



Royal Australasian  
**College of Surgeons**

# **STP Rural Support Loading Guidelines**

Specialist Training Program  
(2022-2025)

25 February 2022

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## Introduction

The Specialist Training Program (STP) seeks to extend vocational training for specialist registrars into settings outside traditional metropolitan teaching hospitals, including regional, rural and remote locations.

In recognition of the additional costs associated with training in regional, rural and remote locations, the STP provides a Rural Support Loading (RSL) funding component for each eligible core STP post. RSL aims to reduce some of the barriers for health settings hosting trainees in regional, rural and remote locations. Eligible training settings (the location of the training) must be in a Modified Monash Model (MM) 2-7 location.

The Department of Health has established a maximum RSL funding allocation of up to \$25,000 (GST exclusive) per annum per post and is paid pro-rata. For example, if 0.5 FTE of a post is located in a rural location, only 0.5 RSL for that post should be paid or if a post is not filled to the full FTE originally approved under the STP only a pro-rata amount of the RSL can be made.

### RSL ELIGIBILITY SUMMATION

1. Must be in a MM 2 – 7 location.
2. Position must be 0.5FTE or greater, and
3. Position must be filled for 3 months or greater to be eligible for claim

### CONTACT RACS STP

If you are ever unsure if your claim is eligible, please send the invoice and/or detail to RACS STP and we will provide guidance for you.

Phone: 03 9249 1283

Email: [stp.admin@surgeons.org](mailto:stp.admin@surgeons.org)

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## Claiming RSL Funds

To receive the RSL the Participant's expenditure must be reported to RACS at the end of each surgical term through the Progress Reporting process. The Progress Report submission due dates can be found in Schedule 1 of your Funding Agreement.

Invoices, receipts and any other evidence are not required upon submission, however, all receipts and documentation relating to this claim must be held in the event of future audit.

Whilst the funding allocation is distributed per surgical term (\$12,500 term 1 for example) RACS provides flexibility to Participants to manage their Rural Support Loading funding as required for each position providing the total funds expended for the full training year do not exceed the total allocation scheduled (as listed in Schedule 2 of your Funding Agreement) and is expended in compliance with the guidelines provided by the Department.

Should a Participant claim excess Rural Loading in (for example) surgical term 1 and the post is then vacant in surgical term 2, RACS reserves the right to request a reimbursement of the excess funds paid. A post that was vacant in surgical term 1 and filled in surgical term 2, the Participant is only eligible to claim the allocated funds for surgical term 2.

STP funds not claimed in the year will not be carried over into the next training year. Any funds not claimed in that training year by the due dates outlined in Schedule 2 of your Funding Agreement is deemed unclaimed and no longer available to the Participant.

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## Appropriate use of RSL Funds

RSL funds can be used by health settings for activities that help coordinate the educational development of trainees and/or assist with costs incurred by the trainee. Such as relocation, professional development and program support expenses.

Additionally, and by pre-approval, RSL funds can be used by health settings to improve the facilities and resources (**infrastructure**) utilised by specialty training.

Please seek approval from RACS STP in advance of the activity commencing, if the infrastructure expense is,

- Used for any minor renovations of existing facilities to accommodate specialty training, and/or
- The total expenditure cost for infrastructure exceeds 30% of the total allocated funding for that term.

**COMING SOON** - Please complete a **Planned Infrastructure Expenditure Form** and email to [stp.admin@surgeons.org](mailto:stp.admin@surgeons.org) for review with any other supporting documentation or evidence. RACS STP will provide a response or seek more clarification within two business days.

Once each infrastructure project has been completed an **Infrastructure Completion Report** is required to be submitted with the Progress Reports (or agreed date), accompanied with evidence (invoices). RACS must be satisfied that the projects have been delivered in the manner and to the standard agreed, prior to funds being paid. The Planned Infrastructure Expenditure Forms are available on the [RACS STP website](#) or by request via [stp.admin@surgeons.org](mailto:stp.admin@surgeons.org).

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## Reporting RSL Expenditure

At the time of Progress Reporting the Hospital Liaison will be required to complete a RSL Expenditure Form. As RACS STP is transitioning from paper-based reporting to online reporting, we have not provided templates at this time. We will keep you up to date of our progress and provide instructions (and/or templates) to you at the time of reporting.

When reporting on RSL expenses they must

- Be of an eligible expense item as listed in the tables following this section
- Be listed as exclusive of GST (GST is added on at the time when RACS requests your invoice)
- Be detailed on what was expended

If you are ever unsure if your claim is eligible, please send the invoice and/or detail to RACS STP and we will provide guidance for you.

## EXPENDITURE EVIDENCE

For the majority, invoices, receipts and any other evidence are not required upon submission, except if you have been requested to by RACS prior to the Reporting Period (e.g. [Planned Infrastructure Activities](#)). However, all receipts and documentation relating to this claim must be held in the event of future audit or upon request.

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## Items Eligible for RSL

Item No.	Expense Item	Description
<b>1</b>	<b>Relocation</b>	
1.1	Relocation Expenses	Relocation Costs (household removal, vehicle removal, flights)
1.2	Rental and Utility Expenses	Rent (including pre-accommodation), Utilities (power, electricity, water)
<b>2</b>	<b>Professional Development</b>	
2.1	Professional Development	PD Allowance expenses paid by the hospital setting to the trainee, and/or Costs associated with attendance at education and training activities outside of the health setting such as registration fees, accommodation and travel for the trainee.
2.3	Outreach clinic travel and accommodation support	Travel (flights, car hire, petrol reimbursement) and accommodation expenses associated with outreach clinics as part of specialty training
2.4	Online educational training	On-line courses and resources such as educational training software and relevant online journal access/subscription
<b>3</b>	<b>Infrastructure</b>	
3.1	Training room outfitting	The purchase of specific medical training equipment and textbooks that will be used by trainees
3.2	Office asset equipment purchases	computers, phones, desks, IT equipment and associated facilities that will be used by trainees
3.3	Videoconferencing facilities	The purchase of equipment, installation of and software upgrade costs/renewals.
3.4	Minor renovations of existing facilities to accommodate specialty training	Please contact RACS STP to discuss any planned renovations to determine eligibility.
<b>4</b>	<b>Program Support</b>	
4.1	Initial training post setup	expenditure for initial training post setup, including any costs associated with recruitment and retention

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## Items Ineligible for RSL

Item	Description
Storage	Expenses related to storage of personal goods for trainees who relocate.
International travel for trainees	Any physical attendance at training courses, meetings and conferences held outside of Australia.
Major Capital Works	Major capital works projects involving the construction of new facilities, including as a funding contribution towards the total cost of larger capital projects, or as a funding contribution towards the purchase of substantial medical equipment used in service delivery rather than specifically for training;
Supervisor Expenses	Supervisor travel and accommodation, professional development and salary
Accreditation costs	Direct costs associated with specialist medical college accreditation or any costs related to STP Funding Applications (New Post Process).
General and ongoing operational expenses	the use of funding to contribute to general health setting operational expenses such as administration, salaries, training courses or ongoing building maintenance costs
Locum costs	Costs of covering the trainee's position whilst they are travelling are ineligible
Office consumables	the purchase of office consumables and other recurrent items such as stationery and printer cartridges, recurrent telephone line and rental costs, including phone call costs, and uniforms and cleaning products;
Hospital consumables	Hospital consumables used in the treatment of patients
Mandatory Program and Membership Fees	Annual RACS Training and Examinations Fees (including RACS Membership) and Specialty Society Memberships
Recreational Equipment	Examples: electronic gaming consoles and games/software, sporting equipment