

SECTION 2 – Project Information

Project Title:

Using an integrated logic model to improve workforce retention and maximise sustainability of small rural and remote health care services.

Project Synopsis

The need to ensure an adequate and appropriately qualified health workforce is the foremost issue underpinning the provision of sustainable primary health care services in small rural and remote communities where health needs are greatest and access to services poorest. Unfortunately, despite multiple strategies and initiatives, attempts at recruiting new health workers face ongoing difficulties. Rather, the key to ensuring appropriate, continuous, co-ordinated, high quality primary health care for residents of rural and remote communities lies in integrated and effective workforce retention strategies. Specifically, the most promising workforce retention measures are those that build an attractive organisational and workplace environment.

There are very few evaluations that show how retention policies can improve the attractiveness and sustainability of workplace environments and worker satisfaction so that retention is increased and ‘triggers’ to leave are minimised. Our Stream 6 study showed that an effective workforce retention strategy should comprise an integrated ‘package’ of five broad inter-related components within which interventions target specific workforce needs. Based on this research, the proposed study will identify *sentinel indicators* and develop *performance benchmarks* for measuring workforce retention, organisation and succession. Such integrated, multifaceted approaches are those most likely to result in sustainable outcomes. In order to ensure the continuation of this integrated work, this study will utilise an evidence-based logic model for small rural and remote primary health services. It will develop a framework based on this logic model by which rural and remote PHC services can plan, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of measures designed to improve workforce recruitment and retention, and thereby increase access to quality primary health care.