



Australian Government
**Department of Education,
Skills and Employment**

RPL Grants

Introduction

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) initiative is available to existing regional and remote early childhood educators to have their skills assessed through an RPL assessment. The purpose of the initiative is to improve the quality and uptake of RPL assessments for early childhood educators. This initiative includes:

- development of a new national RPL assessment tool for Certificate III, Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Children's Services
- training existing RPL assessors in the use of this tool
- RPL grants of up to \$3,500 for existing regional and remote early childhood educators to contribute to out-of-pocket expenses associated with accessing RPL assessments.

It is anticipated grants will be available until June 2015.

From 1 July 2014, educators working in Long Day Care (LDC) services are no longer eligible to apply for a grant under the RPL initiative. The LDC professional development programme will provide approximately \$200 million in funding to LDC services which will enable them to purchase RPL.

From this time, the RPL Initiative will continue to assist early childhood educators working in Family Day Care (FDC), Outside School Hours Care (OSHC), Preschools and Centre Based Budget Funded Services.

These Guidelines set out the eligibility requirements and application process for the grants. Specifically, these Guidelines provide an overview of the RPL initiative, information on which early childhood educators and services are eligible to receive grant funding, advice on how to apply for and claim payments, and details of the funding available.

The RPL initiative is being administered by the Department of Education ('the department') and all information regarding the initiative will be available on the department website at dese.gov.au/recognition-prior-learning-early-childhood-educators. The department reserves the right to amend these Guidelines as necessary. Any changes to the Guidelines will be communicated through the above website.

The RPL Grants Programme

Objective

The RPL Grants Programme is designed to increase the number of qualified early childhood educators in regional and remote locations by contributing to the costs of an assessment of their existing skills and knowledge.

Since January 2014, the National Quality Framework has required early childhood educators to hold a minimum of a Certificate III qualification in early childhood education and care or be studying towards a qualification. Further information is available on the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority at acecqa.gov.au/.

The RPL assessment is an efficient way of gaining a qualification for the skills and knowledge early childhood educators have already gained through their experience in early childhood education and care.

Description

The Government recognises that early childhood educators in regional and remote locations face additional barriers accessing RPL. As such, the RPL grants provide assistance for existing, experienced early childhood educators in these locations to access RPL assessments and have the opportunity for their skills to be recognised as meeting all or part of the requirements of a formal qualification.

The grants component of the RPL initiative supports the implementation of the National Quality Framework by ensuring that existing early childhood educators who have experience in the industry but lack formal qualifications are able to have their skills recognised.

Eligibility

Eligible Qualifications

The RPL initiative focuses on the following qualifications:

- CHC30113 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care
- CHC50113 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care.

The following qualifications have been superseded:

- CHC30708/CHC30712 Certificate III in Children's Services
- CHC50908 Diploma of Children's Services (Early childhood education and care)
- CHC60208 Advanced Diploma in Children's Services.

For further details, please see the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) website at [asqa.gov.au](https://www.asqa.gov.au).

To be eligible for the grant, early childhood educators will need to ensure their RPL assessment is conducted by a department registered RPL assessor who has been trained in the use of the national RPL assessment tools developed as part of this RPL initiative.

Eligible Early Childhood Educators

To be eligible to receive a grant through the early childhood service where they are employed, an early childhood educator must:

- be an Australian citizen, Australian permanent resident or holder of a permanent humanitarian visa
- be employed by the early childhood service applying for the grant. The early childhood service must be an eligible service, as detailed in [Eligible Early Childhood Services](#)
- have attended an RPL assessment that was conducted at the early childhood educator's service by a participating RPL assessor as defined in [Participating RPL Assessors](#)

- ensure that the RPL assessment relates to one of the three eligible qualifications as defined in [Eligible Qualifications](#)
- have not already benefited from a grant through this initiative.

Eligible Early Childhood Services

To be eligible to receive grant funding for an early childhood educator seeking the grant, the early childhood service must operate as a:

- Family Day Care
- Outside School Hours Care
- Preschool or
- Centre based, Budget Based Funded Services.

Additionally, the location of the early childhood service must also be in one of the eligible regions, defined in [Regional and remote locations](#).

Regional and remote locations

For the purposes of this grant, a regional and remote location is an area other than a major city of Australia as defined by the 2011 Australian Standard Geographic Classification (ASGC)-Remoteness Area (RA) classes. The ASGC-RA uses the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA), to determine what region the applicant is located in.

