



Vic Kids Eat Well incentive grants

A case study from Gateway Health's Health Promotion Team

Using grants as an engagement strategy to promote healthy eating for children.

<p>Aim</p>	<p>To increase registrations and encourage local Outside School Hours Care (OHSC) participation in the state wide Vic Kids Eat Well program (VKEW).</p>
<p>Rationale</p>	<p>According to both the Victorian Cancer Council and a number of Victorian community health organisations who are implementing Vic Kids Eat Well, if budget allows, an incentives program can work well for initial engagement and participation in VKEW.</p> <p>A barrier for providing healthier food options in some settings can be not having the equipment or funds to prepare food in a healthier way. For example, having funds to purchase an air fryer can help an OHSC provide healthier food options.</p> <p>The team created an incentive program to target OSHC providers in both Wangaratta and Wodonga. This setting (as opposed to schools and sporting clubs) was chosen based on budget constraints, and the opportunity to expand into a setting the team hadn't worked with before.</p>
<p>Links to state policy/initiatives</p>	<p>Vic Kids Eat Well, Cancer Council Victoria</p>
<p>Resources</p>	<p>The team developed a one-page flyer and one-page application form that was sent to all OSHC providers in Wangaratta and Wodonga.</p>
<p>Outcomes</p>	<p>Eight grant applications were received, and all eight met the criteria and were successful. The grants were used for worm farms, healthy eating resources and for buying cooking equipment.</p>



The story

Vic Kids Eat Well is a state-wide program designed to support schools, OSHC, sports clubs, and a wide range of community organisations to offer healthier food and drink options.

Health promotion coordinators from Community Health organisations across the state support implementation of the program. The program has been developed by Cancer Council Victoria and their staff offer support in delivering the program to both health promotion coordinators and community settings.

A number of Local Government Areas (LGAs) have experienced low uptake and participation in the program. A barrier for some settings is not having the equipment or funds to do things in a healthier way. For example, having funds to pay for an air fryer can help them meet a 'small/big bite' areas of the program. To address this concern, a number of LGAs implemented an incentives program to fund health promoting activities or purchasing cooking equipment for settings when they register and/or have the first meeting and/or start work towards a 'bite'.

In designing the Gateway Health VKEW incentives program, staff spoke with representatives from the following Community Health organisations about their experience implementing an incentive program:

- La Trobe Community Health Service (metro)
- Sunraysia Community Health Services (regional)
- Bass Coast Health (regional)
- Connect Health and Community (metro)

Information was collated on how they implemented the program, the criteria used, registration rate and whether they deemed the program successful. Feedback was also sought from North Eastern Victoria Region Department of Education Outside School Hours Care division who provided up to date information about local OSHC services.

Gateway Health decided to focus on delivering the program to OSHC providers in Wodonga & Wangaratta. We hadn't worked with these OSHC providers before and this was a good opportunity for us to build relationships and to partner with them.

Implementation

A database was created to map all OSHC in both LGAs. This involved both desktop audit and individual calls to schools. There are 21 OSHC services operating across both LGAs.

A one-page flyer and one-page application was sent to all OSHC providers, follow up calls were made to all providers. This application process was designed to be very quick and easy for services to complete. OSHC providers could apply for a \$200 grant for each site they provide registered OSHC at.

The application asked information on what the service was currently doing to support and promote healthy eating and what the grant will be used for. Suggestions included: building a worm farm, supporting the kitchen garden, running education sessions or purchasing educational resources, cooking programs, acquiring new appliances to enable healthy food, such as an air fryer.

Incentive program criteria

OSHC providers were required to register with the VKEW program and meet with health promotion staff to complete a 'baseline survey'. The provider had to aim to achieve one small bite by the end of 2023 and were to use the \$200 grant to support and promote healthy eating within their OSHC service.

Results

Eight applications were received and were successful. There were four applications from each LGA. Grants were used on worm farms, healthy eating resources and for buying cooking equipment such as air fryers.

Reasons reported for not applying included having just received large grants from Department of Education, not being a priority, not needing any equipment, and two services said they would have applied if it didn't involve registering with VKEW.

Finance and acquittal

All successful services were required to invoice Gateway Health. Templates were sent to the services to make this as smooth as possible. Services needed to register with VKEW before invoice was paid.

The acquittal process also involved staff visiting services to take photos of what the grant was used for, and collate some informal feedback about the impact of new equipment and resources.

What did we achieve?

8

Eight grant applications were received from OSHS providers in Wangaratta and Wodonga. All eight applications were successful and received grant funding.

8

All eight providers registered for VKEW, and as of September 2023, four services are actively engaged in progressing with the program. We have assisted one service in gaining Advanced Standing in VKEW to recognise the work they have already completed.

200

Within the four services who are actively engaged, there are around 200 students and their families who are benefiting from being in the VKEW program.

Things to consider for the future:

- Drafting an application package (incl. one-pager and flyer) took a lot longer than anticipated. It is important to factor in ample time for material development.
- It is important to factor in how much time it takes to follow-up on emails with phone calls. This was important as emails would not have been enough.
- There was an emphasis on making it very easy for services to apply, and that VKEW can also contribute to the National Quality Standards for Education Settings, under Quality Area 2, Children's Health and Safety.
- Based on barriers we had in contacting OSHC staff, the one-page application asked for best method and times for staff to be contacted.
- The application process occurred in May/June 2023, and by August, two baseline audits were submitted.
- The incentives program was a good way to engage with settings that hadn't been engaged before. Building relationships with eight of 21 providers was a good result.
- One of the settings that was supported to submit a baseline for VKEW will receive advanced standing for most of VKEW. This means they won't get any of the 'rewards' VKEW offers, so having the grant enables us to provide a reward to these settings to recognise and celebrate their changes.



Wodonga West OSHC using their new worm farm. The farm has diverted over nine kilograms of food waste a week!