



Department of
Primary Industries
Rural Assistance Authority

FARM BUSINESS SKILLS

Professional Development Program

Guidelines



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Farm Business Skills Professional Development Program Guidelines

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (November 2015). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.

Foreword



The NSW Government is committed to helping our State's farmers prepare for and manage drought. Our five-year NSW Drought Strategy, announced in February 2015, is focused on long-term low interest loans, skills and training, animal welfare assistance, access to information, research and development, and wellbeing support.

This strategy is focused on encouraging drought preparedness to ensure our farming sector and regional communities are better prepared for future drought conditions.

The NSW Drought Strategy includes:

- **Finance** – Over the next five years, funding will be provided to producers under the Farm Innovation Fund in the form of long-term low-interest loans to help improve permanent on-farm infrastructure. In addition, the NSW Government has committed to continuing its joint contribution to the free Rural Financial Counselling Service.
- **Skills and training** – The Farm Business Skills Professional Development Program will provide primary producers with access to vocational training and farm business planning.
- **Animal welfare assistance** – Funding is available to provide transport assistance for animal welfare and donated fodder within NSW.
- **Access to information** – Including practical advice on seasonal conditions, pest and weed management and livestock management made available through Local Land Services and the Department of Primary Industries.
- **Research and development** – Funding has been allocated to work with the Bureau of Meteorology to develop an enhanced network of weather stations across NSW. Continued investment through the NSW Department of Primary Industries into research and development programs that assist with drought preparedness, like research into drought-resilient crops. The NSW Government will continue to work with the Commonwealth Government and the farming sector, including through the Farm Business Skills Professional Development Program, to increase the uptake of multi-peril insurance as a key risk management tool to increase drought preparedness.
- **Wellbeing** – Continued funding over the next five years to the permanent Rural Resilience Program, and the Rural Support Worker Program as required, and facilitation of access to a range of other services in the public, private and non-government sectors.

The NSW Government has a clear role to play in supporting farm businesses and regional communities to be more resilient and better prepared for future drought conditions.

We're supporting our farmers to grow their business skills and invest in new business efficiencies to better manage seasonal fluctuations and drive productivity gains.

This document outlines the program framework for the vocational training and farm business planning, which has been developed through extensive consultation with the NSW Farmers Association, Local Land Services, the Rural Assistance Authority and the Department of Primary Industries.

Last year the NSW Government commissioned the Australian Farm Institute to conduct a Review of NSW Drought Policy, which informed our NSW Drought Strategy.

A clear recommendation in that review was that the NSW Government should commit significant funding and resources to develop and provide training for farmers in drought planning and risk management strategies and to assist farmers to develop drought plans for their farm businesses.

The launch of the Farm Business Skills Professional Development Program fully delivers upon that recommendation, with funding to be allocated to this program over the next five years under the NSW Drought Strategy.

The program will promote farm business sustainability and strategic planning, and will contribute to informed assessment and implementation of risk management options like commercial multi-peril insurance. This new program will complement the nationally agreed Farm Business Management Skill Set, which the NSW Department of Primary Industries is already delivering through Tocal College.

The NSW Government will continue to work closely with the farming sector and regional communities to ensure that the NSW Drought Strategy supports farm businesses prepare for and cope with the effect of drought conditions.



The Hon. Niall Blair MLC
Minister for Primary Industries
Minister for Lands and Water

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Background

The NSW Drought Strategy (2015) is designed to support the State's farmers to become more resilient and better prepared for future droughts by providing opportunities to improve their business and reduce risks by delivering a targeted system of drought support.

The strategy moves away from a reactive style of drought funding to a proactive strategy, which aligns with the Intergovernmental Agreement on National Drought Program Reform.

The NSW Drought Strategy will provide key assistance measures for primary producers over the next five years.

Funding has been allocated over five years for the Farm Business Skills – Professional Development Program, which is due to commence on 2 November 2015.

The Farm Business Skills Professional Development Program will complement the existing range of programs in NSW and work will continue with the Commonwealth Government to ensure program development and availability is consistent with the Intergovernmental Agreement on National Drought Program Reform. (IGA)

This agreement between the Australian and state and territory governments came into effect on 1 July 2014. One of the key elements of the IGA is establishing a national approach to farm business management development that will deliver courses to develop core competencies in the farm business management skill set.

Program objectives

The Farm Business Skills – Professional Development Program will provide:

- the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills to build improved resilience and adaptability in the agricultural business.
- exposure to new ideas, tools and techniques that businesses can use.
- a range of products and services that engage the wide diversity of skills, knowledge and experience within the agricultural business sector.
- a focus on building the skills and knowledge of agricultural businesses to manage risk, financial and business planning or decision making capacity.

About the program

To achieve the objectives of the Farm Business Skills – Professional Development Program, three priority areas have been identified.

A core principle to the program delivery is, wherever possible, to encourage peer learning and/or coaching and a supportive environment to build capacity and knowledge within the business.

Initiatives funded through the program should provide an environment for peer learning and support. This includes the establishment of ongoing peer or professional networks focused on improved business management outcomes, such as a benchmarking group; shared learning experiences; a professional network establishment; and or, a structured plan of ongoing learning and professional development as a group.

The priority areas for the program are outlined below:

a) Management of risk

The management of risk is a key area of focus to support future decision-making and investment decisions that underpin profitable and sustainable agricultural businesses.

Areas of risk management that are considered important for the program include the undertaking of a business risk analysis; understanding exposure to climate and natural disaster risk; debt and financial risks; succession planning and business continuity; understanding and development of strategies to mitigate and manage risk

b) Financial and business management

Improving financial and business management capacity is a key focus area that is critical to securing future agricultural business viability.

Areas of financial and business management that are considered a priority for the program are financial literacy; capacity to analyse the business; benchmarking; enterprise analysis; infrastructure and capital investment on farm; different business structure options; improved personal skills around communication and managing people; and a capacity to implement and monitor a business plan into the future.

c) Farm business planning and/or drought preparedness planning

Developing a farm management plan and/or drought preparedness plan assists in the planning, preparation and prioritisation for the future growth of the business. A well-formulated plan helps to provide protection for the farm business from possible risk in a hostile and variable business environment.

