential issues and opportunities and identify how these will be addressed. This may include opportunities to consider new and innovative models including, for example, a satellite or hub and spoke operation, or opportunities for collaboration.
- A map and list of the current Regional University Study Hubs can be found here: [www.education.gov.au/regional-university-study-hubs](http://www.education.gov.au/regional-university-study-hubs)

### 3. Forms and submissions

**a. What must be included in my application?**

- You must complete and submit all required documentation as outlined in the Application Guide.
- A list of required documentation, including the Application Guide, can be found [here](#).
- Please note there is a strict limit of 50 pages (total) for attachments to the application which must be adhered to – any additional documentation beyond the 50-page limit will not be considered as part of the application.

**b. I have completed my application; how do I submit it?**

- Completed applications must be submitted via the link provided [here](#).

**c. Who can I contact if I have questions about the application process or submitting my application?**

- For assistance, please contact [regional@education.gov.au](mailto:regional@education.gov.au)
- Please note that this email address is monitored during business hours (Canberra time).

**d. What is the closing date for applications? What if I miss the deadline, can I submit a late application?**

- Applications will close at 5:00pm (AEDT) on 15 December 2023.
- Late submissions may be accepted at the sole and absolute discretion of the Department and only in exceptional circumstances.

### 4. Funding and payments

**a. How much 2023 Regional University Study Hubs Program funding can I apply for?**

- It is up to each applicant to determine the amount of funding they are seeking to establish a Regional University Study Hub.
- The Assessment Panel will carefully consider applications in respect to:
  - i. total program funding available and the total applied for
  - ii. the level of thought and planning in developing the proposed budget, and
  - iii. demonstrated value for money.
- The median Commonwealth grant funding provided to existing Regional University Study Hubs for annual operational costs is \$309,620. This amount excludes funding from other sources and should be used as a guide only.
- Funding amounts vary based on the local context, service offering (for example, a satellite Hub or a Regional University Study Hub connected with another local service) and contributions from other sources, including in-kind contributions.
- Total funding provided will be determined in consultation with the Department as part of finalising Conditions of Grant with each applicant.
- Please note: where appropriate, final funding amounts for each successful application will be subject to negotiation with the department. Successful applicants are not guaranteed the full funding amount as outlined in their application.

**b. What can Regional University Study Hubs Program funding be used for?**



- Funding can be used for costs associated with the establishment and ongoing operation of the Regional University Study Hub for the life of the Conditions of Grant.
    - i. In the establishment stage, funding could be used for capital works and/or to lease a facility or to acquire electronic and physical resources. Capital works may include installation of interior walls, secure swipe card access to support after-hours use, painting, floor covering and purchase of ICT equipment. The Program is not intended to fund large-scale capital works.
    - ii. In the ongoing operational phase, funding could be used to support human resources, teaching resources and administrative expenses.
  - Funding cannot be used to purchase property or land.
  - Information on what funding can be used for will be detailed in Conditions of Grant with each Regional University Study Hub.
- c. What kinds of infrastructure can funding be used for?**
- Funding may be used to lease property and/or facilities, renovate or refurbish facilities and undertake internal fit outs (including installation of partitions and other furnishings).
  - Funding must not be used to purchase property or land.
  - Applicants intending to undertake capital works (including internal fit outs) must complete the capital works section of the Application Form.
- d. In addition to the Commonwealth grant funding, what types of funding agreements are Regional University Study Hubs expected to have with other organisations? Is there a requirement for organisations to match the grant funding?**
- The funding model and ability to establish partnerships varies depending on the local community and location of the Regional University Study Hub. There is no requirement for organisations to match grant funding.
  - Funding or in-kind contributions from other sources such as local and/or state government, industry or education partners is considered favourable for the additional support it provides the Regional University Study Hub, demonstrating the commitment of other parties to its success.
  - Applicants are required to set out how other sources of income will be used as part of their budget proposal.
- e. I have applied for, or have received, funding for my Regional University Study Hub from another funding source (such as a government grant program or private industry). Can I still apply under the Program?**
- Yes. You can apply for Regional University Study Hubs Program funding if you have applied for, or have received, Australian Government, State, Territory, or local Government funding from a separate funding stream.
  - You must identify other government grant or private industry funding in your application and include the funding status (i.e., pending or confirmed). If funding has been confirmed or received, you must supply evidence of that funding source and amount in the budget in your application.
  - Please note: the Commonwealth grant funding request for the proposed Regional University Study Hub should consider funding from other sources, if such funding is anticipated.

