



Host Organisation Handbook

Work for the Dole

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Host Organisation Handbook

The Host Organisation Handbook provides information for host organisations (hosts) managing Work for the Dole activities under Workforce Australia.

This handbook is not a standalone document. More information on Work for the Dole, including where you can find a list of Workforce Australia Employment Service Providers (providers) in your area who are responsible for delivering Work for the Dole, is available at www.workforceaustralia.gov.au.

Hosts can seek advice and assistance from providers and should get their own legal and financial advice when needed.

Disclaimer: *The term Workforce Australia Employment Services Provider or provider in this document refers to entities licensed under the Workforce Australia Services Deed of Standing Offer 2022-2028 (the Deed).*

Work for the Dole

Work for the Dole is part of Workforce Australia Employment Services. It is an activity to help participants gain new skills, experience and confidence while they look for work. It also offers individuals the opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities and contribute to their local community.

As a Work for the Dole host, you are a critical part of the program and can access an extra set of hands to undertake activities and projects that may not normally get completed.

Providers in your area will work with you to identify and run suitable Work for the Dole activities.

Work for the Dole activities must only be hosted by:

- not-for-profit organisations/charities
- local, state or territory, Australian Government organisations or agencies
- a not-for-profit arm of for-profit organisations.

Payments available to hosts depend on the type of Work for the Dole activity. Information relating to the different types of activities and the available payment amounts are discussed in more detail later in this handbook.

There are various program requirements that must be met as outlined in this handbook. It is essential your organisation fully understands these requirements before committing to hosting an activity.

Host Organisation

As a Work for the Dole host, you will provide work-like experiences, with supervision and on-the-job training. Where possible, you will assist participants to develop some or all the core competencies identified by the Jobs and Skills Australia (teamwork, initiative and innovation, planning and organising, oral communication, digital engagement, reading, writing, problem solving, learning and numeracy). Further information on core competencies is available at www.jobsandskills.gov.au.

Hosts are also encouraged to work with providers to include the opportunity for participants to gain a licence, qualification, micro-credential or other recognised skill as part of the Work for the Dole activity.

It is important to remember, Work for the Dole activities can only take place where it is safe to do so. As a host, you must ensure that your activity meets all relevant work health and safety requirements.

Arranging provider

An arranging provider will work with you (the host) throughout the duration of your Work for the Dole activity. Other providers (non-arranging providers) may refer participants on their caseload to your activity, but you will only deal with the arranging provider, unless you organise otherwise.

The arranging provider holds the Host Organisation Agreement with you and negotiates, signs and updates the Agreement when required. An activity cannot commence, and payments will not be made, without a signed agreement in place.

Arranging providers also conduct an on-site Activity Risk Assessment when sourcing or extending a Work for the Dole activity and pay the Work for the Dole Fees to you. All providers that refer a participant to an activity must conduct a Participant Risk Assessment, whether they are the arranging or non-arranging provider. The Participant Risk Assessment considers any relevant personal circumstances and work restrictions of the participant, including their ability to travel to the activity.

Arranging providers are your key contacts and will work closely with you to resolve any issues that may arise in relation to a Work for the Dole activity.

Participant

If an individual is receiving income support, they usually undertake activities to continue to receive their payments and meet their mutual obligations. Work for the Dole is one of the activities a participant may undertake to meet their mutual obligations.

An individual is eligible to participate in Work for the Dole if they are:

- aged 18 years and over
- in receipt of an income support payment (e.g. JobSeeker Payment); and
- are registered with a Workforce Australia Employment Services Provider.

Participants undertaking a Work for the Dole activity are required to attend and participate in the activity, undertake relevant training, and behave appropriately and safely. It is important that participants are aware that they must immediately inform their provider or host if they have incurred an injury or are feeling unwell.

Participants cannot be required to travel more than 60-90 minutes each way to their Work for the Dole activity and their travel time is based on their individual circumstances. Participants can also access an allowance of \$20.80 per fortnight from Services Australia to help with travel costs. Providers may assist participants with transport to and from an activity. These costs may be eligible for reimbursement under the Employment Fund where the participant is undertaking a Work for the Dole Placement, or the Work for the Dole Projects Fund where the participant is undertaking a Work for the Dole Project.