The plan should include an analysis of the farming enterprise and preparation for internal and external risks that impact on the business. The plan will help farm business managers to develop strategies, measures and outcomes for achieving business growth by looking at the marketing, financial, human resources, and succession planning pillars of the farming business.

The business plan will support the productivity, profitability and viability of the farm business. An example of a business plan is included at Appendix 2 as a guide. One example of a business outcome could be for individual farm businesses to have a farm management plan and/or drought preparedness plan that can be used to access multi-peril insurance or commercial finance.

The guidelines

These guidelines address the responsibilities of the various parties involved in the program including service provider registration, eligible professional development activities, the criteria for participants, and reimbursement of professional development costs.

1. Responsibilities

a) Rural Assistance Authority (RAA)

The RAA will:

- call for expressions of interest from potential service providers.
- advertise the application processes, respond to queries in relation to the process, and resolve any uncertainties that may arise in relation to the application process.
- assess and approve applications for registration of service providers.
- assess non-approved professional development activities to ensure all eligibility criteria are met.
- maintain the public register of service providers on the RAA website.
- ensure applicants are notified of the outcomes of the application process.
- determine the number of places the provider will receive based on the information provided in the application.
- monitor funded providers for the duration of the program.
- monitor the requirements of the providers, including reporting.
- undertake follow-up activities if required.
- process payments in a timely, transparent and efficient manner.
- evaluate the program outcomes.

b) Service providers

The providers will:

- apply for registration under the program.
- ensure that all information provided in the application is accurate and in accordance with the requirements set out in the application documentation and these guidelines.
- disclose all the information required to enable their application to be processed appropriately.
- hold copies of all relevant paperwork.
- ensure that the person completing the application is authorised to commit the provider to the ongoing obligations under the funding agreement.
- ensure that the contact person nominated in the application is authorised to make decisions on behalf of the provider.
- ensure that the contact details are current.

More details about the provider application process can be found in the information package for service providers.

Providers can apply to be [registered](#) and have materials updated or listed from 2 November 2015 for the life of the program.

c) Program participants

The program participants will:

- apply for reimbursement of eligible costs relating to approved professional development.
- provide proof of eligibility to claim against the program.
- only undertake non-approved professional development activity or training courses (ie not listed on the RAA web site) after seeking approval from the RAA **before** starting the activity.
- provide proof of expenditure and evidence the development activity has been completed.

Details regarding the participant application process are contained in the [information package](#) for participants.

2. Program risk management

The RAA is committed to the effective management of the program. All applications for funding and the registration of providers will be subject to a risk management assessment.

The RAA will use information from applicants and other relevant sources to assess the potential risk to NSW Government. Measures to address these risks, such as requiring evidence for ongoing financial viability or alterations to the service agreement, will be considered.

The program will cease to operate if funding is discontinued. However, this will not affect approved existing funding commitments to professional development places and service agreements.

3. Program funding

The Farm Business Skills – Professional Development Program funding will be available from 2 November 2015 until 30 June 2020.

Specific detail of dates for service providers will be determined by the funding agreement. No funding will be provided beyond 30 June 2020. Final acquittal will be required three months after all the funds have been spent or three months after 30 June 2020, whichever is earlier.

4. Governance

The NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) through the NSW Rural Assistance Authority (RAA) will be responsible for implementing and reporting on the implementation of the program.

5. Evaluation

The RAA will evaluate how the program contributed to the professional development of the farm business managers in improving business performance. Providers may be required to provide information to assist in this evaluation for a period of time after funding has been provided.

6. Communications.

Public notices announcing the program will be published in rural and regional newspapers. Public notices will explain when applications for service providers and participants of the program will open.

Publicity will continue for the duration of the program.

7. Making an application.

The NSW Government is committed to reducing regulatory burden on service providers applying to register their services, and participants who are applying for funding support. The RAA is working to ensure the application process is simple and straightforward.

Applications will be open for the duration of the program.

a) For participants

i. Eligibility

Eligible participants are individuals involved in the management of a primary production enterprise. Eligible participants could be:

- The principal operator and spouse

- Partners
- Family members
- Managers who are not family members

Eligible participants must provide a signed statutory declaration showing that 51% of their income is received from primary production.

Participants must also show in the application evidence of their ability to contribute 50% of the total cost of the professional development activity. In-kind contribution can make up to 25% of the total costs and evidence will be required.

There will be limited opportunities for financial support and payment will not be made without evidence that the professional development activity has been successfully completed.

A step-by-step guide to getting involved in the program is summarised below. More details can be found at www.raa.nsw.gov.au.

ii. What can funds be used for?

The following items **will be eligible** for funding under this program:

- professional development, vocational training and farm business planning
- travel costs (fuel, accommodation, meals)
- child / respite care costs (from a registered provider)
- software that is specifically related to the professional development activity

The following items will **not be eligible** for funding under this program:

- accountancy fees
- funding for the recognition of prior learning
- software - unrelated to the professional development activity
- technology purchases
- stand-alone technical or operational development activities (eg: WH&S courses)
- activity that is required to satisfy government regulatory and statutory obligations.
- activities for which the recipient is receiving funding from other government programs.

iii. Making an application for reimbursement (participant)

Participants can apply for reimbursement of expenditure when they have completed a professional development activity from the pre-approved list of providers (refer to the RAA website).

If participants wish to undertake a professional development activity not included on the pre-approved list, prior approval must be obtained from the RAA before commencing the activity.

To apply for reimbursement of costs associated with the professional development activity, the participant must lodge a completed application form with RAA in accordance with these guidelines. Information and forms are available at www.raa.nsw.gov.au.