- If you are unsure if activities you are planning to undertake with program funding are capital works, please contact the Regional Policy Team at [regional@education.gov.au](mailto:regional@education.gov.au).
- f. If my application is successful, will I become eligible for Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS) support and/or Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs)?**
- Regional University Study Hubs are not eligible for direct CGS funding.
  - Previously, the program included a small number of CSPs for Regional University Study Hubs to allocate to partner universities. In 2021, the Department undertook a research project focused on Regional University Study Hub partnerships and how best to support them, with a particular focus on hub-university partnerships and the role of CSPs.
  - As a result of the key findings from this project, CSPs are no longer provided in connection with the Regional University Study Hubs program for new hubs. Instead, a direct stream of partnerships funding will be available to support new Regional University Study Hubs. Further information regarding partnerships funding will be provided to successful applicants in due course.

## 5. Application assessment and decisions

### a. What is the assessment process?

- All eligible applications will be assessed against the assessment criteria outlined in the Application Guide.
- The department may request advice on applications from local councils, state and territory governments, other Australian Government agencies, other independent experts, and other external parties on a range of matters, including but not limited to:
  - i. the history of the applicant in delivering projects
  - ii. the financial viability of the proposal and applicant
  - iii. the extent to which the proposal aligns with or delivers priorities in state/territory/local community plans
  - iv. confirmation of funding contributions
  - v. impact of the proposal on the region, including the most appropriate location.
- The department will assess the applications for eligibility and suitability against the criteria outlined in the Application Guide.
- Eligible applicants found Suitable or Highly Suitable may be invited to attend an interview digitally via Microsoft Teams (or other system, including phone as appropriate) for the Panel to clarify or verify details outlined in the application.
- Interviews are **not** an opportunity to elaborate or provide additional information beyond the content of the application. All relevant information applicants wish to be considered **must** be included in their submitted application documents.
- Interviews are not a requirement for finding an applicant Suitable or Highly Suitable. Applicants who are not interviewed may be successful in receiving funding. Applicants who are interviewed may not be granted funding.

- The department will finalise the outcomes of the assessment and make recommendations on the successful applications to be funded to the Minister for Education, who will make the final decision on successful applications.
- b. How will the Regional Needs Model support the assessment process?**
- As part of the previous grant round for Regional University Study Hubs in 2022, the Regional Needs Model was used to complement the assessment process and assist the Assessment Panel when considering potential locations.
  - The Model considers factors such as population, level of tertiary access, participation and attainment, proportion of disadvantaged students (including First Nations and low socioeconomic status) and transition to employment outcomes.
  - The Regional Needs Model has been updated in 2023 with latest available data and will again be used to support the assessment process.
  - To request Regional Needs Model data relevant to your region, please contact [regional@education.gov.au](mailto:regional@education.gov.au).
- c. How will the information in the Regional Needs Model affect assessment? Will the data and information impact on eligibility?**
- All applications for funding to establish a new Regional University Study Hub will be assessed based on the criteria outlined in the Application Guide, with the Regional Needs Model used to complement the assessment process.
  - Applicants may wish to consider the data included in the Regional Needs Model as evidence of the level of need and readiness for a Regional University Study Hub in the proposed region. Applicants may also provide further information to support the level of need and readiness for a Regional University Study Hub that is not covered by the Regional Needs Model.
  - It is important to note that the Regional Needs Model is just one factor that will be considered as part of the broader assessment process. The department invites applications from all regional and remote communities to be considered for funding in this round.
- d. Who will assess Regional University Study Hubs applications?**
- Assessment of applications will be conducted by an Assessment Panel established by the department.
  - Assessment of Regional University Study Hubs applications will include a review of financial viability which will be conducted by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations on behalf of the department.
  - The department will make recommendations to the Minister for Education. The Minister will make the final decisions regarding successful funding recipients.
- e. How will eligibility criteria be assessed?**
- All eligibility criteria, as outlined in the Application Guide must be met to be considered for funding.
  - Where an application does not meet the eligibility criteria, it will not be assessed further against the assessment criteria.
- f. How will assessment criteria be assessed?**
- The individual assessment criteria detailed in the Application Guide will be rated as either Highly Suitable, Suitable or Unsuitable.