Where the applicant's location falls within one of the following ASGC-RA classes they will be deemed to meet the 'location' eligibility requirements:

- Inner Regional Australia
- Outer Regional Australia
- Remote Australia
- Very Remote Australia

For all early childhood services, the location used to assess eligibility will be the physical location of the service at which the early childhood educator(s) is employed.

To determine your eligibility under this criteria, please visit the following website spatialonline.com.au/ARIA_2011 or abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS

Participating RPL Assessors

A total of 349 RPL assessors from across Australia have been trained in 'candidate-focused' RPL using the national RPL assessment tools for the three qualifications defined in [Eligible Qualifications](#).

To be eligible for the grant, early childhood services will need to engage a department registered RPL assessor to conduct their RPL assessment.

Grant applicants should consult the list of department registered RPL assessors before enrolling in an RPL process. The list may be found on the department website at dese.gov.au/recognition-prior-learning-early-childhood-educators.

It is a requirement that the RPL assessor's department registration ID number is provided on the application form.

Roles and Responsibilities

Early Childhood Services

It is the responsibility of the early childhood service to:

- explore the RPL assessment options available with various Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and RPL assessors until they have found one that best suits their specific requirements, taking into account value for money
- ensure their RPL assessment is conducted by a department registered RPL assessor who has been trained in the use of the national RPL assessment tools developed as part of the RPL initiative
- support and assist the early childhood educator while the early childhood educator(s) undertake the RPL assessment and any follow-up activities or gap training. This may include verifying currently held skills and knowledge, and assisting with workplace assessment activities including assessor visits
- ensure that assessments of more than one early childhood educator are timetabled to capture cost efficiencies (e.g. travel and accommodation)
- agree to transfer the grant payment to early childhood educator(s) and /or the RPL assessor who have incurred costs for the RPL assessment.

Grants may only be claimed through the early childhood service for the early childhood educator(s) assessed under the RPL initiative.

Early Childhood Educators

Early Childhood Educators are required to:

- work with their early childhood service to investigate the RPL assessment options available with various Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and RPL assessors until they have found one that best suits their specific requirements, taking into account value for money of different assessment options
- work with their early childhood service to ensure their RPL assessment is conducted by a department registered RPL assessor who has been trained in the use of the national RPL assessment tools developed as part of the RPL initiative

- actively participate in the RPL process and identified gap training
- provide all necessary information and documentation to support their employer's grant application.

Registered Training Organisations

Registered Training Organisations must:

- engage with early childhood educators who are investigating RPL assessment options
- provide early childhood educators with quotes at current market rates for RPL assessment costs and options which suit their specific requirements
- ensure RPL assessors are able to conduct quality RPL assessments in a timely and cost effective manner (eg. organise multiple assessments where possible when traveling to a regional or remote area).

Recognition of Prior Learning Assessors

RPL assessors are required to:

- be registered with the department as an approved RPL assessor;
- use the national RPL assessment tools effectively in assessing the early childhood educators;
- conduct high quality RPL assessments;
- travel to the early childhood service to conduct an RPL assessment on early childhood educators employed at the service; and
- provide advice on any required gap training.

Grant Payments

Claims and Payments

Claims and payments will be made in two installments:

- first payment (up to \$1500) once the RPL assessment has commenced with evidence of enrolment in an RPL assessment as well as a copy of the early childhood educator's RPL Assessment Plan
- second payment (up to \$2000) upon attainment of a formal qualification with evidence of copies of qualifications and receipts for additional costs incurred to support attainment of the qualification (assessor travel to conduct the RPL assessment and early childhood educator gap training and associated travel costs to attend the gap training).

Please note the maximum grant payable is \$3500 per eligible early childhood educator.

Claiming payment of more than one RPL Assessment

Grant applications can be lodged after the initial RPL assessment contact occurs. It is expected that each RPL assessment may require more than one meeting with an RPL assessor and the costs associated with the subsequent contacts can be covered, so long as they do not exceed \$3500.

It is expected that, where an early childhood service has more than one early childhood educator undertaking an RPL assessment, best efforts should be made to have RPL assessments scheduled to capture cost efficiencies (e.g. travel and accommodation).

If an early childhood educator listed on the claim has previously received a grant under this initiative, then the early childhood service will not be eligible to receive grant assistance for that person.

