Program Guide

NSW Government Graduate Program

2024

www.psc.nsw.gov.au/graduateprogramresources



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The NSW Government Graduate Program offers recent graduates experience, exposure and development with diverse rotations across the sector, strengthening the NSW Government's employee value proposition as an employer of choice for graduates.

Program objectives

The NSW Government Graduate Program is a structured employment and development program, designed to attract and retain talented graduates, build public sector capability and develop a cohort of future leaders.

The program provides graduates with accelerated exposure to the sector, its governing framework and principles and its operations. Graduates will be equipped with transferable skills and a sound understanding of the workings of the NSW public sector.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) works with subject matter experts across the sector to support the expansion of the program. This includes responding to emerging business needs by establishing new functional areas within the Primary stream or designing new occupation-specific streams.

Underpinning principles

- The program targets entry level graduates for each stream.
- The program will provide graduates with a structured and challenging experience intended to develop generic capabilities relevant to working in the public sector, as well as any skills relevant to their professional discipline and organisational needs.
- The program is intended to build long term organisation capabilities and not to be used as a means of addressing short term vacancy pressures.
- Sector commitment determines the number of graduate roles in the program each year.



Benefits to agencies

- Rigorous capability-based assessment approach to select talent
- Access to high calibre talent from diverse backgrounds and disciplines
- Attraction and retention of talent in both Sydney metropolitan and regional NSW
- Targeted exposure through a comprehensive advertising and marketing campaign, raising the profile of NSW Government as an employer of choice
- Targeted university visits including regional locations
- Workshop delivery in both Sydney metropolitan and regional NSW locations, minimising costs and travel for graduates

Streams snapshot

Placements are available in five streams across Sydney Metropolitan and regional NSW areas. More information can be found in the below snapshots.

Primary

Graduates in the Primary stream can work in a range of areas, from analytics or human resources, to policy and projects, and more, while completing a Diploma of Government.

Download the Primary overview

Legal

Graduates in the Legal stream gain knowledge, skills and experience in areas such as policy, litigation or advice while completing a Graduate Diploma of Legal Practice, providing a pathway to becoming admitted as a solicitor in NSW.

Download the Legal overview

Digital

Graduates in the Digital stream can work on a range of digital government services from identifying cyber security risks or designing and delivering products and services across critical areas including health, housing, customer service and transport. Graduates join the Australian Computer Society and complete a digital development program.

Download the Digital overview

Social Work

Graduates in the Social Work stream apply their knowledge and develop skills that improve the lives of children, adults, families, and communities who often experience disadvantage and live in varied and challenging circumstances. Graduates also complete tailored Case Worker Development Training.

Download the Social Work overview

Engineering

Graduates in the Engineering stream will gain invaluable experience in analysing and addressing problems and coming up with practical ways to change things so they perform better. Graduates will complete tailored development through Engineers Australia.

Download the Engineering overview

Agency commitment

The PSC writes to cluster secretaries, the heads of separate agencies and executive agencies in April each year seeking commitment for the following year's graduate program.

The number of graduates needed by the sector and identifying specific talent needs is finalised by the end of May. Maintaining this timeline is critical to developing a targeted advertising and marketing campaign.

Attraction and selection

Selecting the best and brightest

A comprehensive advertising and marketing campaign is tailored each year to meet the sector commitment to roles by stream and location needs.

The program is promoted across several platforms including social media, I work for NSW, GradConnection, university and diversity job boards. The PSC also works with providers and industry bodies to stay updated with the latest graduate recruitment and marketing trends.

The campaign is designed to attract a diverse range of students by highlighting the support and opportunities available to them. The PSC engage an Aboriginal employment services provider to support Aboriginal students during the recruitment process. The Australian Network on Disability has nationally recognised and accredited the program's recruitment practices, ensuring that the process is accessible and inclusive.



The PSC also works closely with university career advisors to promote the program each year by hosting targeted employer information sessions and participating in career fairs.

Recruitment process

Candidates applying for the program complete a rigorous assessment process:

Stage 1 - Online application

- Candidates enter details and nominate preferences (stream, location and functional areas of interest). Candidates complete targeted questions, situational judgement questions and a cognitive ability assessment

Stage 2 - Pre-assessment centre activities

- Candidates complete an online individual task and a personality assessment and book their attendance at a virtual assessment centre.

Stage 3 - Virtual assessment centre

- Candidates complete a structured interview and a group activity or a roleplay.
- The PSC commences work entitlement verification.