- As part of the assessment process, the assessment panel may account for other considerations to ensure the objectives of the program are met. This includes using the outputs from the Regional Needs Model to assess regions based on their level of need and readiness and could also include advice or consultation with others as mentioned at 5.a. of this document.
  - During the assessment process, greater weighting may be applied to specific criteria which the Panel considers as having a greater impact on the overall ability for a Regional University Study Hub to contribute to the program’s objectives and achieve success.
- g. When will I find out if my application was successful?**
- It is anticipated that successful recipients of Regional University Study Hubs funding will be announced in early 2024.
  - The Department will contact successful applicants to discuss next steps, including funding arrangements and Conditions of Grant.
- h. Are financial contributions provided by other parties a key factor in determining successful Regional University Study Hubs?**
- Financial contributions are a factor considered in assessing Regional University Study Hubs applications, however, applications will be assessed for suitability against all assessment criteria.
- i. Will I get feedback if my application is unsuccessful?**
- If you are unsuccessful, you may seek feedback on your application from the department. Please contact [regional@education.gov.au](mailto:regional@education.gov.au).
- j. Will the Department contact me with questions relating to my application?**
- The Department may contact you to clarify or verify information contained in your application as part of the assessment process or to schedule an interview with the assessment panel.

## 6. Other Questions

- a. What is in-kind support?**
- In-kind support refers to goods, services and transactions which do not involve money. Examples of in-kind contributions could include, but are not limited to, donations of equipment, premises or floor space, subsidised rent, information technology services and office equipment.
- b. Are there restrictions on disciplines, fields of study and course levels Regional University Study Hubs can support?**
- Regional University Study Hubs must provide support to all students in their local area who wish to access the Regional University Study Hub and are undertaking studies at a registered Australian tertiary education provider.
- c. What can students study at Regional University Study Hubs?**
- Students are supported to study the course of their choice in any field of education by accessing a Regional University Study Hub. Students can enrol to study any course delivered by distance through a registered Australian tertiary education provider.

The purpose of the program is to increase accessibility and participation for students in regional and remote areas who remain in their local community to study.

- i. A list of all registered higher education providers and courses is maintained by TEQSA and is available online at [www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register](http://www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register)
  - ii. A list of registered Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers and courses is available online at [training.gov.au](http://training.gov.au)
- Regional University Study Hubs may also support students temporarily located in their area who are undertaking placements, examinations, or other course-specific training.

**d. How do Regional University Study Hubs engage with other education providers (including secondary schools) in their region?**

- Regional University Study Hubs typically engage with other education providers such as public and private VET providers and secondary schools. This engagement provides opportunities for linkages and to build and support local aspiration.
- Each Regional University Study Hub develops their own plans and goals for engaging with secondary schools and other education providers in the area, depending on the needs of their region.
- Services and engagement in school-related activities provided by existing Regional University Study Hubs include visiting secondary schools to provide information about the Regional University Study Hub and higher education opportunities, offering homework programs, providing career advice/support to students and in some cases, with appropriate arrangements in place, allowing final year students to study in their facilities.

**e. Are there ongoing Program reporting requirements?**

- Yes, Regional University Study Hub funding is subject to ongoing reporting requirements. Specific reporting requirements and agreed milestone reporting linked to payments will be detailed within Conditions of Grant for successful applicants.
- The types of information and data you will need to be able to provide to the department includes:
  - i. Unique Student Identifier (USI) for each student registered with the Regional University Study Hub (subject to the requirements of Division 5 of the Student identifiers Act 2014)
  - ii. Equivalent Full time Student Load (EFTSL) data
  - iii. Student characteristics
  - iv. Staff numbers and qualifications
  - v. Operational hours
  - vi. Current and anticipated facilities
  - vii. Risk plan and insurance arrangements
  - viii. Detailed information on student support services and pastoral care
  - ix. Higher education provider partnerships
  - x. Business and industry partnerships (including local and state government)
  - xi. Community organisation partnerships
  - xii. Course details of the students supported through the Regional University Study Hub and the number of students undertaking them (Note: Regional University Study Hubs must support all students studying externally in their

local area that wish to access the Regional University Study Hub regardless of any partnerships with tertiary education providers)

