

Breakout Session Summary – Session 2

Innovative solutions to address GP Registrar workforce issues in WA

Participants highlighted several innovative solutions:

- **Sharing GP Registrars:** Rotations between health services, such as the Kalgoorlie/Leonora rotations, allow for more comprehensive training and better resource utilisation.
- **Single Employer Model (SEM).**
- **Accommodation subsidies:** Community initiatives involving local shires and practices provide subsidies to make living arrangements more affordable for registrars, thus improving their retention and satisfaction.
- **Dial-a-Supervisor:** Utilising external GPs as a dial-a-supervisor helps address the shortage of GP supervisors by offering remote supervision and guidance.
- **Social welcoming strategies:** Implementing support mechanisms such as WhatsApp networking groups and Balint groups to foster a sense of community and provide emotional support to registrars.

Adapting successful initiatives from other regions

Participants considered various successful initiatives from other regions for adaptation:

- **Hub and spoke models:** These systems centralise resources and expertise while extending services to remote areas.
- **Centre for excellence in Riverland, SA:** This model offers a three-year contract with access to leave, training, and family support, providing a stable and supportive environment for GP Registrars.
- **Remote supervision models:** Programs such as the Remote Vocational Training Scheme offer remote supervision and mentoring, making it feasible to train Registrars in underserved areas.
- **Increased medical placements:** Providing more opportunities for pre-vocational doctors to gain exposure to primary care settings, thereby encouraging them to pursue careers as GPs.
- **Innovative childcare solutions:** Other organisations have 'in-house' childcare.

Necessary support or resources for effective implementation

To ensure effective implementation, participants identified the following necessary supports:

- **Funding and investment:** Both government and private entities, such as mining companies, need to invest in these initiatives to ensure their success and sustainability.
- **Organisational leads and coordination:** Establishing clear leadership and coordination roles, such as those seen in SEM models, to streamline processes and support the initiatives.
- **Accommodation and resources:** Providing access to accommodation and necessary resources for remote supervision, including investments in IT and administrative support, to facilitate the training process.
- **Streamlined processes and incentives:** Creating streamlined processes and offering incentives for supervision and training hubs to attract and retain GP supervisors.

Measures to ensure the sustainability of innovative solutions

To ensure the sustainability of the proposed innovative solutions, the following measures were recommended:

- Independent SEM operations: Establishing independent operations with strong communication links among hospitals, GPs, and other stakeholders to maintain consistency.
- Pooling resources: Standardising processes and creating robust health and safety frameworks to ensure the efficient use of resources and long-term sustainability.
- Securing long-term funding: Ensuring funding beyond political cycles by establishing collaborative arrangements across all levels of government to support the initiatives.
- Local engagement: Engaging local communities by providing housing and childcare support for registrars and their families to create a supportive environment.

Next steps for effective implementation

Participants outlined the following key next steps for effective implementation:

1. Identifying coordinators and candidates: Selecting third-party coordinators for SEM and suitable candidates for employment in new models to ensure proper oversight and execution.
2. Political lobbying for childcare support: Engaging in political lobbying to secure childcare support and addressing supervisor support through the formation of working parties.
3. Organising round tables: Bringing together key stakeholders, such as the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine and Rural Health West and universities, to develop evidence-based solutions that address the identified issues.
4. Trialling pilot programs: Implementing small pilot programs to test solutions early and make necessary adjustments before scaling up to full implementation.

Support needed from other stakeholders

The following support from other stakeholders was deemed necessary:

- Investment and buy-in: Securing investment and buy-in from key organisations by clearly communicating the benefits of the proposed initiatives.
- Legislative reviews: Conducting federal and state reviews of existing legislation and identifying barriers to implementation to facilitate smoother execution.
- Collaborative data sharing: Promoting collaboration for data sharing, refining funding models, and providing necessary infrastructure to support the initiatives.
- Non-medical support: Addressing non-medical barriers, such as housing and childcare, through community and shire collaborations to support GP Registrars and their families.

This information will be shared in WA Primary Health Alliance's June 2025 workforce need and training capacity report to the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.