



UPSKILL AND INVEST

YoungFarmers Scholarship

Program Guidelines 2019

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Upskill and Invest – Young Farmers Scholarship Program

Program overview

In recognition of the increasing need for sophisticated skills in the next generation of farmers, the Victorian Government has established a scholarship program tailored to the professional needs of young farmers.

The Upskill and Invest – Young Farmers Scholarship Program (the Program) provides young farmers and those who work directly on farm with up to \$5,000 (exclusive of GST) towards training or study (Upskill), backed by further funds of up to \$5,000 (exclusive of GST) to invest on-farm or in professional development (Invest), putting new skills into practice.

The Upskill funds can be used to meet the cost of study at a university, a registered training organisation, or another quality training provider approved through the application process.

Completion of study or training unlocks the Invest funds to invest in activities that support application of learnings from the chosen study or training. This may include professional development, farm planning or other on-farm activities.

There is one scholarship round per year and approximately 12 scholarships are awarded per round. The application period opens June 2019 for approximately six weeks.

The Program is managed by the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (the Department).

Requirements of scholarship recipients

On successful application for a 2019 scholarship, recipients are required to fulfil the following over the two and a half year scholarship period:

- complete Upskill training as noted in signed agreement with the Department, within two years of commencing the scholarship
- expend Invest funds as noted in signed agreement with the Department, within six months of Upskill completion
- provide a short report to the Department at the end of the scholarship experience.

In addition, scholarship recipients are expected to fulfil the following during and after the completion of their scholarship:

- share learnings and experiences with other young farmers as part of the scholarship program (i.e. share with local community or farming groups, write articles, present at events, mentor future scholarship recipients)
- participate in Young Farmers Scholarship Alumni through social media platforms, webinars and attending events (where possible).

Eligibility

Applicants must:

1. be aged 35 years or under at the time of the application close date
2. be working in a food and fibre farm business in Victoria at least three days per week for the past three months
3. have at least two years of total experience on-farm
4. be an Australian citizen or permanent resident currently residing in Victoria.

Selection criteria

Applicants must address the following selection criteria through the application process:

- demonstrated interest in building skills and boosting your food and fibre agricultural career prospects
- desire to implement learnings from study or training
- commitment to build a productive and profitable agricultural career in food and fibre in Victoria
- commitment to best practice in animal welfare (only if applicant is working in an animal-based farm business).

Applicants must also provide:

- a clear, detailed study plan and timeline (refer Guidelines on selecting study or training)
- a case outlining how the knowledge and skills obtained through selected study or training will benefit your career
- a proposal outlining how the Invest funds will be used and how the investment will support the application of learnings from the chosen study or training
- a case outlining how the scholarship will help build the productivity and profitability of the farm business and your agricultural career in food and fibre in Victoria
- a description of how animal welfare contributes to a sustainable farming business (only if applicant is working in an animal-based farm business).

Guidance on selecting study or training

Applications will be considered for any form of study or training, including professional short courses or workshops, as long as it:

- involves **a minimum of 16 contact hours** (*this may involve more than one course or workshop, and may be across multiple institutions or organisations, or offered online*)

AND

- is delivered by a registered training organisation (RTO)

OR

- is delivered by any other reputable organisation approved through discussion with the Department. For further information, contact the Young Farmer Coordinator.

Fields of study must support the applicant to build a productive and profitable career in agriculture. Study or training in the areas of business planning and management, risk management and financial literacy are encouraged.

The **Victorian Skills Gateway** and **training.gov.au** provide information on vocational training and Learn Local organisations. Further information is also available from local industry or training organisations or local Victorian Farmers Federation branches.

Examples of how scholarships might work in practice can be found at: www.vic.gov.au/youngfarmers

The duration of study for which the scholarship applies should not be more than two years, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Department.

To provide a clear study plan and timeline in the application, applicants need to provide:

- education institution/training organisation name
- course name and code (if applicable)
- course commencement date
- total course duration (units/hours)
- cost of tuition.

Scholarships will be awarded based on the information provided in applications. Therefore, it is important that applicants take adequate steps to ensure that the cost and timing of the proposed study plan is accurate.

Study or training that **will not** be awarded a scholarship include:

- international training courses (unless the applicant can demonstrate there is no equal learning opportunity in Australia).
- training that has already commenced or been completed at the time of application. However, longer duration courses and training with distinct components (i.e. individual subjects) not yet undertaken at the time of applying may be eligible for reimbursement. Examples include, future semesters of an Agribusiness Diploma or the second or subsequent year of a related degree. In these circumstances the subjects must be completed before the Invest activities commence.

Victorian Training Guarantee

The Victorian Training Guarantee (VTG) is available to individuals who do not hold a post-school qualification or who want to gain a higher-level qualification than they already hold.

Individuals that are successful in obtaining a scholarship and who are eligible for the Victorian Training Guarantee, or any other form of government funding, in association with the training approved through the application process, will be provided with funds that cover any course fees charged by the training provider. Recipients will be required to provide a copy of the invoice of fees from the training provider and a copy of the receipt for payment.

