Technology Access Fund for Learners – Guide for TEOs

This document provides guidance to TEOs on the use and reporting requirements of the Technology Access Fund for Learners.

Purpose of the Technology Access Fund for Learners

The purpose of the Technology Access Fund for Learners (TAFL) is to assist those learners whose courses have been disrupted by COVID-19, and have limited or no access to technology-enabled learning. The funding is allocated directly to Tertiary Education Organisations (TEOs), who can then use the resources to provide assistance to their learners who need it the most.

While the TEC is responsible for administering the fund, we trust TEOs to decide how, when and where the funding is used, within the guidelines provided by this document.

Funding is available to support initiatives from 23 March 2020 (the date the move to COVID-19 alert Level 4 was announced) until 31 December 2020, or until all funding is allocated.

TEOs can apply for TAFL by completing the TAFL application form and sending it to customerservice@tec.govt.nz with the subject line: **[Your Edumis] – Technology Access Fund Application**.

What can TAFL be used for?

TAFL must be used to directly build your learners' capacity to access technology-enabled tertiary education and training. This can be done by supporting access to:

› Suitable devices which enable learners to access technology-enabled learning[1];

› Adequate internet connections to participate in technology-enabled learning;

› Essential operating systems and/or programmes needed to participate in technology-enabled learning; and/or

› Appropriate technical support to help learners access technology-enabled learning.

In providing the support, we have an expectation that you will work to identify which of your learners need assistance the most, such as vulnerable learners and learners who face technological and skill barriers, and spend the funding in a responsible way which attempts to provide the greatest assistance, to the greatest number. The

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[1] It is expected that devices will remain the property of the TEO, and will be returned by the learner to the TEO when no longer needed.

approach may include prioritising funding towards Māori, Pacific and disabled learners, as well as other learners most in need of assistance to access technology-enabled learning.

Except where the TEC has given prior written consent, TAFL funding cannot be used for:

› Developing or creating a TEO's technology-enabled delivery platform.

› Developing technology-enabled course materials.

Eligibility

TEOs who receive funding through one of the following funds are eligible to apply for TAFL:

› Student Achievement Component – Level 3 and above

› Student Achievement Component – Level 1 and 2

› Industry Training Fund

› Youth Guarantee (excluding Trades Academies)

› Intensive Literacy and Numeracy

› Intensive Literacy and Numeracy – Refugee English

› Intensive Literacy and Numeracy - English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

› Workplace Literacy and Numeracy (TEO-led or Employer-led)

› Section 321 of the Education Act 1989

TAFL must only be used to assist learners who are funded through one of the above funds. To be eligible, the learner must also:

› Be an eligible learner as per the conditions of the fund they are funded through.

› Be enrolled in a course or programme which is being delivered online at the point in which they receive assistance.

› Meet any other relevant conditions of the fund they are funded through.

The specific conditions for each fund, including the conditions for TAFL, are available on the TEC's website.

TEO reporting requirements and monitoring

TEOs who receive TAFL are required to periodically report to the TEC on how, where and when they have used the funding. The TEC will use the information to regularly update a public list on the TEC's website. We also require TEOs to retain the original receipts and invoices where TAFL has been used.

The below provides a summary of the reporting requirements. For the full reporting and monitoring conditions, please see the TAFL conditions on the TEC's website.

We will publish a list of all TEOs who receive TAFL funding

The TEC is required to publish, and regularly update, a list of all TEOs who receive TAFL. The list will include:

› The total amount of TAFL that each TEO has received;

› The amount of TAFL spent to date;

› The type of support, and when it has been provided; and

› The number of learners that have been supported.

Reporting

Once TAFL has been accepted, we will provision two reporting templates to your Workspace2. These templates record:

› The total amount of your TAFL allocation spent to date, including a summary of what your TAFL allocation has been spent on; and

› The National Student Numbers (NSN) of each learner who has received assistance with TAFL, including their ethnicity, gender, disability status, and when the support was provided.

TEOs must update their reports every fortnight, up to 30 June 2020, and there-after every two months. A final report is then due in early 2021.

The reporting deadlines are:

› 19 May 2020

› 2 June 2020

› 16 June 2020

› 30 June 2020

› 31 August 2020

› 31 October 2020

› 31 January 2021 (final report)

Note that all reports are cumulative and so should be updated to record total TAFL use year-to-date, with the final report being to the end of 2020. If there has been no change to your TAFL use between reporting periods, please re-submit the data used in your last report.

Learner Technology Support Strategy

All TEOs who accept TAFL as part of the phase one allocation (ie. TAFL was automatically allocated to the TEO rather than through an application process) must complete a Learner Technology Support Strategy (LTSS) and return it to us within 15 working days.

For TEOs applying for TAFL, the LTSS is included as a section in the TAFL application form and must be completed as part of the application process.

The LTSS is a short series of questions which help set out your organisation's planned approach to using its TAFL allocation:

› How will your organisation identify which learners need assistance with accessing technology-enabled learning?