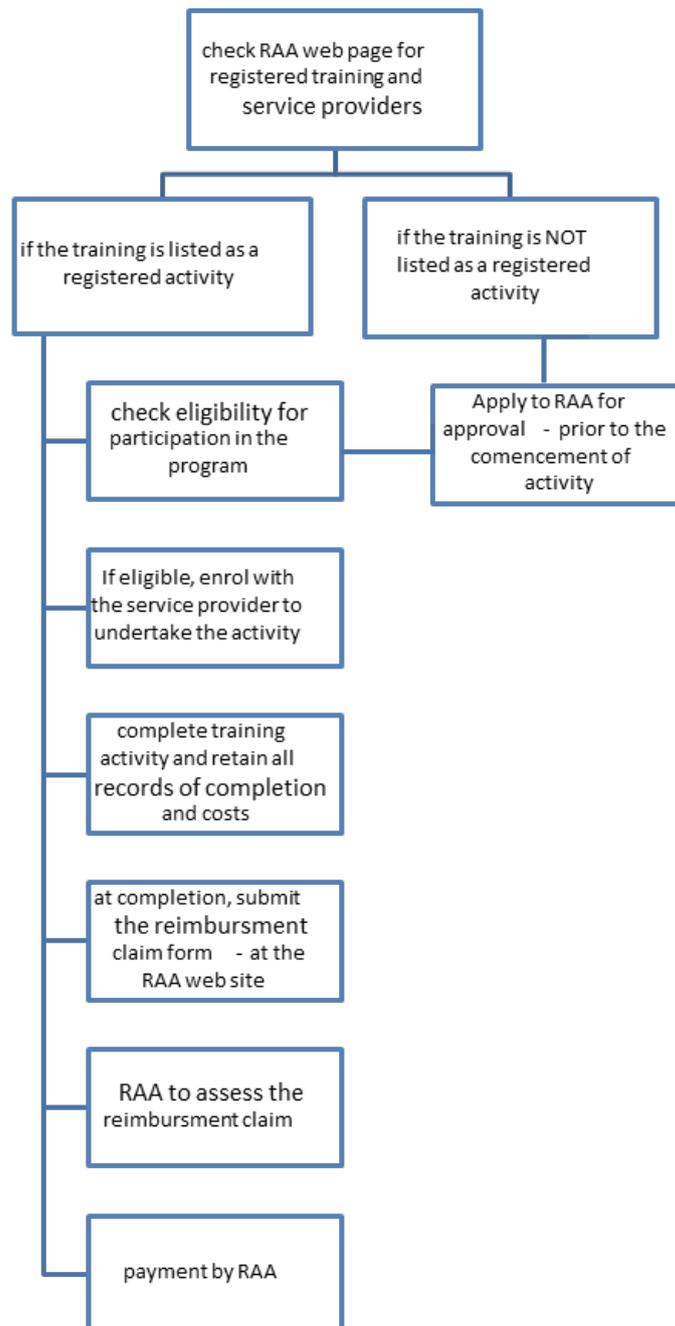
iv. Payments

Service providers will receive an allocation of places, with the price per place capped in accordance with their submission.

Eligible participants will be reimbursed when they have completed an application form and submitted proof of expenditure (receipts of expenses). Payments will be made as per the NSW Government's customer service guidelines.

Participants can receive:

- up to a maximum of \$5,000 for the first person from the farm business across eligible programs.
- additional members of the farm business management team can also apply for support for up to an additional \$1000 per person for a maximum of four (4) more people to a maximum of \$9000 for the farm business over the five years of the program.
- It is possible to undertake a number of professional development activities. However, the maximum allocation for the first person from the farm business across eligible programs over the five-year life of the program is set at \$5,000. Up to four (4) additional members of the business can also participate with a maximum of \$9000 available for the farm business.



b) For service providers

Service providers can submit expressions of interest from 2 November 2015. Service providers are encouraged to apply for registration on the RAA website at any time during the program. There will also be an annual call for registration.

The RAA will develop and maintain a database of service providers and service delivery, which will allow participants to identify service providers in their local area.

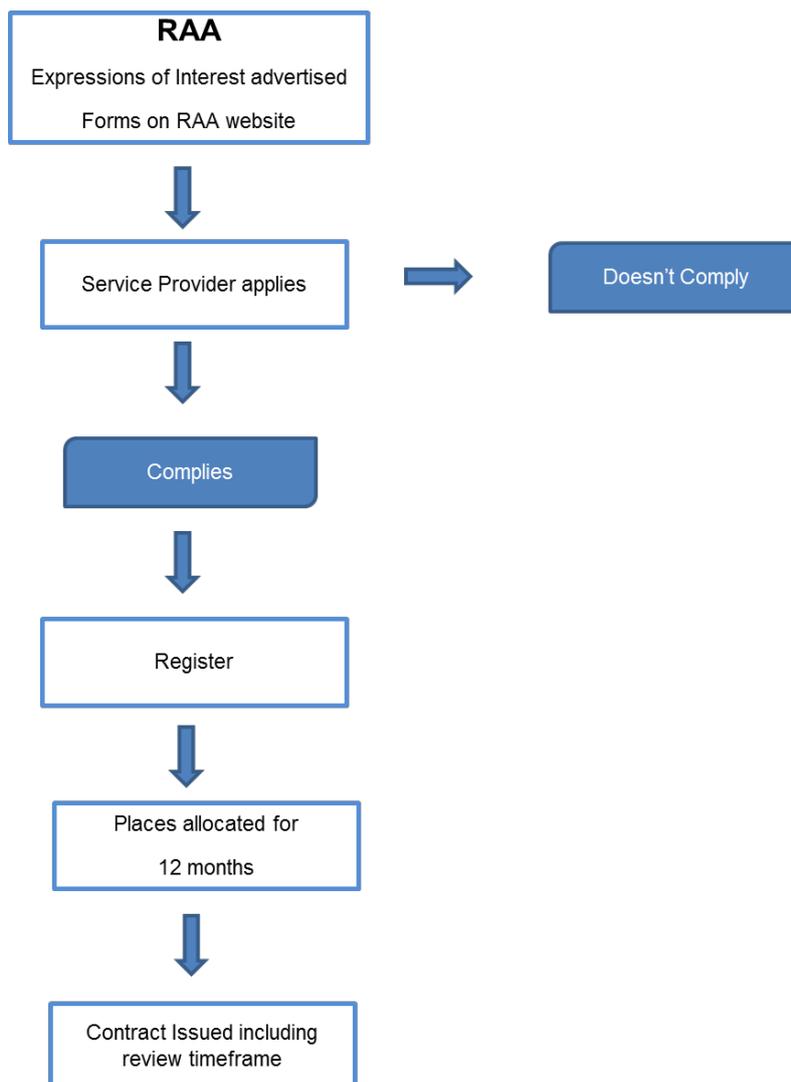
The RAA payment will be made to the primary producer (production enterprise), **not** the service provider.