Participants' requirements differ depending on their age and circumstances. The provider will advise you of what hours per fortnight each participant will take part in your activity. The minimum number of hours for a participant on a Work for the Dole activity is 15 hours per fortnight and the maximum is 50 hours per fortnight. The minimum length of time a participant will be required to be in a Work for the Dole activity is 8 weeks – however this could be longer if the participant and their provider agree it meets the participant's needs. There may also be circumstances when a participant finishes their placement prior to the 8 weeks. For example, if the participant commences a job, receives an exemption from Services Australia, or is no longer in receipt of an income support payment.

Not all participants will be suitable for all activities. Providers need to consider the personal circumstances of a participant before placing them into an activity to ensure a good fit for both the host and the participant.

You do not have to accept a participant referred by a provider if you consider them inappropriate for your activity and you can stop their involvement in your activity at any time. Advise your arranging provider of the decision so they can assist to fill the vacated activity place.

As gaining employment is their most important goal, participants are expected to attend job interviews or job placements as a higher priority to their attendance at a Work for the Dole activity. If this occurs, they are required to notify their provider or host as soon as possible.

The department

Work for the Dole runs nationally through providers. The Deed and Guidelines between the department and these organisations outline services to be delivered and the requirements and obligations of providers.

Work for the Dole activities

Types of activities

There are 2 types of Work for the Dole activities.

Work for the Dole Placements have a single participant, or multiple participants, doing individual but similar tasks in one or more locations. Generally, a placement activity sits within the existing structure of the host organisation. An example of a placement activity is retail work in the day-to-day operation of an op shop.

Work for the Dole Projects are specific community projects to provide a work-like experience for a group of participants working as a team to meet a common goal or deliverable. An example of a Project activity is the development or restoration of a community garden area.

There are many tasks that can be undertaken by a participant. These tasks need to be safe, not replace the duties of a paid worker and contribute to the community.

A Work for the Dole activity can operate outside normal business hours if the participant, host and the arranging provider agree.

Prohibited Work for the Dole activities

Work for the Dole activities cannot include tasks that:

- are in Early Childhood Education settings such as childcare and early learning or preschools
- require the participant to undertake activities remotely (i.e., all aspects of activities must be undertaken in person at the activity location)
- involve personal/intimate care of people. This includes dressing, showering, feeding, toileting, or professional services that require a professional registration to practice (counselling, social work etc)
- result in a benefit or gain to the provider, or would fund any operations, activities, or infrastructure of the provider
- involve work which would have been undertaken by a paid worker if the Work for the Dole activity had not taken place
- primarily promote a particular religious or political view
- might bring the Work for the Dole Program, the provider or the department into disrepute
- are otherwise not allowed under any Guidelines or by any advice provided by the department.

Some activities cannot be undertaken without the department's written approval prior to the activity commencing. These are activities that:

- are an Indigenous specific activity involving tasks for a family member
- have a residential or overnight accommodation component.

Activities on private property

Work for the Dole participants cannot enter or work on private property unless the department has provided written approval before the activity starts.

If the department provides approval to undertake a Work for the Dole activity on private property, your organisation will need Public Liability insurance. The insurance must be obtained on an occasion basis and have a limit of cover of at least \$20 million in respect of any one occasion. This insurance will cover the liability of the lessor or owner of the land on which the activity takes place.

Community Support Projects

A Work for the Dole activity can be designed to help a community recover from a disaster event or to assist with nationally significant projects that provide social, economic, environmental, cultural or heritage benefit to the Australian community. These can only occur if the department has agreed in writing before the activity starts.

These types of activities are specifically known as Community Support Projects (CSPs), and they can:

- respond to and assist the recovery from declared natural disasters
- assist not-for-profit and volunteer organisations supporting affected communities
- support local residents and assist rebuilding of the local economy
- provide logistical support to emergency services personnel in areas such as food preparation, delivery of clothing, maintenance of emergency services accommodation and infrastructure
- respond to other events or identified tasks that positively impact on communities
- assist the community where there is an identified need for a coordinated national activity and human resources, and finances are limited.

CSPs should not compete with the work of, or replace the roles of, specialised emergency services such as a State Emergency Service.

A CSP can be either a Work for the Dole Placement or a Work for the Dole Project.

Indigenous specific Work for the Dole activities

Hosts can establish Indigenous specific Work for the Dole activities as either placements or projects that:

- have an Indigenous host and/or are for the benefit of an Indigenous community
- are linked to community goals
- help support achievable and meaningful career pathways for Indigenous participants.

Indigenous specific Work for the Dole activities are not restricted to only Indigenous participants, as non-Indigenous participants can also contribute.