- xiii. General courses or training offered through the Regional University Study Hub
- xiv. Planned use of funding and ongoing financial expenditure and income
- xv. Project communications and marketing activities
- xvi. Ongoing project activities, milestones, and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

**f. Can the Department of Education provide me with relevant higher education student data to assist with my business case?**

- Higher Education data can be obtained from the department's website at: [www.education.gov.au/higher-education-statistics](http://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-statistics)
- The department can also supply you with higher education student data by postcode upon request. Please note that there is a cost associated with requesting this data. A data request form will need to be completed and emailed to the University Statistics Team at: [university-statistics@education.gov.au](mailto:university-statistics@education.gov.au)
- Data contained in the Regional Needs Model (outlined above) can be provided on request. Please contact [regional@education.gov.au](mailto:regional@education.gov.au)

**g. Do Regional University Study Hubs provide access to research databases?**

- Regional University Study Hubs are not required to provide direct access to research databases. Students enrolled with a tertiary education provider will have access to that provider's research databases and library resources online.
- Regional University Study Hubs must be able to support external delivery of tertiary education (distance education) by providing the necessary computing facilities, internet access and software to support online learning as well as administrative support.

**h. Will there be a set number of Regional University Study Hubs in each state or territory?**

- There is no set number of Regional University Study Hubs for each state and territory.
- Key objectives of the program are that Regional University Study Hubs will support a demonstrated gap in access and support for higher education in regional and remote Australia and will complement existing and/or planned university infrastructure and Regional University Study Hubs.

**i. What else is the Australian Government doing to support the Regional University Study Hubs Program?**

- To support the Regional University Study Hubs Program, the department, in collaboration with the Network, runs a biannual Regional University Study Hub Symposium, which provides an opportunity for Regional University Study Hubs to come together, share information and make connections.
- The department also undertakes regular communication activities through media and social media channels to promote the program, as well as collecting and analysing program data to build an evidence base in support of the program's effectiveness.

**j. Are Regional University Study Hubs required to form partnerships with universities and other education providers?**

- To provide appropriate support to regional and remote students, Regional University Study Hubs are strongly encouraged to develop partnerships with universities, TAFEs and other tertiary education providers.
  - These partnerships may be in the form of financial contributions (such as fee-sharing arrangements), in-kind support (such as provision of professional development or access to services) or other arrangements as negotiated.
  - Successful applicants from this funding process will have access to support from the Network to help form appropriate relationships and develop beneficial outcomes from them.
- k. What is a realistic timeframe for the establishment of university partnerships and what fee sharing arrangements can be expected?**
- University partnerships vary between Regional University Study Hubs and their university partners. Regional University Study Hubs are responsible for establishing their own partnerships with universities, and as such the Department cannot provide detailed information on the value of fee-sharing arrangements.
  - It should be noted that partnership arrangements may involve in-kind support rather than, or in addition to, fee sharing. For instance, some university partners may provide Regional University Study Hubs with IT equipment for use by their students, or access to university staff on-site.
  - New Regional University Study Hubs can often find the process of establishing new university partnerships to be a challenging process, especially during the establishment phase. As a result, partnership arrangements may not be developed or finalised within the first 12 months of operations.
- l. Will there be future funding rounds to establish additional Regional University Study Hubs?**
- There will be a further funding round to establish up to 10 additional Regional University Study Hubs. More information regarding this round will be available in due course.
- m. My organisation wants to apply for funding for more than one site. Should we submit a single application covering all sites, or a separate application for each site?**
- Applications for funding may include multiple sites, however it is recommended that careful consideration is given to the capacity for organisations to deliver across more than one site. This includes considering the impact of associated financial and administrative arrangements.
  - Applicants may use their discretion when determining how to structure their application. Depending on their organisational structure, applicants may choose to submit a single application covering all locations, or a separate application for each site. Consideration should be given to the governance arrangements for each site and applicants should ensure the ‘community-owned’ requirement is met.
  - All proposed sites must meet the eligibility requirements and will be assessed against the assessment criteria as detailed in the Application Guide. Applicants should clearly indicate how each proposed site will meet a demonstrated need of tertiary education support in the region.
- n. My existing organisation intends to set up a new body corporate to operate the Regional University Study Hub/s proposed in our application. Which organisation details should we use to complete the Financial and Credentials Information form?**

