

ACT Women's Return to Work Grant Guidelines 2025–26

About the Grant

The ACT Women's Return to Work (RTW) Grants give money to help women with low incomes find steady jobs. The grants help pay for things that might stop them from working, so they can earn their own money and be more independent.

The grant provides:

- Up to \$1,000 for eligible women
- Up to \$2,000 for women in or leaving the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC)

The total funding available under the Return to Work Grants is \$160,000.

Who Can Apply

You can apply if you:

- Identify as a woman (including cisgender, transgender, and non-binary people who identify as women)
- Are 19 years or older, or younger if you support yourself financially
- Live in the ACT or nearby areas (like Queanbeyan, Googong, Bungendore or Yass)
- Plan to work in the ACT or nearby areas
- Have the legal right to work in Australia
- Have a low or no income
- Are:
 - unemployed, or
 - working only a few hours, or
 - in a low-paying job (earning less than \$1,400 per week)
 - have accepted a new job but haven't been paid yet
- Have a clear and realistic plan to get a job within 6 months or after finishing a course

You cannot apply if you:

- Have already received a Return to Work Grant
- Are on maternity leave or other paid/unpaid leave

What the Grant Can Pay For

You can use the grant to pay for things that help you return to work. These include:

- Accredited training or course fees
- Study materials like textbooks or equipment
- Work clothing and shoes
- Childcare costs while studying or working
- Transport to work or study (e.g., public transport, car repairs, driving lessons)
- Digital devices or internet access for job searching or study
- Job readiness costs such as Working With Vulnerable People registration, police checks, or first aid training.

Each item has a spending limit, and the total amount you request must not exceed the grant value. For full details and item limits, please see: **Return to Work Grants – Item Limits and Conditions** (available on the RTW Grants webpage).

What the Grant Cannot Pay For

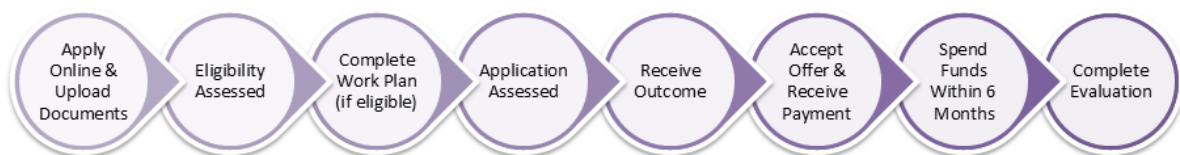
The grant cannot be used for:

- Anything not related to your return to work
- Items already paid for
- Furniture, household goods, or health-related items
- Starting a business or self-employment costs

How to Apply

1. Apply online through SmartyGrants: <https://dhcs.smartygrants.com.au/2526RTW>
2. Answer questions about your situation and upload documents like:
 - Photo ID
 - Proof of address
 - Centrelink Low Income Health Care Card or Services Access Card (please note we do not accept Pensioner Concession Cards)
 - Letter from a support worker (if needed)
 - Course enrolment confirmation (if studying)
3. If eligible, you'll be sent an email and asked to complete a **Work Plan Form** to explain:
 - Your job goal
 - How the grant will help you get there.

Overview of the Return to Work Grant application process



Assessment Process

All applications will be assessed by the Office for Women. We look at whether you meet the eligibility criteria and how clear and realistic your plan is to return to work.

Work Plan Requirement

If your application is assessed as eligible by the Office for Women, you'll be sent an email asking you to complete a **Work Plan Form**. This is a very important part of the process. It helps us understand:

- what kind of job or work you want to do
- what steps you'll take to get there (for example, training, job searching, or gaining experience)
- how the items you're asking to pay for with the grant will help you return to work.

You should only apply if you already know what kind of work you want to do. You should also know how you will work towards this. Your plan does not need to be perfect, but it should be clear and possible to follow. You are not locked into this plan. You can change it as your interests and situation change.

If you're not sure what kind of job you want or how to get started, we recommend speaking with a career advisor or support service before applying. There is a list of services that may be able to help you available on the RTW Grants SmartyGrants Application webpage (**Employment Support for Women in Canberra handout**).

What We Look For

When we assess your application, we consider whether:

- you meet the eligibility criteria
- your Work Plan shows a clear and realistic path to employment
- the items you're asking for will genuinely help you return to work
- there is funding available.

We want to support as many women as possible, but funding is limited.

Important to Know

Even if you meet all the eligibility criteria, you may not receive a grant. We receive many applications, and we prioritise those that:

- show a strong and clear plan to return to work
- request items that are directly linked to that plan
- are ready to take the next step toward employment.

We aim to be fair and transparent in our decisions. If you're not successful, you're welcome to apply again in the future if your circumstances change.

Behavioural Expectations

- **Respect and Privacy:** HCSD staff and the RTW Team will always be respectful and keep your personal information private.
- **Applicant Behaviour:** You must behave respectfully and courteously. If you don't, you may get warnings or be ineligible for the grant.

If You're Approved

If your application is approved:

- you will receive a Letter of Offer which will detail the grant amount and approved items
- you must accept the offer and provide your bank details within 30 days
- payment will be made to your bank account.

Spending the Grant

You must spend the money within 6 months on the approved items.

Acquittal and Evaluation

After you have spent the funding and within 6 months of receiving the grant, you'll be asked to complete a short **Evaluation Survey** about how the grant helped you. This helps us improve the program and share success stories (with your permission). You will be emailed this form and complete it through SmartyGrants using the same login you used to submit the application and workplan.

Need Help?

If you have questions or need help with your application, contact:

Office for Women: HCSDRTW@act.gov.au

Additional Support Resources

If you are experiencing challenges such as housing insecurity, financial stress, domestic or family violence, or need help finding work, there are services that can support you.

- Support Services for Women in Canberra
- Employment Support for Women in Canberra

These handouts include contact details for free and low-cost services in the ACT region. They are available on the RTW Grants SmartyGrants Application webpage.