Stage 4 - Final candidate pool

- Candidates complete an online video interview while application is considered for a role in the program. This video is not an assessment tool.
- Pre-employment checks commence for all candidates successful for the talent pool.

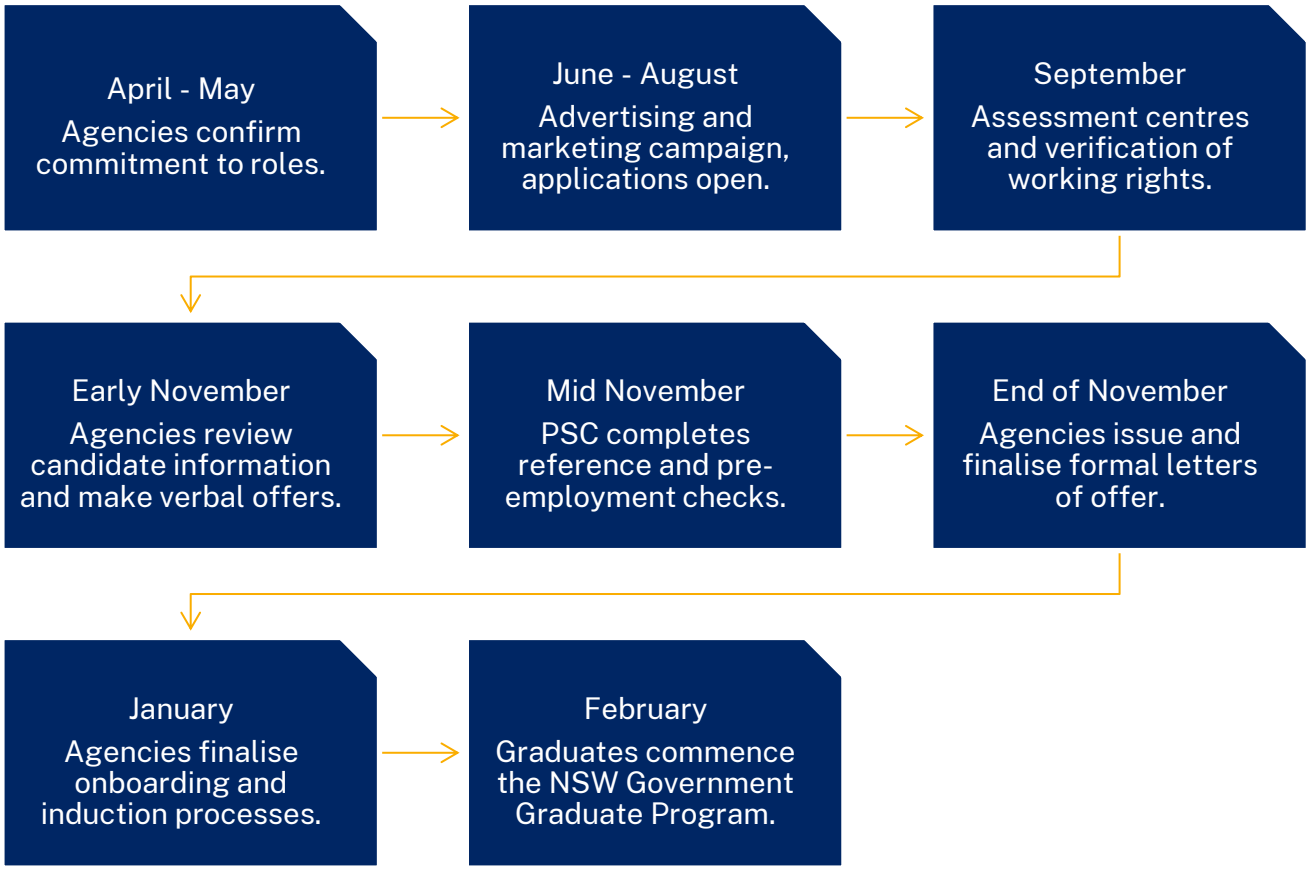
Stage 5 - Offers of employment

- Agencies make verbal offers of employment.
- Reference checks are completed for an agency's preferred candidates before an offer is finalised. Graduates are employed by the home agency.

The PSC seeks expressions of interest from participating agencies to assess at the assessment centres. Training is mandatory for all assessors and is designed and delivered by a recruitment provider.

Recruitment timeline

Offers are conducted during November. Agencies are encouraged to be swift with reviewing candidates and making offers to retain high calibre graduates.



Placements

As part of the program's exposure component, graduates complete 3 x 6-month placements gaining accelerated exposure to the sector, its governing framework, principles and operations. Rotating across the sector is designed to provide graduates with a diverse experience, building their understanding of how government works in different contexts, an important component of career development and progression.

