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Information about the Rural Financial Counselling Service in Victoria



This fact sheet provides background information on the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) in Victoria for entities interested in submitting an application for the 2016 to 2019 merit-based competitive grants round.

About the Rural Financial Counselling Service

Since 1986, the Department of Agriculture has been funding the RFCS to provide free, financial counselling services nationally to farmers, fishing enterprises and small, related businesses suffering financial hardship.

The main services offered by counsellors are to assist and support an eligible client to:

- understand his or her financial position and the viability of his or her enterprise
- identify options to improve their financial position
- develop and implement a business plan.

Under the RFCS 2016 to 2019 grants round, forest growers and harvesters will also be eligible for this service. From April 2016, the RFCS will operate in 12 regions across Australia.

The 2016 to 2019 grants round

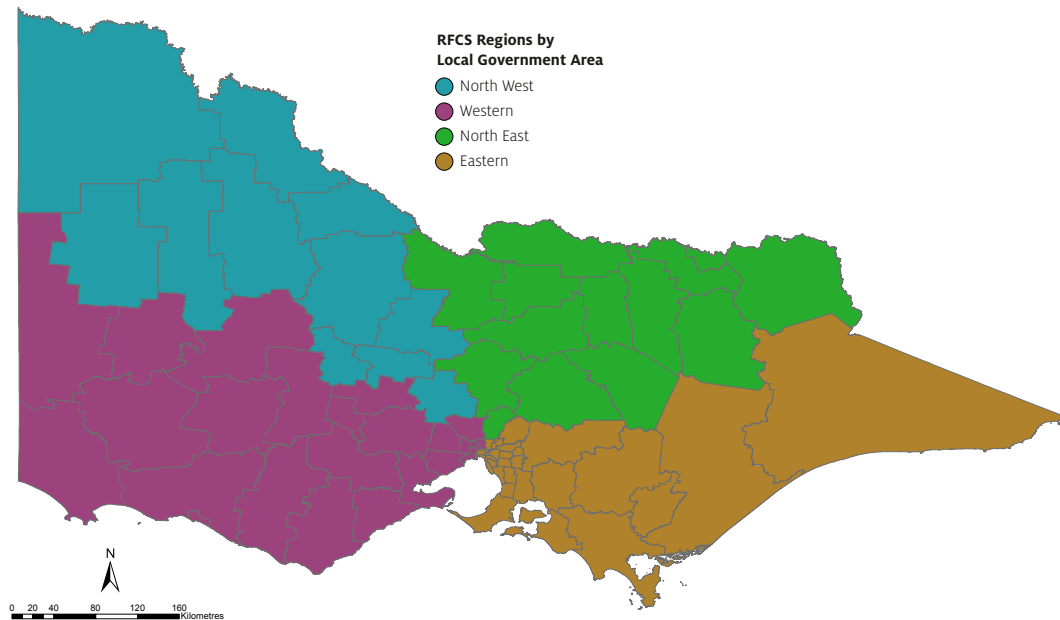
The RFCS 2016 to 2019 merit-based competitive grants round is open to entities wishing to deliver the RFCS on a not-for-profit basis. The grants round is open until midday (AEDT) 16 October 2015. An assessment panel, comprising federal and state government officials, will assess applications. The panel will recommend eligible applicants to the Australian Government Minister for Agriculture for final decision.

Current providers have had their contracts extended to 31 March 2016 to ensure a smooth transition between providers, if required. Any new providers will start in January 2016 but will not begin delivering the new RFCS programme until 1 April 2016. This will give them time to familiarise themselves with their regions and clients.

There will be no interruption to the RFCS clients during this transition and services will continue as usual.

Key points

- Rural financial counsellors support farmers, fishing enterprises, forest growers and harvesters, and small, related businesses suffering financial hardship.
- The new grants round is open to entities qualified to deliver the RFCS on a not-for-profit basis.
- The grants round is open until midday (AEDT) 16 October 2015.
- For further information on the RFCS grants round please visit agriculture.gov.au/rfcs or phone 1800 686 175.



Farming in Victoria

From April 2016, Victoria will have four RFCS regions. A more detailed map of the new Victorian RFCS regions and associated local government areas can be found on the Department of Agriculture's website.

Region	Kilometres of rural productive land	Number of farm businesses
Victoria North West	45 615 km ²	4 500
Victoria Western	53 586 km ²	7 000
Victoria North East	34 370 km ²	4 900
Victoria Eastern	28 424 km ²	4 460

The main agriculture industries are:

- beef producers (8 200 enterprises)
- dairy producers (4 700 enterprises)
- sheep producers (3 800 enterprises)
- grain growers (2 400 enterprises)
- mixed grain livestock farmers (2 200 enterprises)
- fisher enterprises (500 enterprises).

Approximate numbers from the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences, Farm Survey Results, 30 June 2014.

Forest enterprises are mainly located to the east of the Hume Highway and in southwest Victoria near Warrnambool. There are small pockets of forestry around Ballarat.

Current client numbers in Victoria

There are currently approximately 36 counsellors servicing 870 clients in Victoria.

Region	Number of RFCS clients	Number of rural financial counsellors	Full-time equivalent counsellors
Victoria North West	290	13	10.5
Victoria Western	300	7	5.8
Victoria North East	150	11	7.9
Victoria Eastern	130	5	4.4
Victoria Total	870	36	28.6

RFCS regions will change in the new grants round; therefore, these numbers are indicative only.



Phone
1800 686 175

Postal Address
18 Marcus Clarke Street, Canberra City ACT 2601



agriculture.gov.au/rfcs