› How will your organisation prioritise which learners receive assistance with accessing technology-enabled learning?

› How does your organisation plan to use its TAFL?

› How will you ensure TAFL funding is ring-fenced for TAFL purposes and keep track of costs incurred?

If you make any significant amendments to your LTSS throughout the year, please send an updated copy to us at customerservice@tec.govt.nz with the following Subject Line:

> [*Your Edumis*] **– Learner Technology Support Strategy**

The TEC may recover unused or incorrectly used funding

The TEC will monitor how TAFL is being used through your progress reports. We may recover any TAFL that is being used contrary to the fund conditions, or the approach set out in your LTSS.

Frequently asked questions

How can we apply for TAFL/additional funding?

TEOs can apply for TAFL by completing the TAFL application form and sending it to customerservice@tec.govt.nz with the subject line: **[Your Edumis] – Technology Access Fund Application**.

How much TAFL funding is available?

The total size of the TAFL fund is $20 million. Approximately half of this funding was allocated in phase one, with remaining funding available for distribution through the application process.

If we buy devices with TAFL, who owns the device?

TEOs retain ownership of any device purchased with TAFL. However, we expect these devices to be provided to learners as soon as reasonably practicable. Once a learner has completed/finished their studies, the device must be returned to the TEO so that it can be re-distributed.

You must assign a unique serial number to each device distributed to a learner. Using these serial numbers, you must maintain a fixed-asset register to record the devices distributed to each learner.

What happens with the internet connection once the learner has completed/withdrawn from the course? And who is liable for any additional costs?

It is up to each TEO to decide how they will provide internet connections to their learners.

There is no expectation that you continue to pay for a learner's internet connection once they have completed/withdrawn from the course. However, you must not create ongoing costs for learners, such as by paying for a portion of a fixed term contract.

Is there a limit on what we can spend per learner?

There is no cap on how much can be spent on one learner. However, we have an expectation that TEOs spend the funding responsibly, to adequately support the largest number of learners who need support, and within the bounds set out in this document and your funding conditions. As noted above, your total spend and the number of learners funded will be published on the TEC's website.

Can we use TAFL to provide mobile data for learners?

Yes. If a mobile internet connection is the most appropriate way of enabling a particular learner to access technology-enabled learning, then TAFL can be used to assist with this.

My organisation has already implemented a similar initiative with our own funding – can we retrospectively use the TAFL funding for this initiative?

Yes. If an existing initiative was announced on or after *23 March 2020* (the date the alert level 4 plan was announced) and it meets the conditions and guidance in this document, then you may use the funding to support your own initiative. However, the use must be reported as per the reporting guidelines.

Prior to TAFL, my organisation had already established an initiative to help learners access technology-enabled learning, but the initiative does not quite meet the TAFL conditions. Can we use TAFL funding for it?

TAFL funding can be used for costs incurred from 23 March 2020 that meet the conditions of the fund. Prior to being aware of the TAFL conditions, if your organisation had already established an initiative to help learners access technology-enabled learning, but the initiative does not meet the TAFL conditions, we would happy to discuss whether TAFL funding can be used. Please contact us at customerservice@tec.govt.nz.

Does TAFL cover the direct costs associated with providing support e.g: courier costs, maintenance of devices?

Yes. However, you must keep a record of the costs.

We are struggling to source devices due to a stock shortage. What do we report?

Unfortunately due to current events you may experience difficulties in sourcing devices. We understand that this may mean it takes longer than anticipated to provide a device to your learners and recognise that there may be little to include in early reports. However, we still require that these reports be submitted to us, even if there is not much to report.

We may be able to assist if you require additional support to source devices. Please contact us at customerservice@tec.govt.nz if you need help.

What is the purpose of the Learner Technology Support Strategy?

The purpose of the LTSS is to help us to understand how you intend spend your TAFL allocation, and ensure that assistance is provided to your learners which need it the most.

My organisation is not going to use all of its TAFL allocation – can we return it?

Yes. As there is only limited funding available, if you do not think you are going to use all of your TAFL allocation please contact us at customerservice@tec.govt.nz so we can re-allocate the funding to help other learners at other TEOs.

Are students who are funded under Māori and Pasifika Trades Training (MPTT) eligible to receive support?

Yes, as at the MPTT funding comes from either Student Achievement Component – Level 1 and 2, or Student Achievement Component – Level 3 and above, these students would eligible.

How should we treat depreciation of assets (devices) purchased with TAFL?

TEOs should treat the devices purchased with TAFL as they would any other asset. Devices should be assigned a unique identification number, be recorded on the fixed asset register, and depreciated.

Does the TEC have any other resources to support online delivery?

The TEC has gathered resources and tools, from New Zealand and overseas, to build and enhance the quality of your online teaching resources and best practice. The information is now available on our website. We are also exploring supporting these resources with interactive learning webinars with experts sharing their knowledge and answering your questions.