

# THE 2008 RURAL RESEARCH CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM INFORMATION AND APPLICATION GUIDELINES

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## INFORMATION

### Background

The NSW Institute of Rural Clinical Services and Teaching (IRCST) aims to support rural clinicians across all stages of their careers and promote good practice in rural health service delivery. The IRCST is a “virtual institute” with staff working from locations across NSW. The IRCST has developed a program designed to increase the number and range of people with knowledge and skills in rural health care evaluation and research. This program is related to the following strategic directions for IRCST:

- *The Institute has demonstrated initiatives to support a sustainable rural and remote health workforce*
- *The Institute is considered a leading provider of information and advice on rural and remote health issues*
- *The Institute will positively influence those whose decisions affect rural and remote health in NSW*

### Aim

The Rural Research Capacity Building Program aims to increase the number and range of people with knowledge and skills in rural health care evaluation and research. We will develop rural based researchers:

- With knowledge, skills and abilities in applied research and evaluation;
- With the ability to address health care issues in policy and practice; and
- Who can work collaboratively with practitioners, consumers, and researchers from other disciplines

This program has been developed for health professionals wanting to learn more about research and conduct their own research project. Up to 30 candidates per year will be selected to participate in the program.

## Rural Research Capacity Building Program Content

### Research Methods Short Course

The program commences with a research methods short course run by the NSW Primary Health Care Research Capacity Building Program (also known as the NSW PHC Collaboration) in association with the Australian Rural Health Research Collaboration. The NSW PHC Collaboration is a commonwealth funded program that includes the University of Sydney, University of Newcastle, University of NSW,



Australian National University Departments of General Practice and the Broken Hill, Lismore (USYD) and Tamworth (Newcastle Uni) University Departments of Rural Health. The research methods short course will take place in Sydney, commencing on September 29, 2008 for 5 days.

Days 1-3 introduce both quantitative and qualitative research methods and is focused on developing skills to critically appraise the research literature and design a research project. At the end of the short course, participants will be able to:

- Identify stages in the research process and their application in a health care setting
- Distinguish the basic difference between quantitative and qualitative research methods
- Describe and identify the main types of quantitative research strategies
- Define the major sources of bias in quantitative research
- Interpret basic measures of frequency and association
- Define the principles and uses of observational techniques and theory
- Define the uses and roles of interviews and focus groups and understand how an interview is constructed
- Describe approaches to coding qualitative data
- Describe the use of mix methods approaches to research and evaluation

Day 4 of the short course allows for small group work where participants develop their research idea into a feasible study.

Day 5 will be spent covering some of the operational aspects of the course such as reporting mechanisms.

#### **Preparation for Short Course**

Telephone interviews will be held with each successful candidate to help them prepare their research proposal for the Short Course. Candidates will be expected to do some reading and writing in order to prepare for the Short Course.

#### **Allocated research time**

It is envisaged that successful candidates will continue to work in their substantive positions with time release for one day per week for up to 97 weeks for which the Institute will provide financial support to the value of \$335 per day. Candidates who work part time will have backfill days individually negotiated.

#### **Rural Research Program Support**

Successful applicants will receive a range of support including supervision/mentoring; access to infrastructure where required, access to research specialists (statisticians/qualitative researchers); access to training and networks (formal and informal).

## **Who is eligible?**

The Rural Research Capacity Building Program is aimed at anyone working within the rural public health care sector who is involved in the development of policy, design, delivery, evaluation or administration of health care services and population health in their community. This includes community health care

workers, allied health staff, nurses, doctors, educators, managers, and public health officers as well as staff involved in providing support services.

Permanent employees of the North Coast, Greater Western, Hunter New England (except Newcastle area), Greater Southern Area Health Services plus Nowra and areas south of Nowra in South East Illawarra are invited to submit research questions/topics for consideration. Rurally based staff working for NSW Ambulance and Justice Health are also eligible.

**Please note:** Existing researchers or individuals undertaking a higher degree which involves a significant research component are **not** eligible to apply.