Setting up activities

Host Organisation Agreement

A Host Organisation Agreement is a written and signed document between your organisation and the arranging provider. The agreement sets out the arrangements for the Work for the Dole activity and must be signed before the start of each Work for the Dole activity.

The Host Organisation Agreement includes the agreed timeframes for passing on payments to your organisation (for example, when documentary evidence is provided by your organisation to the provider). The agreement may also outline any transport arrangements provided for participants to and from activities, arranged by the provider or your organisation.

Your organisation may wish to obtain its own legal advice prior to signing a Host Organisation Agreement.

Insurance

As a host, you will need to ensure you have and maintain current and appropriate insurance to cover any risks associated with the tasks being undertaken on the activity. The insurance will cover your liability and the liability of your officers, employees, representatives, and agents – including to participants. Further details of insurance requirements for hosts are outlined in the Host Organisation Agreement.

The department has purchased insurance to cover participants while they are undertaking Work for the Dole activities. Details of this insurance are available at www.dewr.gov.au/insurance-arrangements-employment-services-activities.

Work Health and Safety

Requirements

The host of a Work for the Dole activity has the same work health and safety responsibilities for participants as it does for employees, volunteers, or members of the public. As work health and safety is a priority, you must ensure your workplace and the activity meet all work health and safety obligations under relevant legislation.

Hosts must ensure activities are run in a safe manner, while also meeting rules set by local authorities. Hosts also have the responsibility to ensure participants comply with local health advice and take appropriate action if a participant is suspected to have an infectious disease.

It is essential to work with providers in relation to risk assessments and other related safety matters. There are specific requirements a host must meet including:

- complying with state or territory work health and safety laws
- always having a safe system of work in place at the activity
- appropriately managing work health and safety issues that arise, including potential exposure to infectious diseases
- providing an environment free of bullying and harassment
- taking all reasonable care to avoid the risk of harm to participants
- providing correct and sufficient instruction, training, and supervision to participants to undertake the activity safely and effectively
- providing suitable facilities and equipment, e.g. drinking water, shade, toilets, any required Personal protection equipment (PPE), clothing and materials
- ensuring participants follow any instructions and work systems in place, which include reporting hazards, accidents and incidents to their supervisors as soon as they occur
- immediately report any incident at the activity to your arranging provider
- keeping information and records about work safety, including incident reports and training records as required by law.

Refer to your relevant state or territory authority to find information about your obligations, managing risks and work health and safety.

To support and provide a safe work environment, you must make a First Aid Kit available for each location an activity takes place.

The arranging provider must ensure (in consultation with you) that each participant is equipped with any PPE that is required to participate safely in the activity. The need for PPE **must** be identified in the risk assessment process and outlined in the Host Organisation Agreement. It must be specified in the Agreement who will supply the relevant PPE (the arranging provider, the non-arranging provider, or you).

Activity Risk Assessment

Before an activity can be approved or started, the arranging provider will conduct an on-site risk assessment of the activity, called an Activity Risk Assessment. Risk assessments are conducted by a 'competent person' who has the knowledge and skills required to carry out risk assessments and other specific work health and safety tasks as set out in the Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act.

The Activity Risk Assessment should identify:

- all potential hazards at the activity
- the risks involved with the activity
- the measures that must be taken to address those risks
- consideration of tasks to be undertaken and the supervision required.

If an activity involves more than one location, an on-site Activity Risk Assessment must be conducted for each location where the activity will occur and must be kept up to date.

If an Activity Risk Assessment identifies significant work health and safety concerns that cannot be addressed to create a safe working environment or be adequately managed by the host or the arranging provider, the activity must not go ahead. Risks to personal safety should be addressed and controlled as part of the Activity Risk Assessment.

After the activity starts, you **must** immediately inform the arranging provider of any proposed or actual changes to the activity or tasks being undertaken including supervision arrangements. It is essential that you notify the arranging provider if you are hosting activities with other arranging providers, where there is a shared supervision arrangement in place across activities. This allows each provider to review their Risk Assessments to ensure the activity is still suitable.

Participant Risk Assessment

The relevant provider will arrange for a competent person to undertake a risk assessment for each participant before they start in an activity. This is called a Participant Risk Assessment. Each participant will be assessed against the Activity Risk Assessment to ensure the activity is appropriate and safe for them. The participant's circumstances, work restrictions and any required checks will be considered as part of the Participant Risk Assessment. As with the Activity Risk Assessment, risks to personal safety should be addressed and controlled as part of the Participant Risk Assessment.

