Information for agencies

NSW Government Graduate Program resources for agencies

The NSW Government Graduate Program is a structured employment and development program designed to attract and retain talented graduates, build NSW 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 sector.

The PSC ensures the program stays up to date and fit for purpose by collaborating with subject matter experts and agency representatives from across the sector. This allows us to respond to emerging business needs by changing aspects of the program to better meet the sector's demands.

Streams snapshot

The program has 5 streams, available across Sydney Metropolitan and regional NSW areas.

Primary

Graduates work in a range of areas, from analytics and human resources to policy and projects and beyond. They complete a tailored development program alongside this work.

Download the Primary overview

Download the Primary graduate role description →

Legal

Graduates gain knowledge, skills and experience in areas such as policy, litigation or advice. They complete a Graduate Diploma of Legal Practice, providing a pathway to admission as NSW legal practitioners.

Download the Legal overview

Download the Legal graduate role description →

Digital

Graduates work on a range of digital government products and services from identifying cyber security risks to designing and developing new apps. Graduates complete a tailored learning and development program.

Download the Digital overview

Download the Digital graduate role description →

Social Work

Graduates 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

Download the Social Work graduate role description →

Engineering

Graduates analyse and address problems and come up with practical ways to change things, such as contributing to infrastructure projects for the community. Graduates complete a tailored learning and development program.

Download the Engineering overview

Download the Engineering graduate role description →

Agency commitment

We write to Secretaries, the heads of separate agencies and executive agencies in March each year seeking commitment for the following year's graduate program.

The process of confirming the number of graduates needed by the sector, as well as identifying any specific talent needs, is finalised by the end of April. You can **contact the NSW Graduate Program team** anytime about opportunities to employ graduates.

Attraction and recruitment

Attracting 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 platforms including social media, **I work for NSW**, **GradConnection**, **Prosple**, **Forage**, university career fairs, targeted information sessions, and university and diversity job boards. We also work with providers and industry bodies to stay updated with the latest graduate recruitment and marketing trends.

Recruitment process

Stage 1 - Online application (July - August)

- Candidates enter details and nominate preferences. Candidates complete situational questions and a cognitive ability assessment.

Stage 2 - Pre-assessment centre activities (August - September)

- Candidates complete an online individual task and a personality assessment.

Stage 3 - Virtual assessment centre (September - October)

- Candidates complete a structured interview and a group activity or a roleplay.
- Agencies provide assessors for assessment centres.

Stage 4 - Pre-employment checks (October)

- Pre-employment checks commence for all candidates in the graduate pool.

Stage 5 - Offers of employment (November)

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

Stage 6 – Onboarding (December – February)

- Agencies finalise onboarding and induction processes.
- Graduates start in February.

The Australian Disability Network has nationally recognised and accredited the program's recruitment practices, ensuring that the process is accessible and inclusive.

Placements

Graduates complete 3 x 6-month placements in the same region.

- Placement 1 is in the graduate's employing agency, known as their home agency.
- Placement 2 is with a host agency. The secondment mechanism is used when graduates move to a host agency. We understand that this may not be possible in some regional locations and that all 3 placements may take place in the home agency. This should be discussed with candidates at the time of offer.
- Placement 3 is in the graduate's home agency but in a different area to their first placement to provide a diverse experience.

Graduates in the social work stream complete 2 x 9-month placements.

We coordinate placements with agency coordinators. We place graduates based on organisational needs for specific qualifications and locations where possible.

Graduates do not nominate preferred agencies.

Placement dates

Placement	2023 cohort	2024 cohort	2025 cohort
1	6 February 2023 – 6 August 2023	5 February 2024 – 4 August 2024	3 February 2025 – 3 August 2025
2	7 August 2023 – 4 February 2024	5 August 2024 – 2 February 2025	4 August 2025 – 1 February 2026
3	5 February 2024 – 4 August 2024	3 February 2025 – 3 August 2025	2 February 2026 – 2 August 2026

Key contacts

Graduates have a network of support to help them succeed in the program.

Agency coordinators

Agency coordinators support the graduate experience, the education and support of managers and the coordination of the program within their agency.

Agency Coordinator's calendar 2025 and 2026 →

A calendar of key events for agency coordinators

Role description →

The role and responsibilities of agency coordinators

Graduate employee promotion guidelines (GSE Rule 20A) →

Guidance on the use of rule 20A to promote graduates

Secondment letter template →

Use this letter template to arrange a graduate's second or third agency placement

Performance and Development platform →

Access the online graduate performance and development platform

Agency coordinator list

If you would like the Agency coordinator list, please **contact the NSW Graduate Program team**.