Availability of Grants

Eligible claims under the Grants

Grants can be used to contribute to the costs of:

- an RPL assessment
- travel costs for the assessor to travel to the early childhood service
- early childhood educator gap training where additional training is required to complete a qualification
- travel and accommodation for the early childhood educator to participate in the gap training

Grant or funding limits reached

Funding is capped at \$500,000 for 2014-15. If the total amount of grants paid has reached the cap then no further grant applications will be approved.

Maximum grant amount payable

The maximum grant amount payable is \$3500 per eligible early childhood educator. Where group RPL assessments are undertaken, the amount paid per early childhood educator will decrease as the number of early childhood educators undertaking RPL assessments increases. This is due to the fixed nature of the costs of having a department registered RPL assessor attend the early childhood service.

In general, early childhood educators who are required to travel greater distances or who incur greater expenses (within reasonable limits) will be entitled to receive a higher payment, not exceeding the maximum grant payable.

Expenses covered by the grant

Rebate for travel costs

Travel claims can be made based on the locations provided below:

RPL Assessment Travel Claim Limits (based on the Australian Standard Geographic Classification (ASGC)-Remoteness Area (RA) classes).

<i>Location</i>	<i>Maximum rebate for travel costs</i>
Inner Regional	\$800
Outer Regional	\$1,400
Remote	\$2,000
Very Remote	\$2,000

Department registered RPL assessor expenses

Department registered RPL assessor expenses are defined as costs for a Department of Education registered RPL assessor to attend the early childhood service in order to conduct the RPL assessment of the early childhood educator(s).

- **Travel** – costs of economy airfares, car travel, hire cars etc. for long distance travel that is greater than 50 km from the RPL assessor’s usual workplace.
- **Accommodation** – cost of standard accommodation to attend the RPL assessment.

Please note that any claims for travel expenses need to be substantiated by receipts and/or travel logs, and should be provided by the RPL assessor to be included in your claim application.

Early Childhood Educator Expenses

Early childhood educator expenses are defined as costs for an early childhood educator to access any required gap training.

Payments will only be made once the costs have been incurred and supporting documentation has been provided to the department.

- **Travel** – costs of economy airfares, car travel, hire cars etc. for long distance travel that is greater than 50 km from the early childhood educator’s usual residence.
- **Accommodation** – cost of standard accommodation to attend gap training.

Please note that any claims for travel expenses need to be substantiated by receipts and/or travel logs, and should be provided by the early childhood educator(s) to be included in the claim application by the early childhood service.

Non-claimable Expenses

Stationary, electronic equipment and connections, meals and other incidentals are not covered by the grant.

Application Process

Applying for the grant

The application form is available on the department website at docs.education.gov.au/node/32038.

Information required to complete the application form

To complete the form, you will need the following information:

- early childhood service details: name, street address, service type, ABN
- details of the early childhood educator undertaking an RPL assessment: name, contact details, current level of qualification
- RPL assessment details: qualification against which skills are to be assessed, the number of anticipated RPL assessment contacts and dates (if known)
- RPL assessor details: name of participating department registered RPL assessor, RPL assessor ID number, RTO name
- details of expense claims, outlined in [Expenses covered by the grant](#)
- location the RPL assessment will take place.

If the grant application is approved, payments will be based on the evidence provided as part of a two stage claims process (see [Payment Claims](#) for more information).

Application Assessment Process

All grant applications will be assessed by departmental staff. In some cases the department may request additional information, which must be provided to the department within 15 working days of issuing the request.

If applicants choose to incur costs in anticipation of funding, please be advised that the department cannot guarantee that the application and/or all claims for the assessment, travel or gap training will be approved.

Once the assessment of the application has been completed, the applicant will be notified in writing of the outcome.

Payment Claims

Initial Payment

Upon enrolment or commencement of an RPL assessment, the early childhood service must fill in the grant application form and submit the following documents for their early childhood educator(s) to claim the initial grant amount:

- evidence from the RTO confirming enrolment and commencement of the RPL process
- a copy of the early childhood educator's RPL Assessment Plan

- evidence of a tax invoice from the RTO clearly showing fees for the RPL assessment and any receipts for payments/or part payments made to date.

