



## RESOURCE 4: ESTABLISHING ALLIED HEALTH RURAL GENERALIST TRAINING POSITIONS

### OVERVIEW

This document defines the role requirements for an Allied Health Rural Generalist Training Position (AHRG Training Position), details the associated resourcing implications, and provides information on issues to consider when determining workplace suitability for establishing a position. Information is also provided to guide the operational decisions and planning for establishing an AHRG Training Position.

### ROLE REQUIREMENTS OF AHRG TRAINING POSITIONS

An 'AHRG Training Position' is a role designed to support the development of an early career professional from graduate-level competency through to a proficient rural generalist practitioner in an allied health profession. To be considered an AHRG Training Position, and use this title, the AHRG Training Position must include the following components. These components should be explicitly identified in role documentation and supporting processes.

- 1) Dedicated **development and supervision time** of at least 0.1FTE
- 2) Participation in a formal **rural generalist education program** currently offered by James Cook University in collaboration with the Queensland University of Technology
- 3) A formal **development plan** aligned with the rural generalist education program and requirements of the employing service
- 4) **Development funding** to support participation in the education program
- 5) Regular formal supervision with **profession-specific local supervisor**. For graduates the supervisor should be co-located a minimum of 50 percent of work hours to provide ad hoc support and frequent work-based training. Scheduled and formal supervision arrangements should also be established and strictly maintained.

For practitioners with two or more years professional experience, more flexible profession-specific and inter-professional supervision arrangements can be implemented which may include a combination of on-site and remote supervision. Scheduled and formal supervision arrangements should also be established and strictly maintained

- 6) Contribution to rural generalist **service development strategies** that improve client care and service outcomes. This is a mandatory requirement of AHRG Training Positions. It is also an expectation of the Rural Generalist Program that participants will be involved in a service development project and apply learnings from their training modules to the local strategy

Variations to the above components will need to be formally trialled and evaluated for any position based on those varied components to be considered an AHRG Training Position

### RESOURCING REQUIREMENTS FOR AHRG TRAINING POSITIONS

- Position costs are consistent with any other entry level or early career role (salary, on-costs, entitlements, accommodation, telecommunications, etc.) excepting that a minimum 0.1 FTE of the position will be allocated to development, training and supervision activities. This will need to be accounted for in workflow and activity expectations of the position, and potentially in the business modelling.
- The primary clinical supervisor will allocate approximately one hour per week for formal supervision and additional time for work-place based support and teaching. This should be broadly consistent with the commitment to supervision and support for any other early career practitioner in the work unit.
- Time investment of the manager and team and any related resourcing requirements for the service development project. Resource requirements will be defined by the project adopted by the team in consultation with service leaders e.g. purchase of telehealth equipment for a new service.



- The costs of the Rural Generalist Program are defined by James Cook University (JCU), the administering institution. Fee estimates are provided below but current information should be sourced from JCU at <https://www.jcu.edu.au/courses-and-study>.
  - **Level 1:** Twelve modules (equivalent to 6 credit points) at \$800 (excl. GST) per module. Delivered online.
  - **Level 2:** Eight subjects (24 credit points) Graduate Diploma course. Subject costs consistent with similar JCU postgraduate courses (approximately \$3,285 per subject). Participants who have completed Level 1 or have other relevant qualifications or experience can apply for credit for up to 9 credit points as recognition of prior learning. Depending on subject choice, some block study or other travel may be required.
  - Additional costs be incurred for study resources, IT resources and data use.

AHRG Training Positions can be created that support the incumbent to complete the Level 1 program only (up to 24 months) or Level 2 program only (up to 24 months) or the Level 1 and 2 (up to 36 months).

- Other development costs may be incurred for work shadowing or clinical placements, additional courses outside the Rural Generalist Program, mandatory training etc.

## **WORKPLACE SUITABILITY FOR ESTABLISHING AHRG TRAINING POSITIONS**

Successful implementation of an AHRG Training Position requires employing organisations to have adequate capacity to support the training and service development aspects of the role. Health services, teams and individual position holders that are suitable and have the capacity to implement the supervision, support, resourcing and leadership required of an AHRG Training Position include:

- Early career positions with a co-located or highly accessible, experienced, profession-specific supervisor with reasonable expectation of stable staffing.
- Entry level positions with a recent history of unstable staffing or average tenure of less than 2 years present a good opportunity for redesign as an AHRG Training Position as the marginal cost is likely to be minimal and will be outweighed by the potential benefits of increased tenure and locally workforce development.
- A work unit that can commit to strictly quarantining a minimum of 0.1FTE to development and supervision time. If this is not feasible, an AHRG Training Position is a poor choice as a staffing strategy as it will be challenging for the incumbent to successfully take part in the education program and to meet the training requirements of the position.
- A work unit that has the capacity to develop, implement and trial service development strategies as part of their continuous quality improvement cycle. As an early career practitioner, the AHRG Training Position incumbent will not lead the service development project. The team leader or other senior practitioner needs to be responsible for overseeing the initiative. The broader team must be engaged in, or contribute to, the service development strategies and have access to the required skill sets and resources to implement and evaluate / monitor the service change.

