

Conversational English program funding 2021. Questions and Answers.

As you know, Community Hubs Australia (CHA) has received funding from the Department of Home Affairs to continue providing conversational English in hubs in 2021. Over the last month, Sonja, Bec and Hiranthi have been visiting hub leader and Principal's meetings to discuss the requirements around the funding. This document summarises those requirements and provides answers to the questions we have received.

The Q & A is in two sections. Section A is about how to apply for the funding and Section B is additional information about how the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and the hub conversational English program will work together.

We will update this Q & A when new questions arise – so if you read this and still don't have the answers you're after, please email Hiranthi - hiranthiperera@communityhubs.org.au

SECTION A – FUNDING

What does the new funding cover?

Same as now – funding whatever conversational English program it is that your hub needs. There are no criteria around what type of English program you run, or the facilitator. You just need to ensure that you meet the following requirements.

What are the funding requirements?

There are three requirements that hubs will need to fulfil:

1. Check and record the AMEP eligibility status of adults undertaking conversational English in hubs;
2. Implement a structured approach to refer participants on to the AMEP once they are ready to move on from English in hubs; and
3. Apply a simple test to measure progress and/or increased English proficiency.

In practice, this is how we plan to work with each of these requirements:

1 - Check and record the AMEP eligibility status

We will need to know the year of arrival and visa category of everyone attending English in your hub in Term 1. We'll be working with hub leaders this term to set up a data collection form that is simple and straightforward. This information will need to be collected separately to any other demographic information you may already collect.

All data will be aggregated - meaning no individual can be identified.

While there are other criteria to determine AMEP eligibility, we are not being asked to collect these. We just have to collect their year of arrival and the visa they arrived on.

2 – Implementing a structured approach to refer to the AMEP

It's possible your hub already has a relationship with the AMEP but if you don't, this is something your support coordinator will help you with. How you decide to structure your hubs' approach to AMEP referrals is up to you. You could consider inviting your local AMEP person to visit a couple of times a year, or you could refer people when either you, or they, think they are ready.

In Term 1, we will ask you to tell us what your approach is, so we can report this back to government on behalf of the whole network. We'll have more information on this next year.

3 – Apply a measure of progress

Your English facilitator will need to collect information each term to demonstrate how participants are progressing with their English learning. If your facilitator currently uses a tool, please continue to use that. If you haven't already let Hiranthi know what your measure of progress is, please email her with this information.

Alternatively, CHA will provide a measure of progress for your facilitator to use and will send this to you by email. The progress of each participant in your conversational English program must be collected at the end of each term and submitted to CHA.

How much funding can I apply for to run conversational English programs in my hub?

There is no limit on the amount of funding that you can apply for. However, please note that at this stage the funding is only available for programs running up to 30 June 2021.

What if my hub has already secured funds to run an English program from somewhere else?

If your hub already has a funded English program, that's great. The CHA funding is available for anyone who needs it - however it is not mandatory to apply. We may still ask your facilitator to collect participants' visa status and a measure of progress. This will help us to understand everyone's eligibility to attend the AMEP.

If my hub would like to run an English program for the first time, how do I get started?

Funding for the first half of 2021 is now open. Share this information with your English facilitator. CHA will also contact them to step through the three requirements they will need to complete for reporting each term. Given it will be the first English program run in your hub, speak directly with your support coordinator with any questions you have.

How and when can I apply for this funding?

Funding for January to June 2021 opens Thursday 26 November and will close on Friday 11 December. You will be notified of the outcome of your application by Wednesday 16 December.

To apply, please complete this [application form](#).

Note you will not be granted 2021 funding until you have completed the reporting requirements for the funding you have received this year.

How will I receive this funding?

Once your application is approved, you will be asked to send an invoice to CHA for payment through SmartyGrants. Remember to make your invoice plus GST.

The invoice will need to be issued by your school or directly from your English facilitator to CHA.

Funds will be paid in two instalments:

- i) beginning of Term 1 and
- ii) beginning of Term 2 (once any reporting requirements for Term 1 have been received).

The grant will be paid via Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) once the application is approved by CHA. Our payment terms are 30 days.

SECTION B – HOW THE ADULT MIGRANT ENGLISH PROGRAM (AMEP) AND THE HUB ENGLISH PROGRAM WILL WORK TOGETHER

What is the AMEP?

The Adult Migrant English Program is a free, formal English language tuition program, provided by the Australian Government. It aims to take participants to a level of English that will enhance their chances of employment.

Who is eligible for the AMEP?

The program is designed for migrants and humanitarian entrants to Australia with little or no English. Eligibility criteria are currently being updated to make it more accessible to these groups and to extend the scope of the language learning. This change will occur via an act of Parliament but we are not sure when the change will be implemented.

What changes have the government made to the AMEP?

Recent reforms include:

- enabling eligible participants to start the program at any point in time after their arrival in Australia
- extending the exit of the program to the point where 'vocational' English is achieved to help ensure participants are better equipped to enter the job market
- allowing eligible participants access to an unlimited amount of tuition hours

- the use of online platforms to enable learning from home to enhance or to replace classroom-based learning.

Do hubs ‘compete with’ or ‘complement’ the AMEP?

The hubs’ conversational English program is very much a complement to, but could equally run alongside, the AMEP. The hub program generally provides more informal language support (through groups taking part in cooking, gardening, crafting, and general catch ups over a cup of tea) and can be viewed as a soft entry to the more formal style of the AMEP. Hubs should always be the place that provides their participants the opportunities to practise and develop their English in a safe and supportive setting.

As part of this funding, hubs will be able to provide childminding on site, enabling parents to participate in the classes which is a big bonus for women with young families.

Can people go to both the AMEP and hubs for English tuition?

Yes - this is already the case for many participants now.

Should hubs encourage people to do the AMEP as well as attend their hub’s English program?

Yes, where this is appropriate. For those who have very little or no English, they may prefer to start in the hubs’ less formal setting, before moving into the AMEP. The two services can run side-by-side or follow each other.

There is no obligation for hubs to automatically refer participants into the AMEP.

How do I know when to refer someone to the AMEP?

You could speak to your English teacher or invite your local AMEP provider to visit your hub regularly so that participants become familiar with the facilitator and their program. The AMEP provider will work out when participants are ready for the AMEP.

If we have not covered a topic area, please email Hiranthi - hiranthiperera@communityhubs.org.au to let her know and it will be added to this document for everyone.