Approaches to system-level implementation of the Allied Health Rural Generalist Pathway: experiences from three jurisdictions

Kendra Strong - Department of Health, Tasmanian Government
Ilse Nielsen - Department of Health, Queensland Health.
Renae Moore - Top End Health Service, Northern Territory Government.
Gemma Tuxworth - Department of Health, Tasmania Government.
Susannah Lennox, Department of Health, Tasmania Government
Michelle Rothwell - Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service, Queensland Health.
Allied Health Rural Generalist Pathway

• An integrated workforce, education and service strategy designed to improve the outcomes and sustainability of rural and remote multi-professional teams
  – Workforce: designated early career training roles
  – Education: formal (university) training in rural generalist practice
  – Service: development / improvement activities embedded in training role funding requirements and education program
Rural Generalist Training Positions

• Early career training-focussed roles that include:
  – Minimum 0.1 FTE allocated development time
  – Funded enrolment in approved, formal post-grad rural generalist course
  – Profession-specific supervisor:
    • Level 1 (0-2 years): co-located 50% or more work hours
    • Level 2 (2+ years): co-located or remote supervision
  – Service development project implemented in team
  – May have a specific title e.g. “Podiatrist (Rural Generalist Trainee)”
Four system-level strategies

Four system-level strategies have been used to implement the AHRG Pathway in the 3 jurisdictions:

a) Supernumerary training positions (Qld, Tas, NT)

b) Centrally-administered funds for education fees (Qld, Tas)

c) Changes to HR & industrial instruments (Qld, Tas)

d) Training support packages (funding) to redesign existing roles (Qld)
Supernumerary Positions

• Examples:
  – Qld: 22 positions (2014-18); Tas: 8 positions (2019-2020); NT: 6 positions (2017-2020)

• Advantages / indications:
  – Used in QLD, NT and Tasmania as the first strategy
  – Provides “proof of concept” and allows the system to work out the model, while limiting financial/activity risk to services

• Limitations:
  – Resource intensive (limited workforce impact for investment)
  – Creates rural workforce supply “bottleneck” at end of temp position (e.g. at 2 years), with net migration to larger regional centres
  – No expansion beyond trial without substantial resource growth
Centrally-administered funds for education fees

• Examples:
  – Qld: 6 positions (2017-18); Tas: 4 positions (2018-2020); NT 4 positions (2017-ongoing)

• Advantages / indications:
  – Supports existing staff / positions
  – Relatively limited resourcing required (max $12Kp.a. / trainee)

• Limitations:
  – Relatively limited uptake as team involvement / investment not represented in funding model
  – Individual benefit – resourcing approach does not account for team’s involvement and investment in supporting training
Human resources and industrial instruments

• Examples:
  – Qld: HR Policy B66 HP3 to HP4 Rural Development Pathway
  – Tas: flexible employment framework in development through industrial negotiations

• Advantages:
  – Robust (and relatively protected from policy change) as integrated into employment terms and conditions

• Limitations:
  – Challenging and often protracted development and negotiation (in large organisations but could be more feasible in smaller / non-govt organisations)
Funding support packages to enable workforce redesign

- Queensland implemented January 2019
  - Funding support package (QDOH) for each existing early career position redesigned into a designated training role - $25K rural; $30K remote.
  - Service pays uni fees but uses residual funds flexibly.

- Advantages / indications
  - Growth/efficiencies (11 supernumerary ➔ ~40 training support positions)
  - No forced separation (and urban migration) like temp role training role
  - Embedded in service organisational structure and business model
  - Services invested in their trainees and can develop / fund their own solutions to implementation challenges

- Disadvantages:
  - Early days... QLD commenced trials in 2019.
  - Promising signs of retention beyond 24 months for trainees transitioning over from old scholarship process
Conclusion

• The various approaches of three state and territory governments to implementation of the AHRG Pathway demonstrates the need for systems to respond to regional challenges and opportunities.

• Limited evaluation to date:
  – QLD 2014, 2015-16, 2017-18 trials (supernumerary positions mostly)

• Evaluation of implementation approaches will be critical to informing national development of the pathway and realising benefits for rural and remote services
Thank you.
For more information

**Tasmania:**
Kendra Strong
Kendra.strong@health.tas.gov.au

**Northern Territory:**
Justine Williams
Justine.Williams@nt.gov.au

**Queensland:**
Ilsa Nielsen:
ilsa.nielsen@health.qld.gov.au