Managers

Managers guide, development and support the wellbeing of graduates, shaping their overall experience of the program.

Checklist for managers
A checklist for managers to refer to throughout the duration of the program →

Performance and development platform
Access the online graduate performance and development platform →

Performance and development plan template
Access this PDP Word template if you need to draft the plan offline →

Digital stream manager's calendar – 2024
A calendar of key events for managers of a graduate in the Digital Stream →

Digital Stream manager's briefinig – 2024
A video recording of the digital stream manager's briefinig →

Engineering stream manager's calendar – 2024
A calendar of key events for managers of a graduate in the Engineering Stream →

Legal stream manager's calendar – 2024
A calendar of key events for managers of a graduate in the Legal Stream →

Primary stream manager's calendar – 2024
A calendar of key events for managers of a graduate in the Primary Stream →

Primary Stream manager's orientation - 2024
A video recording of the Primary Stream manager's orientation →

Social Work Stream manager's calendar – 2024
A calendar of key events for managers of a graduate in the Social Work Stream →

Caseworker development training schedule
Schedule for caseworker development training for Social Work Stream graduates →

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 program.

Mentor role description
→

The role and responsibilities of mentors

Mentoring guide – 2024
→

Critical information and processes for mentors and mentees

Benefits of mentoring a graduate
→

Benefits to mentors and their agencies

Advice from a former mentor
→

Reflections from a former mentor to consider as you mentor a graduate

Video: Graduate Program Mentoring - mentor only briefing 2023
→

Executive sponsors

Executive sponsors are important senior role models. They provide graduates with guidance, personal and professional insights, assistance to build their networks. Graduates are assigned an executive sponsor from their home agency who supports them throughout the program.

Executive sponsor role description
→

Development

Formal learning and development component
⌄

Graduates must participate in the formal learning and development component of the program relevant to their stream. This includes attending all workshops and completing all coursework.

Managers should check in with graduates on a regular basis regarding their progress and how they can assist the graduate.

Performance and development plans (PDP)   ⌄

Graduates complete one PDP for each 6-month placement. PDPs are prepared and reviewed as part of the broader performance management planning and review cycle. Managers and agency coordinators can access their graduate's development report and PDPs on the **online platform**.

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 supports managers to plan the graduate's objectives for the placement. It is important that managers assign performance objectives which allow the graduate to develop and meet all capabilities at the required level at the end of the program. This is one of the success criteria for a graduate to be converted to an ongoing role.

Networking events   ⌄

Whole-of-cohort networking events provide opportunities 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 stream specific events to connect graduates with senior leaders and alumni.

Operational arrangements

Employment   ⌄

Graduates are employed by their home agency in temporary employment for the duration of the 18-month program. The home agency covers the graduate's salary for 18 months and on-costs.

To participate in the program, home agencies must provide graduates with ongoing employment at Clerk Grade 3/4 (or equivalent) level on successful completion of the program. Agencies must also locate their graduate with a team in the same region as they completed the program.

GSE rule 20A can be applied to promote graduates who exceed expectations in their PDP to a Clerk Grade 5/6 or Clerk Grade 7/8 role after successful completion of the program.

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.

Working hours and leave arrangements

Leave entitlements generally are as per the home agency. Home agency coordinators arrange leave with the graduate while on placement with a host agency.

Flexible work ⌄

Graduates' flexible working hours are as per the host agency's flexible working hours agreement while they are on their second placement. However, where conditions of employment at the host agency are significantly different to the graduate's home agency, the home agency's flexible working hours agreement applies. Accrued flexible working hours must be used within the placement they are earned. This arrangement needs to be communicated to graduates at the start of each placement by their manager and 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 supports requests for graduates who access parental leave to defer their formal studies or training and continue in the program.

Study leave ⌄

Graduates do not take study leave for the development component of the program. This is completed during normal working hours.

Leave without pay ⌄

Leave without pay is generally not available to graduates. The home/host agency can review requests with the PSC on a case-by-case basis.

Program completion

To successfully complete the program, graduates must:

- complete all placements during the 18-month program
- have no performance or conduct issues at the end of the program
- be assessed as meeting all capabilities in the role description at the required level

- complete the learning and development component relevant to their stream.

Graduates are not eligible for temporary assignments or secondments. Exceptions will only be considered where the proposed assignment is for up to two weeks to backfill a role while someone is on leave.

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

Find out more

To find out more, please **contact the NSW Graduate Program team**.