- To be eligible for funding, applicants must be a body corporate, or be able to demonstrate that they are a prospective body corporate.
  - If a group is not yet incorporated, a declaration must be submitted with the application, indicating that the group understands it must become a body corporate to be eligible for funding. If the group become a successful applicant for funding, execution of the Conditions of Grant will be contingent on the group successfully incorporating.
  - Where possible, the Financial and Credentials Information form should be completed with the details of the proposed body corporate that would be funded to operate the proposed Regional University Study Hub if successful. Where an applicant has not yet established a new body corporate, as many details should be provided as possible at this time, including any proposed relevant persons and any contingency funding or support the entity may receive from other sources.
- o. Regional University Study Hubs are intended to support students at TAFE and other VET providers, as well as university. Would TAFEs or other VET providers be considered as hosts of the regional hubs?**
- Regional University Study Hubs are encouraged to leverage existing infrastructure when selecting a site. This could include establishing the hub within an existing TAFE facility/campus, where appropriate.
  - To be eligible for funding to establish a Regional University Study Hub, an organisation must demonstrate that they are community-owned. Refer to question 2b for more information regarding the community-owned requirement.
- p. What is meant by “Community-owned organisations can apply for funding to establish and operate a Regional University Study Hub in regional or remote Australia”. Does this mean a Regional Development Australia Committee is eligible to apply for funding?**
- Please refer to question 2b for more information regarding the community-owned requirement.
  - Provided that a Regional Development Australia (RDA) Committee meets other eligibility criteria (such as being a body-corporate) and can demonstrate that it is community-owned, it would be eligible for funding.
  - There are existing Regional University Study Hubs that have been established and operated by RDAs.
- q. How is this grant process different from past processes?**
- This application process is broadly the same as previous application rounds, with some changes made based on previous learnings.
  - In this round, an interview process has been included to support the Assessment Panel to clarify or verify information, as needed. For further information, refer to question 5a.
  - New Regional University Study Hubs will not have access to Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs), which is consistent with the previous funding round. For more information, refer to question 4f.
- r. What is the department’s view on multi-site Regional University Study Hubs?**
- Please refer to question 2j.
- s. Are there any priority regions for this funding round?**



- There are no specific priority regions for this funding round, noting that all applicants should consider the objectives of the program when determining whether a proposed location may be suitable.
  - Applications which present innovative models or support specific cohorts of under-represented students (e.g. First Nations students) will be favourably considered.
- t. The budget template commences in 2023-24, but Hubs are not expected to be operational until mid-2024. Is this to capture any startup expenses?**
- Yes. For example, if your proposed Regional University Study Hub will require capital works which could be commenced in the 2023-24 financial year, please include these costs in the budget template.
  - Exact timing for finalisation of the assessment process and establishing Conditions of Grant is not certain. The department will work with successful applicants to finalise budget details as appropriate.
- u. How specific is the data that should be provided regarding student course need and possible provisions from university/TAFE course providers? How is it best to collect that data?**
- An application will be greatly strengthened if it can demonstrate an understanding of the local community need, and the kinds of supports that students in the area are likely to want/benefit from. The type and detail of data appropriate to an application is at the discretion of the applicant.
  - The department would expect an applicant to demonstrate knowledge of access patterns and gaps, what students want to study, how they want to study and how the Hub can support that. Knowing this information is an indicator of a community's readiness to establish and operate a successful Regional University Study Hub.
  - Refer to question 6f for further information about data available from the Department of Education to support your application.
- v. How do I find out if my Council is eligible to apply?**
- Councils should seek their own independent advice as to whether they meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the Application Guide.
  - Refer to question 2f for further information regarding council eligibility.
- w. Could you please clarify "body corporate" - does that mean not for profit?**
- Please refer to section 2 for further details regarding body corporate entities.
  - Applicants should also note the community-owned requirement when considering if their organisation will be eligible to apply for funding.
  - A majority of the organisations operating the existing Regional University Study Hubs are registered as not-for-profit with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, with the remainder being local councils.
- x. We are currently looking at potential sites to establish a Regional Hub, and one of them is within a TAFE facility. Can a Regional University Study Hub be hosted in a TAFE facility? Would the TAFE need to be a body corporate?**
- Regional University Study Hubs are encouraged to leverage existing infrastructure when selecting a site. This could include establishing the hub within an existing TAFE facility/campus, where appropriate.
  - Only the organisation applying for funding to establish and operate the Regional University Study Hub is required to meet the eligibility requirements for the

program. If the Hub is only being co-located in an existing TAFE facility (not operated by the TAFE), the TAFE does not need to meet these eligibility requirements.