Guidance on expenditure of the Invest funds

Invest funds must:

- be directed towards activities that will support the application of learnings from the chosen Upskill study or training
- be expended within six months of completion of study or training (unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Department)
- not be undertaken before the Upskill activities are completed. If an Invest activity is undertaken before the Upskill activities are completed, the Department may seek reimbursement of the scholarship funds.

Applicants will need to demonstrate, in their application, a clear link between the skills acquired through the Upskill activity and the application of those skills in the Invest activity. Invest activities that focus on putting skills into practice and focus on additional support and training (such as professional services, consultants, business management support) are encouraged.

Examples of how scholarships might work in practice can be found at: www.vic.gov.au/youngfarmers

For further information, contact the Young Farmer Coordinator.

Activities that **will not** be considered include, but are not limited to:

- works that have been paid for from other sources for the same or similar project
- activities that are required by law or that replace an individual's, group's or government's legal responsibility for sustainable management of resources under their control, unless able to demonstrate specific value to the project. For example, training to gain a licence required by law to undertake an activity is not eligible (such as dairy licencing fee, driver's licence)
- works, activities, or purchases already undertaken prior to submitting your application for the scholarship
- purchase, lease or acquisition of land or vehicles
- purchase of permanent or temporary water rights
- purchase, leasing or maintenance and repair of transportation vehicles such as boats, cars, quad bikes, motorbikes, trailers and trucks
- purchase of livestock
- drainage works, unless identified as part of an integrated local catchment plan or with technical input
- administration, legal or insurance costs

- day-to-day operating costs of the business, for example, rent, power, cleaning, telephones
- standard variable inputs, for example seed, fertiliser, chemical, fodder
- standard boundary and house fencing that would fall within a landholder's normal responsibility
- preparation of tax returns
- pre-existing annual fees and services.

Application, assessment, and award process

Stage 1 – Application process

The Young Farmer Coordinator is available to assist applicants to develop their application. For assistance please email

Youngfarmer.Coordinator@ecodev.vic.gov.au.

Example application forms for your reference can be found at

www.vic.gov.au/youngfarmers

All applicants are required to read and accept the Program Guidelines before submitting an application. By submitting an application, applicants are deemed to have accepted the Program Guidelines and agreed to be bound by them. Applicants are required to provide evidence of:

- Australian citizenship or permanent residency (including change of name if relevant)
- current residency in Victoria
- current on-farm employment or farm ownership
- a total of at least two years farm experience.

Applicants may submit an application form online at:

www.business.vic.gov.au/support-for-your-business/grants-and-assistance/young-farmers-scholarship-program

A hardcopy application form may also be submitted. A PDF application form is available to be downloaded from the website. You may then scan and return the completed hardcopy form to

Youngfarmer.Coordinator@ecodev.vic.gov.au, or post to:

Young Farmer Coordinator c/o Gemma Heemskerk
Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions
AgriBio, 5 Ring Road
La Trobe University, Bundoora VIC 3083

Receipt of applications will be confirmed via email.

Stage 2 – Shortlisting process

The Scholarship Selection Committee (the Committee) assesses all applications and shortlists suitable applicants for interview.

Those who are not shortlisted will be notified by email. Unsuccessful applicants will have the opportunity to re-apply in future rounds.

The decision of the Committee as to which applicants will be interviewed will be final and no correspondence will be entered into.

Note the Department considers diversity criteria when assessing applications to ensure that each year's cohort includes a diverse range of scholarship recipients, including by geographic location, industry, gender, cultural background, employment type (i.e. owner or employee) and farming experience.

Stage 3 – Interview process

Shortlisted applicants may be invited to an interview with the Committee (either in person or by phone). Successful applicants will be offered a scholarship.

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their interview by email or phone.

The decision of the Committee as to which applicants will receive a scholarship will be final and no correspondence will be entered into.

Stage 4 – Award of Scholarship

Successful applicants who accept a scholarship will be required to sign a Letter of Agreement with the Department stating:

- Scholarship start date
- Upskill activity as per application
- Invest activity as per application.

Scholarships will be awarded at formal ceremony with the Minister for Agriculture in Melbourne. Details will be provided to each successful applicant at the appropriate time. Attendance is not compulsory.

Stage 5 – Release of Upskill funds to undertake study or training

Scholarship recipients have up to two years (from the time they are awarded the scholarship) to complete their agreed Upskill activities. Funds will be provided to reimburse the tuition expenses paid by the scholarship recipient.

Individuals who receive the scholarship in their capacity as a farm business (registered for GST) must:

- sign a formal Letter of Agreement with the Department
- provide evidence of acceptance and enrolment at their chosen institution(s) (for example, a letter from the institution)
- provide an invoice for tuition fees from the training provider and evidence of payment (for example, receipt, Commonwealth Assistance Notice or Fee Account Statement)
- provide an Australian Business Number (ABN) on a tax invoice to the value of the tuition fees charged by the training provider (excluding GST - see the **Goods and Services Tax** section for further information).

