



RESEARCH PROJECT – REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

ADDRESSING THE AVAILABILITY OF PRACTICAL PLACEMENTS IN ALLIED HEALTH EDUCATION

Preamble

The Australian Council of Deans of Health Sciences (ACDHS) is the peak representative organisation for Australian universities that provide education in the clinical allied health sciences. We represent universities that provide courses in: audiology; chiropractic, counselling, clinical exercise physiology / sport and exercise science; medical laboratory science; nutrition and dietetics; occupational therapy; optometry; orthoptics; paramedicine; pharmacy; physiotherapy; podiatry; prosthetics and orthotics; psychology; medical radiation science; social work; and speech pathology.

The ACDHS has recognised the need for practical placements to not only be available, but to be cost effective and appropriately distributed, in order for mandatory courses and professional accreditation requirements to be met. Further, the lack of readily available placements nationally is a direct roadblock preventing the much-needed scaling up of allied health courses in order to meet workforce needs. Rural and remote locations as well as metropolitan areas all face inadequate availability and distribution of placements. This is seen as one of the most critical educational issues facing the preparation of the allied health workforce in this country. Currently there is suboptimal supply and demand of allied health professionals in disability services, aged care, health and community services.

There are several factors known to adversely impact the availability of practical placements for allied health students nationally. It is not the intention of ACDHS to define or restate the known current obstacles nor is it the core purpose of this initiative. ACDHS is seeking to develop an evidence based paper that proposes several key solutions to the supply of allied health placements that would allow universities to increase enrolments and/or offer new allied health courses, secure in the knowledge that they would be able to access sufficient numbers, type and high quality placements for students. This wicked problem is multifaceted and will require multiple and/or well integrated whole of sector and government driven solutions.

There is great and pressing need for a fundamental improvement in the system and parameters of how placements are made available and undertaken, in order to overhaul what must become a sustainable systemic response, over the next several years.

Scope

- i. The research project will identify, define and recommend solutions to significantly improve the availability of substantially more placements for allied health students nationally. We are seeking evidence based, multidisciplinary, large scale recommendations that will make available substantially more allied health placements nationally in the health, disability, aged care and education sectors in metropolitan and rural and remote locations
- ii. Considering current and future course accreditation requirements develop a clear set of universal principles defining what can and cannot be classified as meeting the requirements of an allied health placement.
- iii. The research report must consider a substantive sample of all allied health professional entry degree programs (undergraduate and postgraduate). This should include AHPRA and non-AHPRA accredited programs and programs that have competency based practical assessment and those that include time(hours)-based practical placement requirements. Sufficient depth of examination across a representative sample of programs is required.
- iv. High-level and more immediate recommendations that would benefit all allied health programs should be identified as a priority. There may be recommendations that serve some but not all allied health programs. However, we are looking for recommendations and solutions that address the majority of allied health placement requirements. If recommendations are not suitable for some allied health degrees this should be noted and explained.
- v. The research report should highlight where recommendations are made that may be suitable for rural and remote locations but not metropolitan settings and vice versa. Domestic and international case studies and models should be considered. Any material differences that may prevent nationwide application of a recommendation should be noted.
- vi. Examination of barriers/enablers and other factors affecting placement availability appropriate to First Nations, and vulnerable student groups should be considered and outlined.

Exclusions, adjacent or related issues.

The ACDHS note the strengths of the medical and nursing professions in establishing placement programs over the long term. It may be that recommendations determined in the research report would benefit health professions beyond allied health, and that should be noted. However, the first and foremost priority is the enhancement of placement availability across the range of discipline of allied health.

University run placements (e.g., University clinics – both onsite and offsite) shall be excluded from the scope.

Request for Expressions of Interest

Eligibility

- Collaborative submissions of more than one institution or organisation working together are welcome. A lead entity and all contractual partners are to be identified.

- Organisations submitting a proposal must include a current ACDHS member institution as party to the research project.
- All current ACDHS members are eligible to apply individually or with partner organisations.
- Proposals where an ACDHS member is the lead partner in a consortia or joint application are preferred.

Budget

This is a budget-limited request (up to \$100,000 plus GST) for a team to undertake the proposed project.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to:

Recommend creative and sustainable solutions to address the obstacles to practical placement availability for allied health students nationally with clear recommendations that are capable of being implemented.

The report should model the impact of each recommendations considering what may be undertaken over a time horizon of the next 6 years (ending 2030).

