Purpose fit or fit for purpose: development resources for rural allied health

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Purpose
The purpose of this presentation is to provide case study examples of two learning and development resources that have been developed to support rural and remote Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) in Queensland Health.

Background
In response to an identified need to provide structured learning and development programs to support rural and remote AHPs, two programs were implemented by the Cunningham Centre in mid-2012, Flying Start Queensland Health (FSQH) and the Allied Health HP3 to HP4 Rural Development Pathway (AHRDP). The two programs complement professional supervision and mentoring arrangements by providing the resources to support development from new graduate to mid-career professional level.

Organisational context
A number of workforce factors within Queensland Health provided the impetus for the development of these resources:

  The policy outlines the need for all allied health professional to participate in professional support activities such as professional supervision or mentoring. The policy came into effect in mid 2011.

- Identified need to support new starter allied health professionals
  In line with recommendations from the Ministerial Taskforce on Clinical Education and Training (2007), Queensland Health undertook a training needs analysis across the allied health disciplines to assist in determining current and emerging gaps in clinical education and training. Support for new starters, including new graduates was identified as a need across most disciplines.

- Industrial changes
  The implementation of the Health Practitioner (Queensland Health) Certified Agreement (No. 1) 2007 http://www.health.qld.gov.au/eb/current_agree.asp saw many rural and remote positions classified as senior roles (HP4), generally due to the level of clinical and professional independence required in work teams with few or no other practitioners of the same discipline. Historically, new or recent graduates have sometimes been recruited to rural and remote positions. This gave rise to the need to provide a rigorous, structured, appropriate approach to the recruitment and support of early career professionals in rural and remote allied health positions state-wide.
**Development resources**


  Flying Start Queensland Health is a web-based program designed to increase the confidence and competence of new starter allied health professionals. It is learner-directed, with an emphasis on building a progressive portfolio of professional development evidence through reflective learning activities. The resource has been developed to complement professional support practices such as supervision and mentoring.

  The intellectual property for the website Flying Start NHS was licensed from NHS (Education for Scotland) as an existing and proven successful online training system and then contextualised for Queensland Health’s needs. FSQH could be described as “fit for purpose” as the need was identified and then a product purchased to meet that need.


  AHRDP was developed by Queensland Health as an adjunct to a progression process and is focused on rural and remote AHPs. This progression process was possible through the development of the human resource policy [HP3 to HP4 Rural Development Pathway](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/qhpolicy/docs/pol/qh-pol-382.pdf).

  Despite a vast array of individually useful materials there was no framework or cohesive product available that met the training needs of the target group. A framework with support modules and development resources were developed in-house specifically to address the needs of these clinicians. AHRDP was therefore created as a “purpose fit” resource.

**Conclusions**

- These two case study examples of rural allied health development programs highlight the potential for contextualising existing development resources or developing new resources depending on the circumstances

- Professional Support practices such as supervision and mentoring are key to the implementation and effectiveness of these development resources for rural allied health

Any further information regarding the development or application of these resources can be directed to the Cunningham Centre.