

# FARM BUSINESS SKILLS

## Professional Development Program

### 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 has funding over five years for vocational training and farm business planning. The program is intended to complement the range of programs available to help farmers prepare for and deal with drought, by building farmers' 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 the farm business manage possible risks in a difficult 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. 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 or until funds are utilised. Service providers can submit expressions of interest from 2 November 2015. Primary production enterprises and participants can lodge applications shortly afterwards.

### 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.

Participants undertaking an eligible training activity must submit proof of training-related expenses in order to receive 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:

- » course fees
- » 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 to a maximum of \$9 million in any financial year, to a total of \$45 million over five years.

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** at [www.raa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au) or by:

**Post:** Locked Bag 23, Orange NSW 2800

**Email:** [rural.assist@raa.nsw.gov.au](mailto: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.