Service providers **do not need to be registered training organisations (RTO)**, however, they will need to demonstrate that the professional development activity being offered meets the objectives of the program and that there is the capacity to deliver a high quality product.

The service agreement between RAA and the provider can be terminated if the service agreement is not being met due to:

- failure to deliver any activities, or
- if the RAA has reason to believe that the delivery is not as described in the application, or
- if the RAA receive substantiated complaints regarding the delivery of the service.

The process for service provider involvement in the program is summarised below, details can be found at www.raa.nsw.gov.au.



i. Registering as a service provider

To apply to become a registered service provider, the service provider must lodge a completed application form with RAA in accordance with the following guidelines. More information and application forms are available at www.raa.nsw.gov.au.

National Drought Policy (NDP) aims to provide nationally consistent units of competency that have been developed through the Federal Government's Industry Skills Council for primary production – AgriFood Skills Australia.

Eligible providers will be required to demonstrate how the professional development activity contributes towards the national competency criteria through the professional development framework (appendix 1).

Applications to register as a service provider will open from 2 November 2015 until 30 February 2020. There will be an annual call for registration. Service providers can register at any time throughout the program.

The RAA may request additional information if clarification is required.

8. Dispute resolution

The RAA will manage complaints in relation to funding and/or administration of the program. Any complaints regarding the program should be lodged using the contact details outlined below. Complaints will be handled in accordance with the NSW Government's complaint handling policy.

9. More information

Further information regarding the program is available on the RAA website at www.raa.nsw.gov.au or by:

Post: Locked Bag 23, Orange NSW 2800

Email: rural.assist@raa.nsw.gov.au

Fax: (02) 6391 3098

In person: 161 Kite Street, Orange NSW 2800

Freecall 1800 678 593

(note: Calls to "1800" numbers from your home phone are free. Calls from a public phone and mobiles may be timed and attract charges.)

Appendix 1: Professional development training framework

This framework outlines the professional developmental objectives and the types of activities that will be eligible for assistance.

Table 1: Professional development training framework.

Category	Finance & Business Management, including benchmarking	Risk Management	Weather and climate risk management
1. Farm Business Skills Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial literacy and basic tools. Understand profit and loss information, and cash flow information. Maintain financial records Complete a multi-year budget. Set realistic goals for the business. Understand indicators of operational performance. Develop and review a business plan Monitor and review business performance. Use benchmarking to drive analysis of the business. Support and review business structures and relationships. Capital investment analysis. Use indicators of operational performance to make decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the impact of risk and the value of planning to mitigate or manage risk. Understand the likelihood of different risks, and the consequences if they occur. Understand enterprise strengths and weakness. Understand the risks that can impact on the business. Prioritise the risks and identify ways to manage or mitigate these risks. Identify and design risk management and mitigation strategies. Operational strengths and weaknesses are evaluated against market conditions to determine current and future capacities. Implement and monitor risk management plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic introduction to weather and climate – local considerations Understand how weather and climate impact on enterprise and anticipated to assess support decision making Develop climate risk management strategies
2. Support services that can be included to improve the business skills development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rapid financial assessment. Coaching on monitoring farm finances. Support for preparation of business and financial plans. Establishment of a benchmarking group to facilitate business analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rapid risk assessment. Coaching on monitoring and managing risk. Support for the preparation of a risk management plan. Establishment of a benchmarking group, with a focus on risk management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to interpret climate forecasts and use the tools available.

Appendix 2: Farm Business Plan/Drought Preparedness Plan

The **minimum** requirements for the Farm Business Plan/Drought Preparedness Plan within the Farm Business Skills – Professional Development Program are detailed below.

Developing a Farm Business Plan/Drought Preparedness Plan assists in the planning, preparation and prioritisation for the future growth of the business. A well-formulated plan will help to protect the farm business from possible risk in a hostile and variable business environment. The framework appears at Table 2.

The plan should include an analysis of the farming enterprise and identification of the internal and external risks that impact on the business. The plan will help farm business managers to develop strategies, measures and outcomes for achieving business growth by looking at the marketing, financial, human resources and succession planning pillars of the farming business.

The business plan will support the productivity, profitability and viability of the farm business. One example of an outcome could be for individual farm businesses to have a specific farm management plan and/or drought preparedness plan that can be used to access multi-peril insurance.

Table 2: Farm business plan and/or drought preparedness plan.

Essential elements	Critical considerations
Background information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm location, ownership details and how long it has been operated. • Property size and valuation, water resources. • Farming history and experience of partners. • Scale and type of farming operation.
Farm assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current operating structure in terms of management and labour duties. • Operating infrastructure, plant and equipment – conditions and adequacy. • Livestock/cropping program. • Natural resource management
Financial performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of financial structure and analysis of the past 12 months trading results. • Details of changes to financial position envisaged over the next five years. • Details of any farm/plant/machinery purchases/sales proposed over the next five years
Risk analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risks facing the existing business. • How these risks are currently being managed. • Proposed plans to minimise the impact of these risks in the future.
Current seasonal outlook and prospects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of climate risk management strategies • Strategies for enterprise change and adjustment • Resource management, water and fodder strategies • Recovery strategies
Future strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current and proposed debt management strategy including time line. • Increased productivity and/or decrease costs strategy including time line.

Appendix 3: Performance indicators and benchmarks

The NSW Government has committed to the delivery of the Intergovernmental Agreement on National Drought Reform. These commitments are summarised in the table below.