The project must consider:

- i. Distribution and availability of placements including but not limited to: metropolitan; regional; rural and remote settings; public hospital; private practice; community health, disability, aged care and education service settings.
- ii. Tertiary (university undergraduate and postgraduate education qualification professional entry programs AQF 7-9)
- iii. All Allied Health disciplines. Noting that with the variances of discipline requirements and settings, some recommendations may serve many but not all discipline programs. Recommendations must address placement solutions for a majority of disciplines and/or contain a combination of recommendations that together will address placements for all disciplines.
- iv. Policy responses, funding sources, funding authorities and types of funding.
- v. Recommendations must take account of regulatory and accreditation requirements (current or proposed amendments) including any influence on availability of placements in required and optional settings e.g. public hospitals or private practice or in community settings.
- vi. Government policy context. Proposals that can where possible establish alignment with government policy settings and programs, recognising this may not be possible in all cases.

Project Terms

The project must be completed within 9 months from commencement with an indicative timetable of March 2024 – February 1st, 2025. September 30th being the due date for a draft report to be provided. The project team will be required to attend and present their draft recommendations at the ACDHS symposium in late October, 2024.

The project team are required to meet with an ACDHS Board delegation as soon as practical after

selection, as an inception briefing to ensure alignment and clarification on expectations.

Payment of \$35,000(+GST) will be made upon contract execution, one payment of \$40,000(+GST) will be made at submission of the draft report and a final payment of \$25,000(+GST) upon acceptance and approval of the final report by the ACDHS Assessment Panel (see Assessment Process). Applicants may wish to provide further in-kind support to the project; this should be clearly specified in the application.

The ACDHS will exercise its rights to use the findings contained within the final report of this work to support its advocacy activities (which may include media releases, government engagement and other forms of communication in non-peer reviewed publications). The team that conducts this research will retain the right to publish the findings of this work in peer-reviewed academic publications at a time not before the express written approval of ACDHS. This is to provide a window for government and stakeholder engagement by ACDHS before wider publication. ACDHS also request that up to 2 coauthors of the report be available to participate in presenting the report at a minimum two initial forums/meetings after approval and finalisation.

The ACDHS requests a digital copy of any manuscripts submitted for publication prior to publication but does not seek any editorial rights over these works. An electronic copy of all files produced in completion of the research project is to be submitted in secure format to ACDHS.

Output

The required outputs of the project form terms of the funded contractual agreement. Key outputs of the research project is a 30–50-page report that potentially includes:

- 1) High level executive summary, key findings and recommendations
- 2) Summary of data sources
- 3) Description of allied health placement requirements
- 4) Universal descriptor of what constitutes an allied health placement
- 5) Barriers and Enablers to the provision of placements
- 6) Recommendations and rationale
- 7) Illustrative case studies
- 8) Options considered but not recommended.
- 9) Recommendation of an additional future stage of related research that may continue the project purpose.
- 10) References and sources.

How to Apply

To apply for this research project please provide:

1. A cover letter naming the lead application entity with which a project agreement would be formed and highlighting the contact details of a representative of the lead application entity who has authority to be signatory to the agreement to conduct this work. Identify the legal entity form and its registered office.
2. A description (max 5 page) of the proposed methodology including approach, key deliverables, feasibility and references sections. Any in-kind support provided by the applicant should also be specified.

3. Overarching response to the scope and purpose of the research project.
4. A high-level proposed schedule of works in relevant milestone stages.
5. Description of the team and the combined expertise that will ensure a high quality outcome of the project
6. Curriculum Vitae for each member of the applicant team in order of responsibility; highlighting their expertise and experience to conduct the proposed work and their proposed role responsibilities in the project.

SUBMISSIONS:

Please provide your proposal in MS Word or PDF file format to: secretariat@acdhs.edu.au by **5pm AEDT Friday March 1st, 2024** Late proposals may be considered at the discretion of the ACDHS panel.

In the subject line please add the words, Research Proposal, followed by one entity name
e.g “RESEARCH PROPOSAL _Australia University ”

Assessment Process

A 3-person Assessment Panel will be formed and approved by the ACDHS Board and assisted by the Company Secretary to determine the successful applicants and approve the final report. The Assessment Panel will be drawn from ACDHS members without actual or perceived conflicts of interest with the applicant team or institution. The Panel’s assessment of proposals will be based on four assessment criteria (equally weighted) of:

1. Rigor and applicability of methodology.
2. Feasibility of methodology - can it reasonably be completed within the timeframe and with the resources specified.
3. Extent to which the range of settings and disciplines of allied health and various placement requirements have been addressed in the methodology.
4. Relevant experience and expertise of the proposed team.

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- Contact
enquiries@acdhs.edu.au
 - For information about ACDHS
www.acdhs.edu.au