**y. I am an existing Regional University Study Hub operator interested in applying for funding for a satellite Hub in the current round. If successful, would our satellite Hub be eligible for partnerships funding? How would this affect our current CSP arrangements for the existing Hub?**

- Existing Regional University Study Hubs can apply for funding for new offerings, for example a satellite site or hub-spoke location.
- If successful, the satellite centre would be eligible for a direct stream of partnerships funding, in line with other Regional Hubs established in this round. The new offering would not be eligible for CSPs. Please refer to question 4f for more information about partnership arrangements for new Hubs.
- The current CSP arrangements for the existing Regional Hub would be unaffected by the establishment of the Satellite Hub.

**z. Can multiple Councils partner together and/or partner with another community-owned organisation to establish and operate a Regional University Study Hub?**

- Multiple community groups or organisations may partner to develop an application to establish a Regional University Study Hub. Please note that only one eligible organisation can receive funding to establish a Hub. This could involve establishing a new body corporate entity for the purposes of operating a Regional University Study Hub.
- All applications will need to demonstrate they meet the eligibility criteria, including the community-owned requirement. Where multiple councils partner to submit an application, consideration will need to be given to the community/communities that the Hub will serve.

**aa. What is the period of funding for this round of Regional University Study Hubs?**

- As outlined in the Application Guide, funding will be provided to successful applicants for the establishment and operation of a Regional University Study Hub for the period 2023-24 to 2026-27, noting that the budget in 2023-24 should reflect the proposed activities that will be possible to take place prior to the end of financial year.
- Funding for capital works is generally for one-off expenses that will occur during the establishment phase.
- Please see question 6t for further information about budgeting in the 2023-24 financial year.
- For more information about funding, please refer to the Application Guide and Section 4 of this FAQ document.

**bb. As noted in the Application Guide, an announcement regarding successful applicants is expected in March 2024. What is the expected timeframe for new Regional University Study Hubs to be operational?**

- New Regional University Study Hubs should aim to be operational to support students in Semester 2, 2024.
- It is acknowledged that the exact timing of establishing and commencing operations will depend on the specific context of each applicant, including potential capital works requirements.

- Applicants are required to provide details about the expected timeframes for establishment and operation in the Implementation Timeline at Section K of the Application Form.
- cc. Can a university lead an application for a Regional University Study Hub, noting that the application will be community led and a body corporate will be established for a community owned organisation?**
- There is nothing that prohibits a university from leading an application for funding to establish a Regional University Study Hub, provided that all eligibility criteria are met.
  - It should be clearly noted that the Assessment Panel will need to be satisfied that the applicant is community-owned in order to be eligible. For example, where a new body corporate entity is established for the purpose of operating a Regional University Study Hub, the governance arrangements for that entity will need to draw a majority of its membership from the local community.
  - Consideration will also be given to the applicant’s ability to clearly demonstrate the need and readiness of the community for the proposed Regional University Study Hub.
  - Details of any connections that the proposed Regional University Study Hub will have with other providers or organisations (such as a university) should be detailed in *Section F – Governance arrangements and connections* of the Application Form.
- dd. Where community partners are providing financial income/support to the project in the form of in-kind contributions, such as a Peppercorn Lease with no rent, are we able to represent the value of this in-kind support as its commercial equivalent?**
- Where partners, including community partners, are providing support for the proposed Regional Hub in the form of in-kind contributions, applicants may represent this value as its commercial equivalent in their budget proposal.
  - Applicants should ensure that the values of these kind of contributions are reflective of their true market value as accurately as possible.
  - For more information about other funding sources and in-kind contributions, refer to questions 4 to 6 of this document above.
- ee. For a proposal to establish multiple Hubs, should we submit them as one application or separate applications?**
- Where a single applicant is interested in establishing multiple hubs, it is a decision for that applicant as to how best to put forward the proposal. As noted in question 2j, it is recommended careful consideration be given to the capacity to deliver across more than one site, and the associated financial and administrative requirements. Applicants should also consider that there will be an opportunity to apply for additional locations through a subsequent application round in 2024.
  - It should be noted that the assessment panel will consider each application in its entirety when assessing against the assessment criteria (for example, the panel will not consider funding only one site where an application is proposing multiple).
- ff. Our organisation has just spent a large sum of money to upgrade our existing facilities which has decreased our available funds. Does this impact on our financial viability and would this exclude us from applying for funding?**