## **How are participants chosen?**

Acceptance into the Rural Research Capacity Building Program is dependent upon a candidate's readiness to undertake and complete the research within the 12 to 24 months duration of the program. This is assessed on the candidate's written application. Support from the candidate's manager is essential. Executive sponsors for the project have been identified in each Area to lead the preliminary selection process, and the Area Health Services make recommendations regarding candidates to the Executive Director of IRCST.

## **Expectations of participants**

Committing to the Rural Research Capacity Building Program is a considerable responsibility. Most candidates find it a challenging, but rewarding undertaking. Course participants will be asked to work towards agreed milestones and provide regular feedback on progress. Participants are expected to attend all face-to-face meetings and to regularly participate in organised teleconferences. Participants will also be required to write a formal report at the conclusion of the study and may be invited to present their research study to the Executive Committee of the Institute at the conclusion of their project. Participants will also be supported to present their completed research at the Rural Research Colloquium and/or other external conferences and prepare their findings for peer review publication.

The research projects will be administered through the NSW IRCST in partnership with the Area Health Services. The NSW IRCST reserves the right to withdraw funding for projects which do not meet established research milestones within appropriate timeframes. Applicants need to be aware that ethics approval is likely to be required and this will be undertaken within each Area Health Service. Local Area policy/procedure for gaining ethics approval for a research project should be checked by the candidate. In NSW Health, employees are expected to comply with the following policies relating to ethics (available on the NSW Health intranet site):

- Doc. No. GL2005\_059 NSW Human Research Ethics Committees - Operations Manual for NSW Health

- Doc No. PD2005\_205 Research Involving Humans Responsibilities of AHS
- Doc No. PD2007\_026 Human Research Ethics Committees: National Ethics Application Form - Application within NSW Health
- PD2007\_043 Research- Authorisation of proposals to conduct research on humans within NSW Public Health System

### Key milestones for 2008 intake

Date	Milestone
Friday June 27 <sup>th</sup> 2008	Applications close
July 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2008	Successful applicants notified
September 29 <sup>th</sup> - October 3 <sup>rd</sup> 2008	Research methods short course in Sydney
October 2008	Mentors allocated for all candidates
January-April 2009	Ethics applications to be submitted
February-March 2009	Face to face workshop (date to be confirmed)
April- December 2009	Data collection and analysis to be completed
Date to be confirmed 2009	Rural Research Colloquium
January- June 2010	write up final report, prepare articles for publication
June 2010	final reports due and formal program concludes

### Information to assist in the preparation of your application

Applicants are encouraged to contact the Institute to discuss their research ideas prior to submitting their application. Applicants are also encouraged to access the Primary Health Care Research and Information Service (PHCRIS) website for fact sheets and information on research, ethics and evaluation.

<http://www.phcris.org.au/infobytes/index.php>

Applicants should consider the following documents in completing their application and demonstrate links to one or more of the following:

- Priorities identified in Area Health Service Plans
- Identified Area Health Service research priorities
- NSW Rural Health Plan
- Clinical Redesign models of care
- Clinical governance priorities
- NSW IRCST Strategic and Business Plans
- Fit for the Future: Future Directions for Health in NSW- towards 2025
- A New Direction for NSW: State Health Plan- towards 2010

# APPLICATION

Please note: Existing researchers or individuals undertaking a higher degree which involves a significant research component are not eligible to apply.

**Applications should be clear and concise and must contain the following:**

1. Cover page with candidate **identification details** - name, address, position, qualifications, full time or part time status, place of work contact details - landline, mobile, email. Please indicate the address to be used for correspondence. Managers name, position, address for correspondence should also be included.
2. Applicants should also address the following **assessment criteria**:
  1. Demonstrated interest in and commitment to health service improvement
  2. Description of individual goals applicant would like to achieve from participating in the Rural Research Capacity Building program
  3. Description of the strategies the applicant proposes to commit time to undertake research or evaluation for the duration of the program (including a description of proposed backfill arrangements)
  4. Demonstrated ability to make independent judgements and achieve objectives
  5. Highly developed interpersonal, oral, and written communication skills
  6. Excellent attention to detail, the ability to prioritise workloads and meet deadlines
  7. Demonstrated ability to work harmoniously and cooperatively with other people
  8. Description of research experience to date (if any)
  9. A current NSW drivers licence
  10. Signed candidate agreement (attached)
  11. Signed recommendation from your manager (attached)
  12. **Optional**: inclusion of a brief **Curriculum Vitae** highlighting recent experience. This should not exceed three pages (do not include copies of certificates etc.).
3. Provide a **description of your research proposal** using the following headings as a guide:
  1. **Research question**: What is the question I plan to answer?
  2. **Rationale**: Why is it important to rural health (and my Department or Area Health Service) that I answer this question?
  3. **Background**: What does the existing literature say about this problem? (Please reference any claims).
  4. **Study design**: Ideas so far about how you plan to collect and analyse the data
  5. **Feasibility**: How feasible do you think it is to answer this question given that the research program allows 97 working days to complete this? Please describe here any factors you anticipate may hinder your progress (eg. Waiting on commencement of program you intend to evaluate)

