

Workforce Innovation Grant Program 2010–11

Project summaries

The Workforce Innovation Grant Program (WIGP) 2010–11 was developed to explore, identify and trial (where appropriate) innovations that improve the utility of the health workforce, while maintaining and improving quality outcomes, efficiency and worker satisfaction. Specifically, the program aims to identify solutions to existing and projected workforce challenges and to identify strategies that could effect positive change and support sustainable health services into the future.

Building on the first round of grants, conducted in 2008–09, the WIGP 2010–11 is currently supporting a range of innovative pilot, feasibility and research projects as part of the Department of Health's workforce innovation program in 2011. The successful projects were selected through an expression of interest round conducted in late 2010, and address key areas of priority for workforce innovation and reform for the department. The projects were selected because of their strong ability to influence innovation at the local level, but also because they have state and nationwide applicability. Rural initiatives are well represented in the selected projects.

For more information on the projects, please contact Holly Hildebrand on (03) 9096 9783 or [<holly.hildebrand@health.vic.gov.au>](mailto:holly.hildebrand@health.vic.gov.au).

Access to healthcare in non-acute settings

Five projects supported through the WIGP 2010–11 will develop and trial workforce models that aim to improve access to healthcare in primary, community health and aged care settings, and increase capacity for training and implementing assistant roles in non-acute settings. These projects include the following:

- Alfred Health will scope and develop a potential allied health assistant (AHA) role in social work. This project builds on a recent study into potential roles for AHAs in Alfred Health and aims to increase access to social work services in the sub-acute hospital setting, through increasing the capacity of the social work department to respond to aged care patient needs. The project will include an analysis of the health and community services training packages to identify existing competency-based training to match the skills required for the development of this role. It will also seek to develop in-house training (if required) to address any skills gaps identified within the current training packages. Alfred Health will also contribute to a social work assistant project that is being undertaken by the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council.
- Ovens and King Community Health Service (OKCHS) will scope and develop an AHA role that has competencies in occupational therapy and continence promotion within a rural community health setting. The project will seek to optimise the efficient use of resources to deliver equitable and effective services to client groups across all levels of function and geographical areas. OKCHS will consult with Goulburn Ovens TAFE, Wodonga TAFE and the Australian Institute of Flexible Learning to deliver training to upskill AHAs to deliver 'better health self-management groups' in the local area. The project will also include the development of priority tools, which will support the role and will be closely linked to existing resources/documents that have been developed by the department for the Active Service Model and Early Intervention in Chronic Disease Management.
- Bendigo Health will partner with Boort District Health Service (BDHS) and Inglewood District Health Service (IDHS) to develop, trial and evaluate a remote supervision workforce model for AHAs. The project aims to improve the overall health outcomes for small rural communities through the increased training and utilisation of the AHA workforce to provide some allied health services under supervision of allied health professionals (AHPs) who are employed by, and travel between, the participating health services. Bendigo Health AHPs will provide mentor support to the AHPs at BDHS and IDHS. The health services will partner with Bendigo Regional Institute of

TAFE to identify, develop and deliver required training to upskill the participating AHAs into the role. The project will also develop and implement processes and protocols to support the AHA remote supervision model, and will trial the department's Supervision and Delegation Framework for AHAs.

- Monash University will develop and pilot a model of allied tele-healthcare provision using AHPs supported by AHAs. The project will aim to increase the use of tele-health communications in the provision of allied health services in rural and regional Victoria. The project will include the development of a short course focused on the technical aspects of delivering allied healthcare using remote technology such as video conferencing. This short course will be delivered to a cohort of AHAs who will then participate in the allied tele-healthcare pilot. The pilot will involve two sites, one at a metropolitan site that offers services to selected rural/regional health sites, and one at a major regional centre offering services to selected rural/remote sites.
- The National Centre for Farmer Health will develop and implement a Pathways, Education, Training and Skills (PETS) for Rural Victoria Project. The project builds on the Sustainable Farm Families (SFF) program, which has been developed to bring better health, wellbeing and safety to people on the land. The project will undertake a scoping and mapping exercise between the SFF training materials and existing units of competency available in the health, community services and agriculture training packages. This mapping will identify opportunities for units or skills sets to be developed and imported across existing qualifications. The mapping process will also explore and identify the training gaps in the rural health area, and will seek to develop accredited units of competency and/or courses with articulated pathways into the health, community services and agriculture training packages, and higher education, to meet this demand.

Improving the delivery of chronic disease management

To address the challenge of preventing and managing chronic disease, there are three main areas focused on improving the delivery of chronic disease management at different care requirement stages, from community level to hospital intervention. The projects focus on key workforce issues in the delivery of chronic disease management and will inform future service delivery options:

- **Eye disease** – two projects will work in conjunction to respond to the increasing incidence of chronic eye disease (for example, macular degeneration and glaucoma) in the face of an ageing population. The projects aim to improve patient access and outcomes through utilisation of the existing skilled eye health workforce and interdisciplinary models.
 - The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (RVEEH) and Australian College of Optometry (ACO) will work together to design models of eye health provision for integrated care between ophthalmology and optometry, using the two organisations as a test platform. The project will implement a pilot clinic to assess 1,000 patients referred by general practitioners to RVEEH via the ACO, where there is no clear need for RVEEH, only medical or surgical intervention. With clear pre-diagnostic work up, patients could bypass the general eye clinic and be streamed directly into sub-speciality clinics such as glaucoma and medical retina. This inter-professional project aims to improve patient care and access to clinical eye care, reduce waiting times for new appointments and improve utilisation of the workforce.
 - Northern Health will develop a model that advances the scope of the orthoptic workforce in the northern suburbs of Melbourne to free ophthalmologists to take on more complex cases. The project will produce an orthoptic workforce that is credentialed to undertake enhanced assessment and management activities pertaining to the care of patients with chronic eye conditions, including diabetic retinopathy, cataracts and glaucoma. This will result in more timely access to care, create staff capacity and will allow for the development of a service for patients with retinal disorders. This is particularly important as retinal services are not currently available in the northern metropolitan area and consequently, patients are required to travel to the RVEEH.
- **Cancer screening** – two projects working in partnership will develop and trial a sustainable model of advanced nurse clinicians undertaking endoscopy to improve patient outcomes and to meet the required volumes of referral for bowel cancer screening. This model, being tested at The Austin and Western Health, is based on the long-standing model developed in the NHS (UK) since the late 1990s. In both the UK and the US, gastrointestinal endoscopy is increasingly being carried out by nurses with approval from professional bodies. The WIGP pilot projects will scope,

develop and trial the appropriateness and effectiveness of an advanced nurse endoscopy workforce, through the development of training pathways (one developed and conducted locally and the other modelled on the international experience), supervision/care protocol development, patient engagement and communication. The aim of both models is to develop the appropriate training, supervision and delegation processes and frameworks for a registered nurse to ultimately perform designated endoscopy procedures independently in an appropriately supportive setting.

- **Multidisciplinary health screening** – four projects focus on enhancing multidisciplinary care and screening by using innovative workforce models to make more effective use of members of the team to address chronic conditions and disease:
 - The statewide identification of the training needs of the chronic disease workforce will provide an evidence base for the 30 Primary Care Partnerships across Victoria, to inform future workforce planning and system requirements to support people with chronic disease and complex conditions across the state. This project is being led by the Inner East Primary Care Partnership. The project will identify individual and team core competencies required for working effectively with clients with chronic and complex care, to provide a baseline of required core competencies at the individual, team and system levels. Based on this, the project will then develop a single, standardised training needs analysis tool and toolkit to guide a consistent standard of practice in learning needs analysis. It will identify current learning needs of staff in PCP member organisations who work with clients with chronic and complex needs, using an individual and team-based competencies approach supported by the tools. Ultimately, the project will enable the reporting of results and identification of existing competency-based workforce development opportunities and gaps, using a mapping and gap analysis process.
 - Seymour District Memorial Hospital will partner with Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE to develop a new training program to upskill existing workers to conduct exercise programs for older adults suffering from chronic disease. This training will be targeted toward existing workers in the Lower Hume region (including aged care workers, personal care assistants, HACC community care workers and fitness instructors) and will offer a pathway into other VET qualifications, including the Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance. Participants will also be provided with an opportunity to undertake the Certificate IV in Training and Education. While the primary aim of the project is to expand the supply and reach of exercise maintenance groups/programs in the local area, the project will also provide a platform to promote training, development and career options to workers within the health and community services sector.
 - Sunraysia Community Health Services (SCHS) will develop and introduce a new Community Health Assessment Team (CHAT) to respond to the lengthy screening processes for clients with chronic or complex needs. The team will consist of administrative and clinical staff who have been upskilled in the areas of chronic disease, complex needs, motivational interviewing and self-management. The CHAT will undertake broad-based multidisciplinary screening, develop care coordination plans and refer clients with chronic or complex needs, in line with the Department of Health's Service Coordination Framework (2009). The CHAT will seek to free up valuable clinician time by creating a more diverse workforce to undertake these assessments, and will provide staff with opportunities to develop new skills and work in a multidisciplinary team environment.
 - Doutta Galla Community Health Service, in partnership with the University of Melbourne, will pilot and evaluate a student-supervised interdisciplinary community clinic, with a focus on chronic disease, complex conditions and mental health. This will be used as a model for improving access to healthcare for disadvantaged groups, supporting students to learn and work using an interdisciplinary approach and increasing workforce capacity. The clinic will provide health promotion, early intervention, interdisciplinary assessment, and care planning and treatment services. The project will ultimately establish an evidence base to promote the expansion of student-supervised interdisciplinary clinics across Australia.

Pathways into health and community services

The following two proposals were submitted through the expression of interest process for the 2010–11 WIGP. While they were unsuccessful in securing funding under that program, the department recognised the strength in developing documented models and resources to promote and support the implementation of clearly articulated pathways into health across Victoria. These two projects are being supported outside the Workforce Innovation Grant Program. They aim to increase the reach of health into schools, and to provide students with the opportunity to articulate into other VET or university-trained health roles. These projects will develop transferable demonstration models that have wider application across Victoria, and encourage the sector to consider implementing these piloted models at the local level.

- Echuca Regional Health in partnership with St Joseph's College and Victoria University (VU) will develop and implement a health pathways and gap year program, which builds on a health-based VET in Schools (VETiS) program developed by VU in consultation with the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority. The project will seek to develop an articulated pathway from the VETiS program into a number of Certificate III and IV health qualifications, and will be complemented by a 'gap' year, which will follow year 12. The gap year will be delivered within the local and surrounding communities using a traineeship framework that utilises web-based distance learning and includes professional development for participating staff.
- The Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network Inc, in partnership with a broad range of government, education and training, and health sector representatives within the G21 Region (including the Barwon South Western Regional Office), will develop and implement health pathway programs for students. This will include a VETiS program, based around the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) VET Health program, suitable to be undertaken by VCE and Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) students. The program will also include a taster program aimed at year 10 students and their parents. This program will provide information on the wide range of career opportunities in the sector and ensure that students are making educated subject selections when they reach VCE/VCAL.