- The Financial Viability Check is used to assess, in the opinion of the department, your entity's credentials and financial viability. It is used to minimise risk to the Commonwealth.
- The Financial Viability Check process takes into account a range of information regarding an organisation. Recent expenditure or low levels of available funds do not necessarily mean that an applicant organisation is ineligible to receive funding.
- In some instances, the department may implement additional requirements in Conditions of Grant to mitigate risks associated with funding particular entities. This will be managed on a case-by-case basis.

**gg. Would consideration be given for a Regional University Study Hub to be co-located within a Library/Community Hub if there were appropriate controls, security and separation of spaces that are put in place as part of the operations?**

- Yes, applicants are encouraged to leverage existing infrastructure where appropriate, including co-location with other community or education services.
- Applicants should ensure that in any co-location, there is a dedicated space for the Regional University Study Hub, and that facilities funded under the program are assured to be utilised primarily for fulfilling the purpose of the Hub.
- Applicants should clearly demonstrate the additional value that the proposed Regional University Study Hub will provide to the community in their application.
- Consideration should be given to appropriateness of the proposed location, including accessibility requirements (for example, if the proposed space will enable after-hours access to students).

**hh. Can I change the line items included in the operational budget template to suit my own preferences?**

- Please use the existing line items where they are relevant. This will enable consistent review by the Assessment Panel.
- Applicants may add additional line items where they are not already covered in the existing list.

**ii. When completing the budget template, should furniture (chairs, desks, etc.) required to set up the proposed Regional University Study Hub be considered operational or capital expenses?**

- Please include the cost of furniture required to set up the proposed Regional University Study Hub in the 'Furniture, storage and other furnishings' line item under *operational costs* in the budget template.

**jj. I intend on seeking partnerships funding (as outlined in question 4f) for the proposed Regional University Study Hub in the future. Should I include this as income in the budget template?**

- No. Any future applications for partnerships funding provided under the Regional University Study Hubs Program will be considered separately and should not be included in the budget proposal.

**kk. We intend to establish a body corporate if our application is successful, however we don't currently have an individual such as a CEO in place to complete the 'fit and proper person' requirement of Section C of the application form. Can a representative from a University or community organisation involved in the application complete this section as a temporary 'fit and proper person' until the body corporate and board is established?**

- A body corporate receiving a Regional University Study Hubs grant, and any person who ‘makes, or participates in making, decisions that affect the whole, or a substantial part, of the body’s affairs’ must be a fit and proper person. This is a condition of eligibility to receive a grant under this program, as set out in subsection 65(2) of the *Higher Education Support (Other Grants) Guidelines 2022*.
- It is ultimately a matter for applicants to determine the most appropriate individual to include in the application form, having regard to the individual circumstances of that applicant.
  - i. Where a Regional University Study Hub will be operated by an existing body corporate organisation, the CEO or Board Chair of that organisation may be the most appropriate person.
  - ii. Where a new body corporate is being established for the Regional University Study Hub, examples of appropriate persons may include the Chair of the governing board/committee, or key individual responsible for driving the application and/or responsible for overseeing the establishment/operation of the Regional University Study Hub.
- An important aspect of the Regional University Study Hubs Program is that each Hub is community-owned and driven. If an applicant is unable to clearly identify an appropriate individual for the purposes of the ‘fit and proper person’ requirement, it may indicate that the community-driven element has not been met.