Placement 1 is in the graduate's employing agency, known as their home agency, and external placements are with a host agency. The secondment mechanism is used when graduates rotate to a host agency.

Graduates will rotate out to a host agency for placement 2* and return to their home agency for placement 3 in a different area to their first placement to provide the graduate a diverse experience.

Graduates who are placed in a regional location will only rotate across agencies within the same region.

Graduates in the social work stream will complete 2 x 9-month placements with their home agency.

Placements are coordinated by the PSC in consultation with agency coordinators. Wherever possible, placements are based on organisational needs for specific qualifications, locations and/or functional areas. Graduates do not get to nominate an agency.

*in regional locations this may not be possible and all rotations may be in the home agency. This is discussed with the candidate at time of offer.





2023 Program	Placement 1 6 February 2023 – 6 August 2023	Placement 2 7 August 2023 – 4 February 2024	Placement 3 5 February 2024 – 4 August 2024
2024 Program	Placement 1 5 February 2024 – 4 August 2024	Placement 2 5 August 2024 – 2 February 2025	Placement 3 3 February 2025 – 3 August 2025

Support network

A diverse network has been developed to support graduates and ensure their success in the program.

Find out more about the role and responsibilities of each member below and by accessing the information and resources available on the NSW Government Graduate Program Resources site.

Agency coordinators

Agency coordinators play a significant role in the support and experience of graduates, the education and support of managers and the coordination of the program within their agency. This includes:

- First point of contact for graduates, managers, mentors, executive sponsors and the PSC's Graduate Program Coordinator
- Educating managers, mentors and executive sponsors about the program structure and their responsibilities
- Managing agency commitment to the following year's program, coordinating graduate selections and role offers
- Ensuring graduates are converted to ongoing roles on successful completion of the 18-month program
- Attending the program welcome event in February
- Communicating with the PSC to provide information and raise any concerns
- Participating in the Graduate Program Steering Committee
- Ensuring that graduates and managers complete the Performance and Development Plan and graduates are being set up for success
- Keeping in regular contact with graduates between when offers are made and they commence
- Ensuring that graduates are onboarded and set up to start work on day one of their placement

Managers

Managers play a critical role in the experience, wellbeing and development of the graduate. Responsibilities include:

- Supporting the graduate with current knowledge of the program structure
- Assigning meaningful and challenging work that supports the graduate's development and assists them to complete their formal learning activities
- Setting performance objectives and development objectives and providing feedback, coaching and support to ensure the graduate is set up for success and remains on track with meeting their Performance and Development Plan (PDP) objectives
- Supporting the graduate to complete their formal learning component and having regular discussions to check on their progress

Mentors

Mentors are important role models providing support and encouragement for the graduate's experience, wellbeing and development. Graduates are assigned a mentor from their home agency who supports them throughout the 18-month program. The role involves:

- Attending the Mentoring Workshop (Sydney and regional locations) and online jams
- Sharing knowledge, professional and personal experiences and providing support in developing strategies and actions to achieve their career goals
- Meeting with the graduate on a regular basis

Executive sponsors

Executive sponsors are important senior role models, providing graduates with guidance and encouragement to experience, grow and give back. Graduates are assigned an executive sponsor from their home agency who supports them throughout the 18-month program. The role involves:

- Sharing personal and professional insights and experiences
- Assisting the graduate to build their network within the home agency
- Meeting with the graduate approximately 3-5 times per year

Events

Program launch and induction

Graduates attend a welcome event on their first day of work where they learn more about the structure of the program, hear from key public sector leaders and meet their graduate cohort and agency coordinator. This is a compulsory event and it is expected that agencies will make arrangements for regional graduates to attend. Agency coordinators are invited to attend to meet and support their new graduates.

Agencies are responsible for arranging an agency induction for their new graduates.

Networking

A suite of themed networking events provides an opportunity for graduates to gain exposure to both public and private sector leaders, broaden their understanding of the NSW Government and develop their networking skills. The PSC also arranges additional networking events in the regions to connect the new graduates and the graduate alumni. Attendance at these events is compulsory.

Graduates are connected with their cohort via a virtual Graduate Hub in Microsoft Teams. This platform provides an opportunity to form connections, hold informal discussions, and access regularly posted resources that support their experience, well-being and development. Graduates are kept up to date with events and announcements and can access support as needed.

Graduates will also be invited to join the NSW Government Graduate Program LinkedIn group, a space for past and current graduates to share their experiences in the program and the public sector and provide tips to support others.