IGA on National Drought Program Reform						
Proposed Outcome (From IGA)	Strategy (from IGA)	Priority state activity	Target	Output	Success measure	Responsibility
1. Assist farm families and primary producers adapt to and prepare for the impacts of increased climate variability	A national approach to farm business training is developed	NSW will encourage the delivery and uptake of the national approach to farm business training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing training programs are reviewed and updated to reflect National approach New training programs developed that are in alignment with the farm business management skill set 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training programs available and reflect the National approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training programs reviewed, modified and available Private providers have been advised and encouraged to review programs New training programs are developed and available with 6 months of the release of the farm business management skill set 	Department of Education & Communities, Department of Primary Industries, Private Providers, Local Land Services
2. Encourage farm families and primary producers to adopt self-reliant approaches to manage their business risks	Tools and technologies are available to inform farmer decision making	NSW will deliver jurisdiction-specific programs based on the principles within the IGA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Regional Assistance Advisory Committee (RAAC) are provided with timely relevant information to assist them to make informed recommendations Farmers and their advisers are provided with tools that assist making informed decisions Ensure the welfare of farm animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State wide seasonal condition reports provide information to assist in high level decision making Regional seasonal condition reports provide information for regional and individual decision making Develop a transport subsidy that moves away from in drought support to being available permanently for the purpose of animal welfare. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State wide reports are produced monthly Regional reports in alignment with LLS boundaries are produced monthly Reports are modified as feedback is received to ensure they are relevant and assist farmers make informed decisions. There is a reduction in the level of 'external intervention' relating to animal welfare 	Department of Primary Industries

Appendix 4: Participant information pack.

Background information

a) What is the Farm Business Skills Professional Development Program?

The farm business skills professional development program is an initiative of the NSW Government offering financial incentives for farming business enterprises to access management training.

Developing a farm management plan and/or drought preparedness plan assists in the planning, preparation and prioritisation of the available enterprise resources for future growth of the business. A well-formed plan will help to protect the farm business from possible risk in a hostile and variable business environment.

The plan should include an analysis of the various attributes of the farming enterprise and preparation for internal and external risks that impact on the business. The plan will help farm business managers to develop strategies, measures and outcomes for achieving business growth by looking at the marketing, financial, human resources, and succession planning pillars of the farming business.

The business plan will support the productivity, profitability and viability of the farm business. One example of an outcome could be for individual farm businesses to have a farm management plan and/or drought preparedness plan that can be used to access multi-peril insurance or commercial finance.

b) Activities eligible for Farm Business Skills Professional Development Program funding

i. Eligibility

Eligible participants are individuals involved in the management of a primary production enterprise. Eligible participants could be:

- The principal operator and spouse
- Partners
- Family members
- Managers who are not family members

Eligible participants must provide a signed statutory declaration showing that 51% of income is received from primary production.

Participants must show in the application that there is a 50% contribution to the total cost of the professional development activity.

In-kind contribution can make up to 25% of the total costs and evidence will be required.

There will be limited opportunities for financial support. Payment will not be made without evidence of the professional development activity being successfully completed.

A step-by-step guide to involvement in the program is summarised below. More details can be found at www.raa.nsw.gov.au.

ii. What can funds be used for?

The following items **will be eligible** for funding under this program:

- Travel costs (fuel, accommodation, meals)
- Child / respite care costs (from a registered provider)
- Software that is specifically related to the professional development activity

The following items will **not be eligible** for funding under this program:

- accountancy fees
- Funding for the Recognition of Prior Learning
- Software - unrelated to the professional development activity
- technology purchases
- Stand-alone technical or operational development activities (eg: WH&S courses)
- Activity that is required to satisfy government regulatory and statutory obligations.
- Activities for which the recipient is receiving funding from other government programs.

iii. Making an application for reimbursement (participant)

Participants need only apply for reimbursement of expenditure after the completion of the professional development activity, if being drawn from the pre-approved list of service providers (refer RAA website).

If participants wish to undertake a professional development activity that is outside the pre-approved list, prior approval must be obtained from the RAA before commencing the activity.

To apply for reimbursement of costs associated with the professional development activity, the participant must lodge a completed application form with RAA in accordance with these guidelines. Information and forms are available at www.raa.nsw.gov.au.

iv. Payments

Service providers will receive an allocation of places, with the price per place capped according to their tender submission.

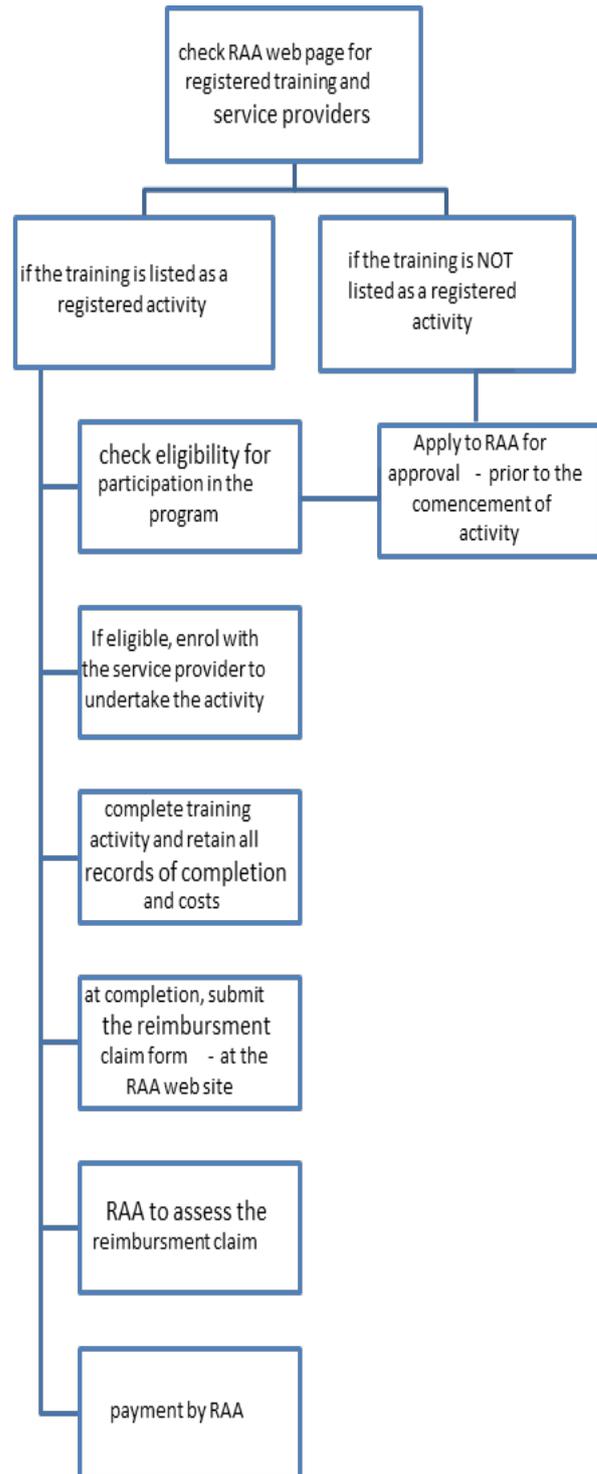
Eligible participants will be reimbursed as per the provision of a completed application form and proof of expenditure (receipts of expenses). Payments will be made as per the NSW Government's customer service guidelines.

