Advanced Practice in Allied Health Workforce Grant Program 2015-16

The Advanced Practice in Allied Health Workforce Grant Program 2015-16 round aims to provide Victorian healthcare providers with seed funding to embed advanced practice roles in their service.

Background

Victoria’s health system is evolving to meet a range of challenges and opportunities. To address these, the department has encouraged health services to grow the numbers and range of skills of the allied health professionals, including advanced practice roles.

Advanced practice roles are those that are currently within the recognised scope of practice for a profession but that, through custom and practice, have been performed by other professions.

Appropriately designed and resourced allied health advanced practice service models have been demonstrated to improve patient outcomes, reduce patient waiting lists, reduce acute hospital admissions, and subsequently lead to productivity gains. Health services in the community sector and sub-acute sector as well as in chronic disease management rely heavily on allied health professionals.

To avoid uncertainty, the department is using the following definitions for this process:

**Advanced Scope of Practice** – A role that is within the currently recognised scope of practice for that profession, but that in custom and practice has been performed by other professions. The advanced role requires additional training as well as significant professional experience and competency development.

**Extended Scope of Practice** – A role that is outside the currently recognised scope of practice and one that requires some method of credentialing following additional training and competency development, and legislative or regulatory change.

Practitioners who specialise in a particular area of practice acquire a high level of knowledge, skill and experience over the course of their career. They also develop a sound understanding of the additional tasks and professional activities specific to their area of expertise usually carried out by other health practitioners.

Many opportunities exist to expand the role of allied health practitioners to undertake some of these tasks and use their full scope of practice to maximise skills utilisation, and improve service efficiency and effectiveness. The range of professional practice within Victoria and across Australia is growing rapidly as allied health practitioners are increasingly being recognised for their potential to improve health service capacity and delivery.

Advanced allied health practitioners are experienced health professionals involved in assessing, diagnosing, initiating and coordinating the complex care needs of individuals with specific requirements. Advanced practice is grounded in evidence, and is applicable to health care practice in primary, secondary and tertiary settings.

It is generally accepted that advanced practice roles are at Grade 3 level. The rules, regulations and boundaries currently in which a fully qualified practitioner can practice are largely subject to local organisational governance, culture and practice at each workplace. Decision making frameworks are available to assist individual practitioners to determine whether certain activities exist within the scope of safe practice.¹,²

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¹ Allied health: credentialing, competency and capability framework (the framework)
Program objectives

The program aims to support Victoria’s healthcare system to deliver more efficient, effective and sustainable care by enabling health care providers to embed proven advanced practice roles into services or settings.

The program supports the Victorian health system by ensuring advanced practice roles address the following themes identified in Health 2040 Discussion Paper including the need for our health system to:

- move to a person-centred view of healthcare
- better prevent and treat chronic disease
- improve people’s health outcomes and experience
- improve the way the system works together
- improve health for people in rural and regional areas
- better value and support our workforce.

Eligible services

Funding may be granted to any suitable Victorian organisation which can demonstrate a clear need, capacity and ongoing commitment to embed an advanced allied health role. This may include (but is not limited to) public health services, community health services, alcohol and drug services, aged care services, mental health services, and private health providers.

General conditions

- Proposals must clearly identify an area of priority exhibiting pressures on their service
- Project proposals must be time-limited, with an end date no later than 30 December 2017 and only costing items prior to this date should be outlined in the budget proposal.
- Organisations are expected to co-contribute funding and/or in kind resources to the Project.
- Funding provided to successful projects will be a one-off grant.
- The project is required to use the Victorian Innovation and Reform Assessment Framework and address the DHHS key questions to assess impact around cost efficiency, cost effectiveness, and sustainability.
- Financial accountability and project performance will be monitored.
- It is a key expectation that services will continue the role in a self-funded capacity following the conclusion of the project.
- The number of grants provided will depend on the amount of funding available.
- Where relevant, joint applications from health providers to form a partnership are encouraged.

Evaluation criteria

Evaluation of projects will be merit based and submissions will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Rationale and priority of the role to the service delivery setting and Victorian healthcare sector
- Strength of the proposed project implementation plan
- Comprehensive clinical support and endorsement by senior executive, and relevant stakeholders
- Level of organisational readiness to implement the role
- Approach to evaluating the success of the role and anticipated impact of the outcomes
- Plan and commitment to sustaining the role beyond the project period.
- Approach to ensure project learnings can support implementation more broadly
- Appropriate and reasonable project budget.
- Provision of a considered and reasonable risk management plan.

2 Dietitians Association of Australia, Scope of Practice Decision Tool
• Appropriate use of the Allied Health Credentialling, Competency and Capability Framework method for identifying an advanced role.
• Provision of an appropriate and reasonable project outcome logic map.

Approved use of funding
• Projects and initiatives covering a range of activities across all allied health professions within Victorian public and private health services and registered community health centres are eligible for funding.
• Although no project budget limit is imposed, Allied Health Advanced Practice Grant Program funding is capped. In preparing budgets, applicants should consider cost effectiveness, efficiency and project sustainability. Costings can be negotiated with the department however EFT should be comparable to part-time senior clinician hours.

Priority professions and settings
In 2015-16 the department has identified a number of priority settings and professions.
• Additional positive weighting will be given to projects involving regional, rural and remote services.
• Additional positive weighting will be provided to roles in non-acute health and health-related settings, such as subacute, ambulatory and community-based care.
• Additional positive weighting will be provided to projects involving the professions of radiography, nuclear medicine, psychology or social work.

Project phases
Projects are expected to deliver on key activities during the project period including:
• Phase 1 – Collate baseline service data, deliver final project plan
• Phase 2 – Commence service delivery and evaluation
• Phase 3 – Finalise evaluation and develop internal business case (where appropriate)

Support networks
Depending on the number and mix of grants awarded, the department may establish support networks for similar projects, based on the Advanced Practice Hand Therapy network arising from the 2014-15 Grant process. Where applicable, successful applicants will be expected to actively engage in these networks.

Preparation day/s
To assist successful applicants to deliver on their projects, the department will provide an initial one-day workshop aimed at assisting applicants to further develop their project implementation plans. This will be held in April/May 2016, and attendance at the workshop by an appropriate project representative will be required. The department may provide further preparation days during the project period where specific needs are identified.

Program logic
Applicants will need to complete a draft program logic and include this in their application. Further refinement of the program logic will be undertaken with successful projects as part of the initial preparation day.

How to submit your application
Please send your proposal via email in Word and PDF format to alliedhealthworkforce@dhhs.vic.gov.au

Application closing date
The closing date for proposals is 9am AEST Monday 22nd February 2016.
It is anticipated that successful projects will be notified by March/April 2016, with the intention of providing funding to successful services in May/June 2016.

**Project period and reporting**

Successful projects will commence on 1 June 2016 and conclude 30 December 2017. Projects will be required to report on progress quarterly. Templates for reporting will be provided.

**Enquiries**

For further information, please contact:

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