Completion Payment

Once the early childhood educator(s) has attained a qualification through the RPL assessment and any required gap training, the early childhood service must complete **Attachment 2** of the grant application form and submit the following documents for each early childhood educator(s) to claim the second part of the grant amount:

- copies of receipts for assessor travel, early childhood educator gap training or early childhood educator travel to attend gap training and details to be provided in **Attachment 2** of the application form.
- the applicant must provide an invoice or receipt, issued by the participating RPL Assessor (or their RTO). The invoice or receipts should include:
 - date the assessment occurred (date of issue)
 - the tax invoice or receipt number (or a unique identifying number)
 - early childhood service name and ABN
 - bank account details for payment of the invoice by electronic funds transfer
 - the total amount of payable with specific identification of the GST component.

GST

Generally, grant funding will attract GST. If the early childhood service is subject to any GST exemptions they should make this clear on their application to ensure appropriate adjustments can be made to the payments.

All early childhood services should seek their own independent advice on taxation treatment of this grant.

Publication of Grants

The department is obliged to publish details of all grants on its website. This information will include the name of the organisation that has received the grant, a brief description of the project, the amount received, and the relevant dates. This information will remain on the department's website for a minimum of two years.

Programme Monitoring

The department will monitor programme outcomes during the life of the initiative, using a programme monitoring survey.

Early childhood services may be contacted by the department as part of any evaluation conducted of the programme.

Complaints

The department has formal complaints service and an applicant can lodge a complaint by telephoning 1300 363 079.

A complaint is deemed as:

‘Any expression of dissatisfaction with a product or a service offered or provided’ [Australian Standard AS4269 – 1995].

The department has a ‘complaints recording system’ to capture complaints to the department about any of its services or those delivered by funded early childhood services.

For the purposes of the department’s complaints recording system, a ‘complaint’ does not include:

- Ministerial correspondence
- Freedom of Information requests, or
- Complaints made to early childhood services, as these will be covered by their own complaints mechanism required under funding agreements.

If complainants are dissatisfied at any time with the department’s handling of their complaint, they may also contact the Australian Ombudsman at www.ombudsman.gov.au

Reviews

If an applicant disagrees with a decision made regarding their application or claim for payment, they may request a review.

To request a review please send an email to rpl@education.gov.au with the subject line “Grant Assessment Review Requested” providing additional information to justify why a change of decision should be considered.

Glossary

Acronyms and terms used throughout these Guidelines are listed below.

Applicant	The applicant is the early childhood service which submits the grant application form on behalf of the early childhood educator.
ARIA	Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia
ASGC	Australian Standard Geographic Classification
CCB	Child Care Benefit
Department	Department of Education, Skills and Employment
Department registered RPL assessor	A Department of Education, Skills and Employment registered RPL assessor is an assessor who has undertaken the Australian Government RPL assessor training and has been registered by the Department of Education for the purposes of the RPL initiative.

Department registered RPL assessor ID number	An identification number issued by the Department of Education Skills and Employment to RPL assessors who satisfactorily complete the training for the national RPL assessment tools.
Early childhood educator	A person employed by or contracted to an early childhood service as listed under the first dot point of Eligible Early Childhood Educators .
FDC	Family Day Care
Gap Training	The training identified through an RPL process. The training is to be conducted by an RTO scoped to deliver the respective qualification at the Certificate III to Advanced Diploma level.
GST	The Goods and Services Tax (GST) is a broad-based tax of ten per cent on the supply of most goods and services consumed in Australia. The funding amount provided under this Programme is GST inclusive.
Guidelines	Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning grants for early childhood educators.
LDC	Long Day Care
OSHC	Out of School Hours Care
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) means an assessment process that assesses an individual's formal, non-formal and informal learning to determine the extent to which that individual has achieved the required learning outcomes, competency outcomes, or standards for entry to, and/or partial or total completion of, a vocational education and training (VET) qualification.
RPL grant	The RPL grant, known also as 'the grant', is the amount or amounts of funding payable to early childhood services per eligible early childhood educator, under the RPL initiative.
RPL Assessment Plan	The RPL Assessment Plan is used to document the intended steps in the RPL assessment process for each candidate and may be updated as the RPL assessment process continues.
RTO	Registered Training Organisation RTOs are Government approved providers and assessors of nationally recognised training. A list of RTOs and Department of Education registered RPL assessors can be found on the Department of Education Skills and Employment website at dese.gov.au/recognition-prior-learning-early-childhood-educators