Participants can receive

- up to a maximum of \$5,000 for the first person from the farm business across eligible programs.
- Additional members of the farm business management team can also apply for support for up to an additional \$1000 per person, for a maximum of four (4) additional people. To a maximum of \$9000 for the farm business over the 5 years of the program.
- It is possible to undertake a number of professional development activities; however the maximum allocation the first person from the farm business across eligible programs over the five-year life of the program is set at \$5,000, with a total of \$9000 for the farm business, if an additional four (4) members of the business also participate.

Participant application process

Step 1:	Refer to the training register on the RAA website for relevant, registered training and training providers. Note: ensure training on offer meets your learning requirements.
Step 2:	check your eligibility for reimbursement of training costs Note: refer to the information sheet on the RAA web site for guidance.
Step 3:	If eligible; Enrol with the provider to commence training. Note: pre approval to attend the training is not required.
Step 4:	If eligible; But wanting to complete training that is not listed on the RAA web site Note: approval to attend the training is required prior to commencement of training
Step 5:	Undertake and complete the training activity. Note: ensure you retain receipts of all eligible costs incurred to complete the training. Note: refer to the information sheet on the RAA web site for guidance
Step 6:	upon completion of the training activity, complete reimbursement claim form available on the RAA website. Note: ensure the information is accurate and that you have copies of receipts and relevant documents that can be provided with the reimbursement application form
Step 7:	Submit the completed reimbursement claim form to RAA. Note: Incomplete forms cannot be processed. Please ensure all copies of relevant records of travel, receipts of expenses, proof of attendance / completion of the training is provided with the application.
Step 8:	Reimbursement by RAA of eligible expenses



Appendix 5: Service provider information pack

General information

NSW Rural Assistance Authority (RAA) will develop a register of service providers who deliver activities that enhance farm business management skills NSW. The allocation of training positions will be carried out by RAA based on the application made by the training providers who register with RAA and whose training activities meet the outcomes described in the training framework. Funding under the Farm business skills professional development program will only be available to eligible farm businesses.

The registration of service providers by RAA will produce a database of information, including the details of each activity. This information will be made available on the RAA web site, and will improve the level of knowledge and understanding about training available within NSW for farm business managers.

Service providers can be training providers or professional farm business service providers who deliver skills for participants in the development of the farm business planning or drought preparedness planning.

a) Why develop a register of training providers?

Service providers can submit expressions of interest from 2 November 2015. Service providers are encouraged to apply for registration on the RAA web page at any time during the program. There will be an annual call for registration.

The RAA will develop and maintain the database of service providers and service delivery. The published database can be used by participants to identify service providers in their local area.

The RAA payment will be made to the primary producer (production enterprise), **not** the service provider.

Service providers don't need to be registered training organisations (RTO), however, there is a requirement to demonstrate that the professional development activity being offered meets the objectives of the program and that there is the capacity to deliver a high quality product.

The service agreement between RAA and the provider can be terminated if the service agreement is not being met due to:

- failure to deliver any activities, or
- if the RAA has reason to believe that the delivery is not as described in the application, or
- if the RAA receive substantiated complaints regarding the delivery of the service.

The process for service provider involvement in the program is summarised below, details can be found at www.raa.nsw.gov.au.

b) Registering as a service provider

To apply for consideration to become a registered service provider, the service provider must lodge a completed application form with RAA in accordance with these Guidelines. Information and forms are available at www.raa.nsw.gov.au.

National Drought Policy (NDP) aims to provide nationally consistent units of competency that have been developed through the Federal Government's Industry Skills Council for primary production – [AgriFood Skills Australia](http://AgriFoodSkillsAustralia.com).

Eligible providers will be required to demonstrate how the professional development activity contributes towards the national competency criteria through the professional development framework (appendix 1).

Applications to register as a service provider will be open from 1 July 2015 til 30 June 2020, the RAA will do an annual call for registration to remind service providers and ensure currency of information. Service providers can register at any time throughout the program.