Please submit your application to your respective AHS Executive Sponsor by June 27<sup>th</sup> 2008.

Expressions of interest due June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Area Health Service employees are to apply to:

Greater Western Area Health Service      Trish Strachan  
Director, Population Health, Planning & Performance  
PO Box 4061  
Dubbo NSW 2830

Hunter New England Area Health Service      Kim Browne  
Director, Population Health, Planning & Performance  
Locked Bag 1  
New Lambton NSW 2305

Greater Southern Area Health Service      Maggie Jamieson  
Director, Population Health, Planning & Performance  
PO Box 1845  
(34 Lowe St),  
Queanbeyan NSW 2620

North Coast Area Health Service      Vahid Saberi  
Director, Population Health, Planning & Performance  
North Coast Area Health Service  
PO Box 498  
Lismore NSW 2480

Employees of South Eastern Sydney/Illawarra Area Health Service, NSW Ambulance and Justice Health should contact Emma or Anne (details below) for details of who to send your application to.

**General enquiries to:**

Emma Webster or Anne Field  
NSW Institute of Rural Clinical Services and Training  
PO Box 4061 Dubbo, NSW 2830  
Phone (02) 6841 2361  
Email: [emma.webster@gwahs.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:emma.webster@gwahs.health.nsw.gov.au)  
or [anne.field@gwahs.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:anne.field@gwahs.health.nsw.gov.au)

## Checklist

Before you submit your application, please check you have completed all requirements:

- Have you completed the Candidate Agreement?
- Have you included ALL of your contact details in your application?
- Have you discussed the Rural Research Capacity Building Program with your manager and had them complete the Manager Agreement?
- Have you addressed the assessment criteria?
- Have you included an outline of your research proposal?
- Does your research proposal address Area Health Service or Rural Health priority areas?

## Candidate Agreement

I, \_\_\_\_\_ understand that in submitting my application to the Rural Research Capacity Building Program I agree to undertake the following if selected:

- Participate in the Research Methods Short Course Sept 29<sup>th</sup>- Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Participate in Annual face to face research workshops
- Submit quarterly progress reports to NSW IRCST in accordance with schedule
- Submit my research project for ethics approval by April 2009
- Complete data collection and analysis by December 2009
- Complete my research project report, including a literature review by June 2010
- Complete an article for peer review on my research topic by June 2010
- Present my research findings at a relevant conference by September 2010
- Commit to taking 97 research days between July 2008 and June 2010 to undertake the research

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Manager Agreement

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have read the potential candidate's application and understand that in supporting this application:

- I have read or had discussions with the potential candidate and think that their research will be useful to rural health and/or our department or Area Health Service.
- I understand they will require 97 research days, including attendance at compulsory face to face workshops. I undertake to support them to obtain backfill for the same and agree with the proposed strategies outlined in the candidate's application regarding this.
- I understand that up to 97 days (45 in year 1 and 52 in year 2) backfill are provided at \$335 per day. I understand that this is equivalent to one day per week for the duration of the project and may be taken in blocks if mutually agreeable to both the potential candidate and myself. I am able to charge these days directly to the research cost centre, or am able to journal monies over using the research cost centre provided by Population Health, Planning and Performance in my AHS. Unless negotiated with IRCST, this money is to be used **only** for backfill for the successful candidate so they may be released to undertake their research.
- It is my opinion that the potential candidate has suitable skills and personal attributes for a program of this nature.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_