Individuals who receive the grant in their capacity as an individual (i.e. not a business, no ABN) OR as a farm business not registered for GST must:

- sign a formal Letter of Agreement with the Department
- provide evidence of acceptance and enrolment at their chosen institution(s) (for example, a letter from the institution)
- provide an invoice for tuition fees from the training provider and evidence of payment (for example, receipt, Commonwealth Assistance Notice or Fee Account Statement)
- provide a completed Statement by a Supplier form (see the **Goods and Services Tax** section for further information).

When scholarship recipients have fulfilled these requirements, they will receive a payment via electronic funds transfer to a nominated bank account. Payment may take up to four weeks to process.

Stage 6 – Release of the Invest funds

Funds of up to \$5,000 (exclusive of GST) will be provided as reimbursement for the purchase/cost of investment made by the scholarship recipient.

Before Invest funds can be released, all Upskill activities must be completed. Scholarship recipients will be required to provide:

- proof of completion of the Upskill activities
- proof of purchase/cost of investment of the Invest activities (for example, receipt).

When scholarship recipients have fulfilled these requirements, they will receive a payment via electronic funds transfer to a nominated bank account. Payment may take up to four weeks to process.

The Invest funds must be expended within six months of completion of study or training, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Department.

If, following completion of their studies, scholarship recipients want to revise their Invest proposal, they must submit a revised proposal to the Young Farmer Coordinator for consideration within 30 days of completing study or training. The value of the revised proposal should not exceed the value of the Invest proposal approved through the application process. Approval from the Department via email is required before the revised Invest proposal is implemented. The Department reserves the right to reject a revised Invest proposal.

Stage 7 – A short written or video report to the Department

On completion of the Upskill and Invest components, each Scholarship recipient will be required to complete a short written or video report on their experience and learnings. A template and questions will be provided at the appropriate time.

Stage 8 - Young Farmers Scholarship Alumni

Scholarship recipients become part of the Young Farmers Scholarship Alumni Network.

Scholarship recipients will be asked to regularly update an alumni profile detailing their experience with the Program. They will also be asked to participate in evaluation surveys and promotional activities, social media activities and events (online and/or live) associated with the program and other Victorian Government Young Farmer initiatives.

Assessment of applications

Applications will be assessed against the **eligibility** and **selection criteria** set out in the program guidelines.

Assessment of applications is based on merit taking into consideration the recipients education levels and farming experience.

The Department aims to ensure each year's cohort includes a diversity of scholarship recipients, including by geographic location, industry, gender, cultural background, employment type (i.e. owner or employee) and farming experience. An objective scoring process is used to assist in assessing applications to represent diversity across scholarship recipients.

Individuals who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders are encouraged to apply.

Selection Committee

Members of the Committee are appointed by the Department.

Complaints process

Complaints, enquiries and feedback in relation to the processing of applications should be sent to

Youngfarmer.Coordinator@ecodev.vic.gov.au.

If an applicant, or any other person, continues to be dissatisfied with the administration of the Program they may raise their concerns with the **Victorian Ombudsman**.

The Victorian Ombudsman may be contacted by telephone on 03 9613 6222.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

The Department will reimburse the agreed upon out-of-pocket expenses of the recipient. Whether the Department reimburses the GST paid by the scholarship recipient to the supplier depends on the GST status of the scholarship recipient. Scholarship recipients can choose to receive the scholarship in their capacity as an individual (i.e. no ABN, not a business), a business not registered for GST, or a business registered for GST.

- **If you are an individual and do not have an ABN**

This means that you are not registered for GST. You will be reimbursed the total amount paid by you to the supplier (including the GST applied by the supplier).

To claim payment, you will need to complete and submit a 'Statement by a Supplier' form.

A Statement of Supplier Form is available from the **Young Farmer Coordinator** or from the Australian Taxation Office website **www.ato.gov.au**

Scholarship recipients must tick the box that states: *The supply is made by an individual or partnership without reasonable expectation of profit or gain.*

- **If you have an ABN but are not registered for GST**

You will be reimbursed the total amount paid by you to the supplier (including the GST applied by the supplier).

To claim payment, you will need to provide your ABN on an invoice to the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, and specify on the invoice that you are not registered for GST.

- **If you have an ABN and are registered for GST**

You will be reimbursed the amount paid by you to the supplier, excluding the GST applied by the supplier. As you are receiving the scholarship in your capacity as a GST-registered business, you can recoup the GST paid by you from the Australian Taxation Office through your business activity statement (BAS).

To claim payment, you will need to provide your ABN on a tax invoice to the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions. The invoice should indicate that no GST has been applied.

The Department recommends that applicants seek independent financial advice on GST and any other tax implications.

Responsibility of scholarship recipients

Scholarship recipients are expected to manage all aspects of their scholarship independently (this includes study arrangements and Invest activities) and must notify the Department in writing of any changes to their contact details.

Special considerations

If you are experiencing financial hardship or there are special circumstances which may impact your ability to accept this scholarship as per the Program Guidelines, please contact the Department.

Review and amendments

The Department in its absolute discretion may review and amend the Upskill and Invest - Young Farmers Scholarship Program Guidelines.

Contact

Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions

Phone: Customer Service Centre - 136 186

Email: Youngfarmer.Coordinator@ecodev.vic.gov.au

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