The RAA may request additional information if clarification is required.

c) Contacts

NSW Rural Assistance Authority:

Further information regarding the program is available on the RAA's website at www.raa.nsw.gov.au or by:

Post: Locked Bag 23, Orange NSW 2800

Email: rural.assist@raa.nsw.gov.au

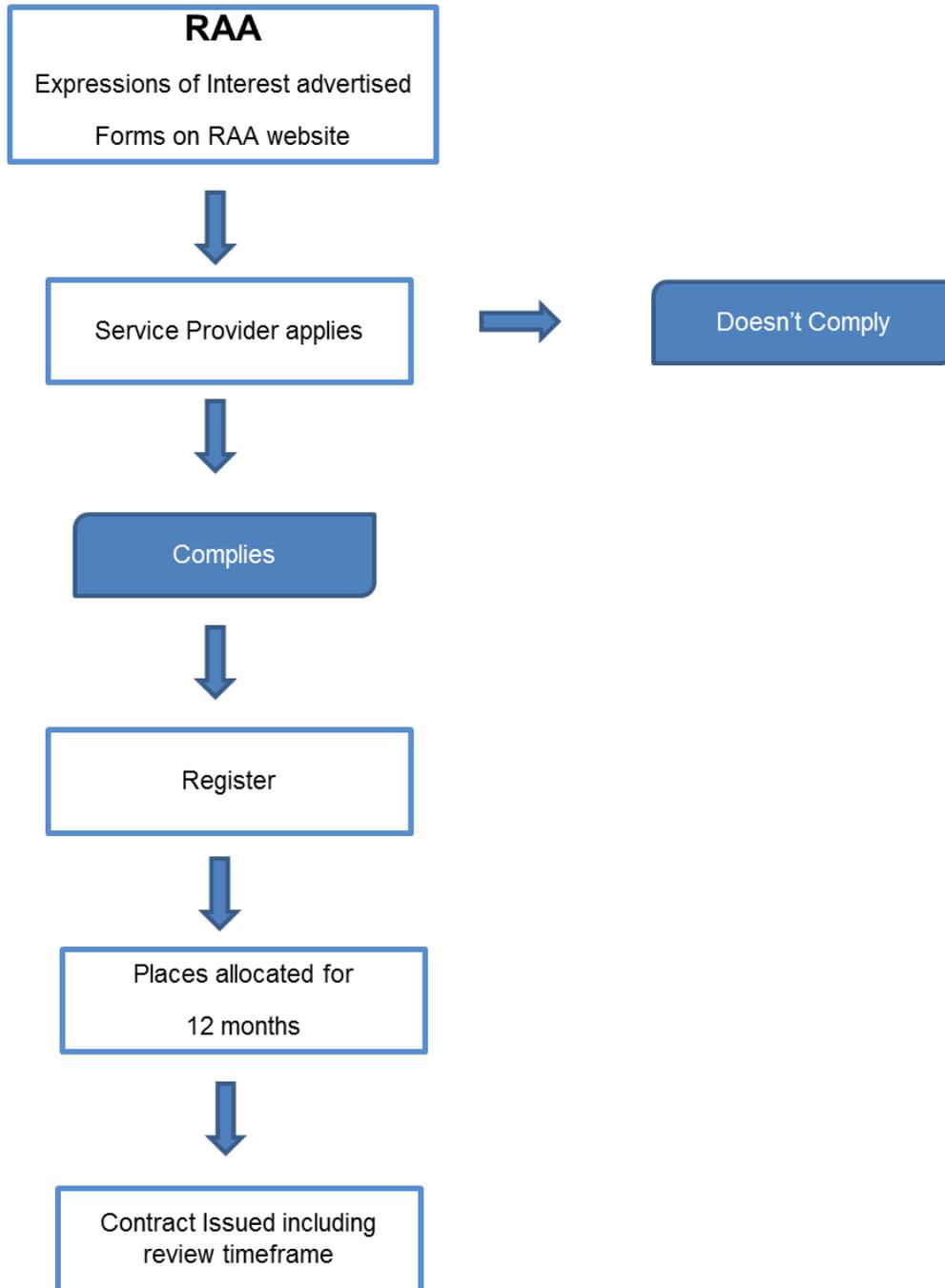
Fax: (02) 6391 3098

In person: 161 Kite Street, Orange NSW 2800

Freecall 1800 678 593

(note: Calls to "1800" numbers from your home phone are free. Calls from a public phone and mobiles may be timed and attract charges.)

Service provider registration process



Appendix 6: Service provider registration form

Financial Year 2015/16

(NOTE: This form is to be completed for each course offered under the Professional Development Program funding)

About you (the service provider)

Name(s)			
Trading name if different from the legal – registered name			
ABN			ACN
Type of training entity	<input type="checkbox"/> University <input type="checkbox"/> College of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) <input type="checkbox"/> Registered Training Organisation (RTO) <input type="checkbox"/> Business		
Business address			
Postal address (if different to business address)			
Contact name			
Home telephone			Mobile
Email			Fax
How would you like to receive future correspondence from the RAA?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Mail <input type="checkbox"/> Fax <input type="checkbox"/> Email (Please tick)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)			

About the professional development course

Name of course		
Types of course offered	<input type="checkbox"/> Management of risk <input type="checkbox"/> Financial or Business Management <input type="checkbox"/> Farm business planning / drought preparedness planning	
Hours of training / professional development to be completed		
Number of places available		
Course description		
Course objectives		
Assessment / Process for successful completion		
Full cost of course	\$	

Statements

General Statement

Any person who knowingly and with intent to defraud the NSW Rural Assistance Authority (RAA) or another person, files an application for assistance containing any materially false information, or conceals for the purpose of misleading information concerning any fact material thereto, commits a fraudulent act, which is a crime under the *Crimes Act 1900* and subjects the person to criminal penalties

Privacy statement

The information in this form is provided voluntarily and is being collected by the RAA for purposes related to the administration of the program of assistance applied, including the assessment of the effectiveness of the program. This may involve disclosing the information in this form to contractors engaged by the RAA or to either State or Commonwealth government agencies. We will supply you with details of those that we have disclosed information to, if you apply to us in writing.

Not providing the information requested in this form or providing false or misleading or incomplete information may impact on the ability of the RAA to accurately assess the student's application.

The RAA agrees to take all reasonable measures to ensure that the personal information collected by it is stored securely.

You may access or correct your information by contacting the RAA by telephone on 1800 678 593 (toll free) or by writing to: Manager Administration, NSW Rural Assistance Authority, Locked Bag 23, ORANGE, NSW, 2800.

Calls to "1800" numbers from your home phone are free. Calls from public phones and mobiles may be timed and attract charges

Your statement

I / We understand that in any one financial year a limited number of places will be allocated to program funding recipients.

I / We will advise applicants when these places have been fully subscribed.

I / We will provide certificates of completion to all successful applicants.