**ll. We are currently considering renovations/expansions of our leased premises which would accommodate a Regional University Study Hub, however the final designs and development approval are not yet submitted. Does this have to be completed prior to submitting an application, or can this be part of the capital works proposal? If so, can any of the costs be included in the budget proposal?**

- Capital works and associated development approvals do not need to be completed prior to submitting an application. However, Hubs funded in this round should aim to be operational by mid-2024.
- Applicants should clearly outline anticipated timeframes for receiving development approvals and completing capital works in Section K (Implementation Timeline) of the Application Form.
- Cost associated with development approvals and/or design work related to the Hub can be met from program funding and should be clearly outlined in the Budget Template. Applicants should note that the budget will be carefully reviewed and its value for money assessed by the Assessment Panel. This includes requests for capital works funding.
- Please note that the Program is not intended to fund large-scale capital works. For more information about capital works, please refer to questions 4.b and 4.c.

**mm. Does the application portal have a save function?**

- The application portal has an auto-save function however the department cannot guarantee the reliability of this function. It is recommended that applicants complete the application submission process in one session to avoid any issues with the auto-save function. Note: Applicants must complete the key application documents, such as the Application Form and Budget Template etc. separately and have them ready to upload to the application portal.

**nn. Will we be required to upload the application documents in the application portal?**

- Yes. As outlined in the Application Guide, you are required to upload your Application Form, Budget Template and Financial and Credentials Information Form, along with any supporting attachments, using the Application Portal.
- There is clear guidance as you progress through the Application Portal to support you in uploading the required documentation.

**oo. If we are unsuccessful in the current application process (Cohort 4), can we submit an updated/refined application bid in the next process (Cohort 5)? What are the planned timeframes for the Cohort 5 process?**

- Applicants are encouraged to consider applying in the next application round (Cohort 5) if they are not yet ready to establish a hub or are unable to put forward a high quality application for the current application process.
- Should an applicant be unsuccessful in this round, they are able to consider re-applying in the next application round (Cohort 5).
- More information regarding timing for the Cohort 5 application process to establish up to 10 additional Regional University Study Hubs will be available in due course.

**pp. Why are line items such as furniture/storage and ICT equipment included in the operational budget, rather than the capital works budget?**

- For this round, capital works refers to activities which are required to fit out a premises to make it suitable for the proposed Regional University Study Hub. This may include works such as installation of interior walls, secure swipe card access to support after-hours use, painting, floor covering and ICT infrastructure.
- If the proposed Hub is successful, applicants will be required to develop a Capital Works Plan for Delegate Approval to ensure sufficient planning and oversight of these activities.
- As the purchase of furniture and ICT equipment does not require the same level of oversight (compared to the activities described above), they are not considered part of capital works and should instead be listed as operational expenses.

**qq. Does the 50-page attachment limit apply to supporting financial documentation?**

- The 50-page limit applies to the combined attachments to the Application Form and Budget Template (50 pages total across both, not 50 pages each).
- The 50-page limit does not apply to supporting attachments to the Financial and Credentials Information Form, which is uploaded in a separate section of the application portal.

**rr. Does the 50-page limit include the Application Form?**

- No. The 50-page limit only applies to attachments to the Application Form and Budget Template. For more information, refer to question qq.
- There are individual page limits for each assessment criteria in the Application Form, which are outlined in the Application Form itself and the Application Guide.

**ss. Page 12 of the Financial and Credential Information Form requires a signature. Can you please advise how we best insert a signature to this document?**

- To add your signature to the Financial and Credential Information Form, you can:
  - i. Add an electronic signature using the 'insert > picture > this device' option in Microsoft Excel, or

ii. Print and sign the relevant page and upload it as an attachment to the Form.

**tt. The Regional Needs Model Dashboard for my region is showing negative *Average growth in HE enrolments*, however other data I have found is indicating that there has been positive growth in HE enrolments. How is this difference explained?**

- The Regional Needs Model Dashboard has been provided to applicants to support transparency and to assist applicants that are preparing an application. The Dashboard was developed for the Department to support analysis of need related to the program, rather than being designed for the purpose of providing data to communities.
- Some measures used in the Dashboard, such as *Average growth in HE enrolments*, have been inverted to enable easy comparison with other measures used within the tool. For example, for the *Average growth in HE enrolments* measure, a negative growth rate (e.g. -2.0) shown in the tool actually reflects a positive growth rate (+2.0).
- Given the customised nature of many variables within the tool, the individual measures should not be considered in isolation.
- The Regional Needs Model is just one factor that will be considered as part of the broader assessment process. Applicants are encouraged to seek their own data and information regarding need in their community.