Driving vehicles at an activity

Work for the Dole participants can only drive vehicles as part of an activity if **all** the following criteria are met:

- the vehicle is:
 - registered with the relevant state or territory authority
 - appropriately insured for third party personal injury and property damage
 - well maintained.
- the owner of the vehicle consents to the participant driving it
- the participant confirms they are legally licensed to drive the vehicle and their licence has been sighted by the supervisor/host
- it is determined through the risk assessment process that it is suitable for the participant to drive the vehicle
- there is appropriate and adequate supervision
- appropriate work health and safety arrangements/training are put in place (for example, well displayed traffic management plans, clear arrangements on how vehicles are to be used).

Accident/Incident during a Work for the Dole activity

You **must** (in accordance with your Host Organisation Agreement) advise the relevant arranging provider in writing as soon as possible and on the same day, of any incidents and/or near misses during the activity (including travel to, from or during the activity). This includes those that result in an accident, injury or death of:

- any participant
- any personnel involved in the delivery or supervision of the activity
- members of the public.

Note: Incidents required to be reported include potential mental health incidents such as dealing with a difficult participant or a member of the public.

Depending on the incident, you may also need to notify the relevant state or territory work health and safety regulator. The definition of a 'Notifiable Incident' varies across jurisdictions, but the following types of incidents will always be notifiable:

- the death of a person
- a serious injury or illness of a person
- a dangerous incident.

In circumstances where you or your staff have information that a person (participant, supervisor, volunteer) at a Work for the Dole activity may have an infectious disease or has been in contact with someone confirmed to have an infectious disease, you should ensure that the person adheres to the current local health advice.

Third parties on activities

It is essential that a Work for the Dole activity is a work-like environment. The arrival of third parties, such as family and friends to the activity, needs to be in line with what would be appropriate to a work-like environment. Any third parties attending the activity are required to always abide by work safe practices in place at the site.

Supervision

Supervisor requirements

The role of the supervisor is critical to the success of a Work for the Dole activity. Supervisors are responsible for managing the overall running of the activity in collaboration with the arranging provider.

Work for the Dole participants must always be supervised in an effective and appropriate manner. Your arranging provider will work with you before the activity starts to ensure appropriate and effective supervision can be provided for the activity.

Supervisors need to have a high level of skill, knowledge, training and experience in the part of the activity in which they are engaged. They need to have relevant work health and safety training, have passed any required checks (e.g. Working with Vulnerable People) and met any additional statutory requirements before being given responsibility for supervising participants.

It is important for a supervisor to ensure activities provide participants with the opportunity to develop the core competencies identified for the activity and the delivery of training as agreed in the Host Organisation Agreement.

Other key responsibilities include:

- ensuring appropriate work health and safety provisions are accessible throughout the activity
- ensuring there are safe systems of work for the overall activity and the health and safety of participants, which may include managing challenging or inappropriate behaviours
- helping participants develop skills employers seek
- providing a supportive environment for participants and helping them build relationships with others in the organisation
- having good lines of communication for participants to give and receive feedback
- encouraging and recognising participants' contribution to the organisation
- assisting the participant to connect with the community.

Any change in supervisor arrangements during the activity (for example, if a new supervisor is introduced, or a supervisor is away) needs to be communicated to your arranging provider as soon as possible in writing (this may include via email or text message). Any new arrangement needs to meet the supervision requirements, or the Work for the Dole activity cannot go ahead.

Supervision ratios

Your arranging provider will work with you to put in place the appropriate ratio of supervisors to participants that best fits the tasks at the Work for the Dole activity, identified during the risk assessment process.

Providers and hosts should carefully consider the appropriate ratio of supervisors to participants, depending on the number of participants there are and the nature of the activity taking place. The number of supervisors required to effectively run and supervise a Work for the Dole activity depends on a variety of factors, including the number of participants and their individual circumstances, the supervisors' experience and the type of tasks being undertaken at the activity.

If participants are working with people classified as 'vulnerable', the participants must be alongside the supervisor, or always within the supervisor's line of sight. If appropriate supervision is not in place, the activity must not proceed or continue.

Monitoring and recording attendance

It is important to support participants to have a work-like experience as part of their Work for the Dole activity. As with all workplaces, attendance is important and is part of participants meeting their mutual obligation requirements.