I / We understand that the NSW Rural Assistance Authority reserves the right to reallocate training places away from courses that have low uptake.

Signed

Name (Name of Training Provider).....

.....

Date

Appendix 7: Answering your questions

What is the Farm Business Skills – Professional Development Program?

The Farm Business Skills – Professional Development Program is part of the NSW Drought Strategy to provide key assistance measures for primary producers over the next five years. The program will receive funding over five years for vocational training and farm business planning and is intended to complement the range of programs available to help farmers prepare for and deal with drought. Training is an important part of building farmer's capacity to prepare for and manage risk. In particular, improved farm business skills support the productivity, profitability and viability of farm businesses. The NSW Government will continue to work closely with stakeholders to ensure program development and availability is consistent with the Intergovernmental Agreement on National Drought Program Reform. (IGA). One of the key elements of the IGA is establishing a national approach to farm business management development that delivers courses that develop core competencies in the farm business management skill set.

What is a farm business plan/drought preparedness plan?

A farm business plan/drought preparedness plan is a document that can create a strategic direction for the business. It assists in the planning, preparation and prioritisation of the future growth of your business. A well-formulated plan will help to protect the farm business from possible risk in a hostile and variable business environment.

A farm business/drought preparedness plan should include an analysis of the internal and external risks that impact on the business. The plan will help farm business managers to develop strategies, measures and outcomes for achieving business growth by considering marketing, financial, human resources and succession planning pillars of the farming business.

The business plan will support the productivity, profitability and viability of the farm business.

How will I know when the program starts and what to do next?

Public notices announcing the program will be published in rural and regional newspapers from 2 November 2015 until 30 June 2020. Public notices will explain when applications for service providers and participants in the program are open.

Publicity of the program will be ongoing.

When will the program commence?

The *Farm Business Skills – Professional Development Program* funding will commence from 2 November 2015 and be available until 30 June 2020. Service providers can submit expressions of interest from 2 November 2015. Primary production enterprises and participants can lodge applications from 16 November 2015.

Who is eligible to participate in the program?

Anyone who is involved in the management of a primary production enterprise is eligible to participate in the program. Eligible participants include:

- The principal operator and spouse
- Partners
- Family members
- Managers who are not family members

Eligible participants must provide a signed statutory declaration showing that 51% of their income is received from primary production.

Do I need to seek approval before starting a course?

If you are a service provider, you will need to seek approval as you will need to confirm how many eligible training places you can offer as part of this program.

If you are a participant and you are undertaking an eligible training activity, you will only be required to submit expenses as proof of your in-kind contribution to the cost of training for reimbursement.

Can I apply to do a course that does not have service provider approval from the RAA?

Yes. You can apply to undertake a course that does not have service provider approval however you will need to seek preapproval before you start the training by completing the appropriate form. The training course will be assessed to ensure it meets the objectives of the program. You will still need to provide evidence of completion of the training before you can apply for reimbursement.

What can funds be used for?

The following items **will be eligible** for funding under this program:

- Travel costs (fuel, accommodation, meals)
- Child / respite care costs (from a registered provider)
- Software that is specifically related to the professional development activity

Can I apply for funding more than once?

It is possible to undertake a number of professional development activities. However, the maximum allocation for the first person from the farm business across eligible programs over the five-year life of the program is set at \$5,000. If up to an additional four (4) members of the business also participate, the maximum allocation for the farm business over the five years of the program is \$9,000.

What do I need to show as proof of primary production?

The provision of a signed declaration showing that 51% of your income is received from primary production will be sufficient proof.

Do I need to contribute to the cost of the training activity?

Yes. You must show in your application that you are contributing 50% of the total cost of the course. These eligible costs can include travel, accommodation, childcare and respite care costs.

Can childcare costs be claimed as part of my co-contribution?

Childcare provided by a registered provider can form part of your contribution however this cannot be more than 25% of the total co-contribution. Receipts will be required.

Are there any activities that are not eligible for funding?

Yes. There are activities that are not eligible for funding under this program. They include:

- accountancy fees
- funding for the recognition of prior learning
- software unrelated to the professional development activity
- technology purchases
- stand-alone technical or operational development activities (eg WH&S courses)
- activity that is required to satisfy government regulatory and statutory obligations.
- activities already funded from other government programs

Who will receive the program funding?

The payment will be made to the primary producer (production enterprise), not the service provider.

Will I need to provide evidence that the training has been completed?

Yes. Payments will not be made without evidence that the training activity has been successfully completed.

Is the program funding limited?

Yes the program funding is limited.

Participants can receive:

- up to a maximum of \$5,000 for the first person from the farm business across eligible programs.
- Additional members of the farm business management team can also apply for support for up to an additional \$1000 per person, for a maximum of four (4) additional people to a maximum of \$9000 for the farm business over the five years of the program.

As a service provider, can I apply for funding on behalf of a group?

No. Each participant needs to apply for reimbursement of costs and each application will be considered separately. The RAA payment will be made to the primary producer or production enterprise, **not to** the service provider.

How can I find a service provider in my area?

The RAA will develop and maintain a database of service providers and service delivery to help participants to identify service providers in their local area.

Service providers can submit expressions of interest from 2 November 2015. Service providers are encouraged to apply for registration on the RAA web page at any time during the life of the program. There will also be an annual call for registration.

As a service provider, do I need to be a registered training officer (RTO)?

No. However, you will need to demonstrate that your training meets the objectives of the program and that you have the capacity to deliver a high quality product

Can my contract be withdrawn?

Yes, your contract may be withdrawn if you fail to deliver your proposed activities, if the RAA has reason to believe your offering is not as described or if RAA receive complaints about your conduct.

What about GST?

The expenses submitted will be reimbursed GST exclusive – as the GST component of business expenses are already available as a taxable deductible items to businesses.

Where can I find more information?

NSW Rural Assistance Authority

Further information regarding the program is available on the RAA's [website](#).

Post: Locked Bag 23, Orange NSW 2800

Email: rural.assist@raa.nsw.gov.au

Fax: (02) 6391 3098

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