



fresh ideas



FRESH IDEAS FOR WORK AND FAMILY GRANTS

The Australian Government has introduced the Fresh Ideas for Work and Family grants program to help small businesses put in place flexible work arrangements.

The program provides grants for \$5,000 to \$15,000 (GST inclusive) to successful small businesses to put in place family friendly arrangements that suit the individual needs of their business.

In addition, the program supports small businesses through:

- developing and distributing business and industry specific information to assist in implementing family friendly work arrangements
- having experts within Fair Work Australia from January 2010, to provide assistance in setting up family friendly work arrangements

The program is administered in funding rounds by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The opening and closing dates of each funding round are available from www.deewr.gov.au/freshideas, or by calling the Workplace Infoline on **1300 363 264**.

WHAT IS MEANT BY FAMILY FRIENDLY WORK ARRANGEMENTS AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE?

Family friendly work arrangements are practices or resources that make the workplace more flexible and help employees have a better work-life balance. They are designed to support employees in balancing their work and family responsibilities, including looking after dependent children and family members with disabilities or those who are elderly.

Work-life balance means achieving a balance in an employee's life that includes work, family, friends, health, relaxation, cultural and community activities and socialisation.

Some examples of family friendly work arrangements include:

- establishing rosters based on school terms and alternative core hours, for example, 10am to 3pm
- establishing quality part-time work or job-sharing opportunities
- developing policies regarding unpaid leave for employees who care for children with disabilities, elderly relatives or people with other special needs
- providing facilities such as family rooms for employees with young children
- establishing a workplace mentoring program

More ideas for effective family friendly work arrangements can be found at www.deewr.gov.au/freshideas.

CASE STUDY: Carman's Fine Foods—Melbourne, VIC

Carman's Fine Foods is well known for its family friendly environment. Its factory provides a 'kids room' with a sick bed, television, DVD player, games machine and computer to accommodate children who are ill or on school holidays. Carolyn Creswell, says: 'We have a flexible work environment so that parents can work around attending school assemblies, sports days and such'.

HOW CAN MY BUSINESS BENEFIT?

Family friendly work arrangements benefit both employers and employees. Employers benefit from improved efficiency, increased staff retention and better health and safety. Employees enjoy increased job satisfaction, reduced health issues and better work-life balance.

Advantages of using family friendly and flexible work arrangements include:

Staff attraction and retention

A small business with family friendly work arrangements can help attract and retain employees, including those who are not currently working. Research shows that mature age job seekers, people with caring commitments and workers with disabilities are more likely to seek jobs with flexible work arrangements. Increased staff retention can also reduce costs associated with employee turnover.

Improved productivity

Your small business may become more productive and efficient when employees are comfortable with their work and family responsibilities. Flexible work arrangements can help maintain and increase motivation, reduce stress levels, increase morale and improve occupational health and safety in the workplace.

National Work-Life Balance Awards

Your small business can receive recognition as an employer of choice. Small businesses with family friendly work arrangements may be eligible to apply for a 2009 National Work-Life Balance Award. Award winners will be given a winners symbol to use for three years to attract employees.

For more information on why family friendly work arrangements are good for your business, visit

www.deewr.gov.au/freshideas.



WHO CAN APPLY FOR A GRANT?

Applications will be accepted from:

- Small businesses in Australia with fewer than 15 employees
- Not-for-profit and non-government organisations.
- Consortia of small businesses
- Sole traders and incorporated sole traders that employ between 1 and 14 employees

The following businesses are not eligible for assistance:

- Small businesses that have already received government funding for the same or a similar project
- Small businesses that are in insolvency administration

HOW DO I APPLY FOR A GRANT?

To apply for a Fresh Ideas for Work and Family grant, you should read the Guidelines for Applicants and complete an application form, both of which are available at www.deewr.gov.au/freshideas.

You do not need to have family friendly work arrangements in place already in order to be eligible to receive funding. Eligible businesses can apply for funding at all stages of development of family friendly initiatives.

Selection criteria

Applicants are required to address the following selection criteria in the application form:

- What kind of discussions have you had with your employees when developing your family friendly arrangements?
- How will your family friendly arrangements suit the specific needs of your business and create work-life balance for your employees?
- How will your family friendly arrangements benefit your business and employees?
- How will you demonstrate commitment to the ongoing development of your family friendly arrangement after the grant has ceased?

CASE STUDY: TakeABreak—Canberra, ACT

Presented with a high commendation in the 2007 National Work and Family Awards, TakeABreak operates a website providing accommodation and booking services. The business has a vision of creating a genuinely good place to work, where family friendly work arrangements are intrinsically linked to business success. The business provides for working from home arrangements, flexible leave options and the ability to bring children to work in emergencies. Benefits for the business include an increase in profits and industry recognition.

Completed application forms must be sent by the closing date of the relevant funding round via one of the following:

Fax: (02) 6123 5413

Post: Fresh Ideas for Work and Family Program
(LC 10M33)

Department of Education, Employment and
Workplace Relations
GPO Box 9880
CANBERRA ACT 2601



CASE STUDY: MBC Employment Solutions— Wollongong NSW

Recognising the value of retaining staff with experience and knowledge of their business activities and the costs when new staff must be employed, MBC Employment Services embraced flexible working hours for their staff seven years ago.

The company offered flexible working hours to a staff member to allow her to return to work after starting a family. It was received so well by the company, family and employee that a further four staff members have taken up similar flexible working arrangements since then.

The Director of MBC Employment Solutions, Michele Greig, says: “By providing a flexible working environment our organisation has happy employees, their skills are kept current and they are able to spend quality time with their family and enjoy financial independence”.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

An independent panel will assess all applications and provide recommendations to the Department on applicants that should receive funding.

If your application is successful you will be sent a letter of offer which will detail the next steps in obtaining funding for your family friendly arrangement.

Funding will be provided in two instalments with 75 per cent paid up front and the remaining 25 per cent paid once your family friendly arrangement is implemented.

HOW CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

Further information on the program, copies of the application form, Guidelines for Applicants and Terms and Conditions can be found at www.deewr.gov.au/freshideas.

Information is also available by calling the Workplace Infoline on 1300 363 264 or by emailing FIWF@deewr.gov.au.