Participants must have their attendance recorded every day and this is done through the department's IT system. A unique passcode or QR code will be generated for each activity, each day. This code will be sent to the activity's supervisor who needs to make these details available to the participants so they can record their own attendance via the Job Seeker App or the department's website. If an activity runs for more than four hours, the system will create two distinct codes and send these to the supervisor. The participant will need both codes for their attendance to be recorded and their full requirements met. If you require assistance with the passcodes or QR codes, you can call 1300 305 520.

Most participants will be responsible for recording their own attendance at Work for the Dole activities. Prior to attending an activity, if a participant can record their own attendance, their provider will have discussed this requirement with them. There will be times when participants can record their own attendance but are unable to, for example, if they have forgotten their phone. They must still report their attendance to their provider or to the activity supervisor to ensure their participation has been recorded for that day.

Where participants are unable to record their own attendance, your organisation is responsible for making sure your supervisors keep accurate timesheets for the attendance of each Work for the Dole participant. The timesheets can be either manual or via the Supervisor Mobile App. Information on how to use the Supervisor Mobile App is available at www.dewr.gov.au/work-dole.

Inductions

Supervisors should provide an induction to all new participants on Work for the Dole activities. Along with covering work health and safety requirements and expectations of the participants and tasks, supervisors may also like to consider including information about the host including any uniform or clothing requirements, communication protocols, emergency contact details, designated smoking areas (if relevant), use and care of property and any additional information that would be useful for the participant to know before they commence the activity.

Funding

Work for the Dole Placement Fees

At as 1 July 2025, the Work for the Dole Placement Fee is \$534 per participant commencement. The arranging provider must pass on at least \$267 of this fee to you, as the host.

A Work for the Dole Placement Fee is paid upon commencement of a participant in an activity. These fees can only be used to help offset the costs of your organisation providing Work for the Dole activities.

Your arranging provider will discuss Work for the Dole funding available to assist you to set up your activity. They must clearly explain the amount of payments available to hosts and include these agreed amounts in the Host Organisation Agreement.

Work for the Dole Project Funding

Work for the Dole Projects Fund

Project funding is allocated to providers. It supports costs directly relating to an approved Work for the Dole Project including supervision, equipment, resources and other operational costs and training.

Providers can select how many projects they would like to operate with their allocated funding based on their caseload in a particular employment region. Project funding is allocated every financial year to the providers by employment region and additional funding can be requested where there is a demonstrated need.

Budget

Providers and hosts collaborate to operate projects within the agreed budget, to ensure project expenditure does not exceed the provider's allocated funding for a particular employment region.

A project budget details all costs associated with an activity, including supervision, PPE for participants, materials for the project, rent, and training for participants.

As Work for the Dole Projects funding is allocated per financial year and cannot be carried over into the following financial year, this means that Projects can only operate within a financial year i.e., the start and end date within the same financial year. If you wish to continue the project beyond 30 June, you must discuss this with the arranging provider.

Advance Payment

To assist with upfront projects costs, Work for the Dole Project funding can be claimed up to 28 calendar days in advance of the project commencement date and any time until the project end date.

Arranging providers can claim up to 80% of the budget for each Work for the Dole Project.

Acquittal

All project expenditure must be acquitted and it is essential that records are kept as evidence for the acquittal process.

An acquittal statement is supported by documentary evidence (such as receipts) demonstrating taxpayer funds have been spent appropriately and against the approved budget.

In accordance with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (Cth)*, the arranging provider submits one acquittal report for all the Work for the Dole Projects per employment region, for each acquittal period.

Acquittal periods

There are two acquittal periods per financial year; the interim acquittal period is from 1 July to 31 December and the final acquittal reporting period is from 1 January to 30 June. Providers must submit an acquittal report to the department for review/approval for each reporting period, per employment region, that includes all Work for the Dole related project expenditure.

Reimbursement or recovery of funds will only occur after the final acquittal at the end of each financial year.

Documentary evidence

The arranging provider must retain written evidence of any changes agreed with the host organisation to the Work for the Dole budget.

To assist the arranging provider with capturing all the information required for an acquittal, hosts must retain expenditure records such as receipts, tax invoices any other acceptable form of evidence relating to Work for the Dole Project expenditure.

Reporting concerns

In the first instance you should discuss any concerns you may have regarding Work for the Dole with your arranging provider. The department is also available to help through the National Customer Service Line on 1800 805 260 (free call from landlines).