Development

Formal learning and development

Graduate participation in the formal education component is mandatory, including attendance at all workshops and completion of all coursework. Managers should check in with the graduate on a regular basis regarding progress toward their formal learning and how they can assist the graduate with their studies. Leave requests should not be approved on scheduled workshop days unless exceptional circumstances exist.

Graduates complete an education component relevant to their stream:

- Primary stream graduates complete a Foundations of Government Program
- Legal stream graduates complete a Graduate Diploma of Legal Practice with the College of Law
- Digital stream graduates complete a Digital Development Program
- Social work stream graduates complete Case Worker Development Training with the Department of Communities and Justice
- Engineering stream graduates complete an Engineering Development Program

Access the relevant Stream Overview available on the NSW Government Graduate Program Resources site for more information.

Performance and development plans (PDP)

Graduates complete one PDP for each 6-month placement. A tailored online platform has been designed to facilitate a consistent and accessible process as graduates move around the sector. Managers and agency coordinators can access their graduate's Development Report and PDPs.

PDPs are prepared and reviewed as part of the broader performance management planning and review cycle. The Development Report, created from the application and assessment process, informs the graduate's first PDP. This report includes the graduate's strengths and areas for development and along with the previous placement's PDP (where relevant), supports managers to plan the graduate's objectives for the placement. It is important that managers assign performance objectives which will allow the graduate to develop their capabilities and meet all capabilities at the required level at the end of the Graduate Program. This is one of the success criteria for a graduate to be converted to ongoing.

Access the NSW Government Graduate Program Resources site for more information.

Operational arrangements

Employment

Graduates are employed by their home agency in a temporary role for the duration of the 18-month program. The home agency will cover the graduate's salary for 18 months and on-costs. Access the relevant Stream Overview for information about the costs to participate in the program.

To participate in the program, home agencies must provide graduates with an ongoing role at level on successful completion of the program. See the Success Criteria in the relevant Stream Overview for more information. Agencies must also locate their graduate with a team in the same region as they completed the program.

During their placements, it is expected that graduates will work in a hybrid way with remote working and face-to-face attendance in the office on a weekly basis to connect with the team, peers and other graduates.

GSE rule 20A can be applied to promote high potential graduates to a Clerk Grade 5/6 or Clerk Grade 7/8 role after successful completion of the program. Refer to the graduate employee promotion guidelines on the NSW Government Graduate Program Resources site for more information.

Governance

Program governance is managed through a steering committee made up of an agency coordinator from each participating agency and chaired by the PSC. The steering committee meets regularly throughout the year, either virtually or face to face.



Working hours and leave arrangements

Leave entitlements generally (including recreation and sick leave) are as per the home agency. The home agency coordinator will make arrangements with the graduate for managing leave while on placement with a host agency.

Flexible work

Flexible working hours are as per the current placement agency's flexible working hours agreement. However, where conditions of employment at a host agency are significantly different to the graduate's home agency (e.g. HealthShare NSW), then the home agency's flexible working hours agreement applies. Accrued flexible working hours must be exhausted within the placement they are earned. This arrangement needs to be communicated to graduates at the commencement of each placement by the manager and both the home and placement agency coordinators.

Parental leave

Parental leave will be granted in accordance with the home agency's Award or Agreement. Graduates can discuss their parental leave entitlements with their home agency coordinator. Wherever possible, the program will support requests for graduates who access parental leave to defer their formal studies or training and continue in the program.

Study leave

Study leave is not available to graduates to complete their formal learning components. Graduates attend workshops and complete assessments during normal working hours. See the relevant Stream Overview for more information.

Leave without pay

Leave without pay requests will be reviewed by the home/host agency in consultation with the PSC on a case-by-case basis but in general, will not be available to graduates.

Program completion

To remain in the program, graduates will not be able to apply for at-level or higher graded roles or be temporarily assigned to other roles. Exceptions will only be considered where the proposed re-assignment is for a short duration of up to two weeks to backfill a role while someone is on leave.

Interruptions to placements can disrupt the workplace and interfere with the graduate's ability to complete the program including study towards their formal education component and attend program events and workshops.

Note: If a graduate leaves the program, it is generally not possible to backfill the role.

As the NSW Government Graduate Program is an 18-month program, to be regarded as successfully completing the Graduate Program and being eligible to attend the end of Program celebration, graduates must:

- complete all 3 x 6 months rotations
- have no performance or conduct issues
- meet all the capabilities in the role description at the required level
- complete and pass their education component.

Contacts

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