## **Situations where it may be inappropriate to establish an AHRG Training Position**

- Teams with limited capacity to support rural generalist service development strategies are a poor option for establishing an AHRG Training Position.
- A service with significant demand management problems (e.g. long waiting lists and high overtime) is a poor option for adding an inexperienced staff member as the training and supervision load can amplify team stress and service capacity issues.
- Services with a narrow focus or a complex caseload are not suited to the addition of an early career practitioner in an AHRG Training Position. A work unit should have adequate clinical demand and a caseload mix appropriate for employment of an early career practitioner.

For advice on assessing the suitability of your organisation or work unit implementing an AHRG Training Position contact SARRAH.



## CREATING AN AHRG TRAINING POSITION

Guided by the information above, four key questions need to be answered to create an AHRG Training Position. Answers to these questions will vary depending on the local work unit structure, available resources, and local recruitment needs.

- 1) How will the position be created in the organisation?
- 2) How will the position be resourced?
- 3) What is the term and status of the position?
- 4) What is the term and status of the incumbent's employment?

Answers to these questions will guide the processes for implementing the AHRG Training Position.

### 1) HOW WILL THE POSITION BE CREATED IN THE ORGANISATION?

There is no central funding or coordination of Allied Health Rural Generalist Training Positions across sectors. Organisations can scope and develop a model of implementation that suits their local circumstances and needs. SARRAH can provide advice during the scoping and implementation phase.

### 2) HOW WILL THE POSITION BE RESOURCED?

The approach to implementation will impact the quantum of resources needed for an AHRG Training Position. For example, redesign of an existing position will have a different direct cost to establishing a supernumerary training role. There are several ways to approach securing the required resources.

- **Workforce redesign:** A service can create an AHRG Training Position by redesigning how the internal staffing resources of the local work unit are used.

#### EXAMPLE

A health service has a total of 4.4FTE occupational therapy (OT) positions. Three fractional positions have stable, long-term incumbents with between 6 and 18 years' professional experience.

The other two 1.0 FTE positions are chronically unfilled or filled only temporarily by locums. This results in periods of limited staffing, a need to restrict services, and significant stress for the permanent staff.

At a time when both positions are not filled, the team redesigns the organisational structure and workforce establishment to create two OT AHRG Training Positions. Surplus funding available from appointment of staff to these junior positions is used to top-up one of the fractional senior OT positions by 0.2 FTE to provide supervision and work-based training for the AHRG Training Positions. The other senior positions also contribute to the training and supervision of the AHRG Training Positions to develop and maintain their own supervision skills.

Such an approach can result in more stable and predictable staffing that is easier to manage from a recruitment perspective, is cost neutral, provides a consistent service to the community through more reliable staffing, and offers better opportunities for leave cover. The process also presents the opportunity to invest in succession planning and building a local workforce.

- **Growth funding:** From time to time, services may receive growth funding from their organisation or increase in revenue. A local work unit may allocate this funding for a designated AHRG Training Position, rather than adding to an existing flat workforce structure comprised of senior roles and lacking internal development opportunities.
- **Centralised funding:** In some organisations, particularly larger service providers, funding may be managed at an organisation-level and provided to local work units to implement a position. This may resource an entire supernumerary AHRG Training Position, or just meet the additional resource requirements of an AHRG Training Position such as enrolment fees. In this scenario, an



organisation selection process may be required, as well as documentation that defines the funding offer and obligations of all parties with respect to the funding.

***The templates provided in the Allied Health Rural Generalist Pathway Toolkit can be used by organisations developing a centralised funding model.***

- **External funding:** Funding contributions towards AHRG Training Positions are made available from an entity that is external to the organisation and local work unit.

In this scenario, a service agreement or similar is likely to govern the arrangements between the health service and external funding provider.

***The templates provided in the Allied Health Rural Generalist Pathway Toolkit may offer useful content to guide selection of funding recipients and the development of an agreement.***

### **3) WHAT IS THE TERM AND STATUS OF THE POSITION?**

- **Permanent:** The position is established permanently in the work unit. Note that this relates to the status of the position. The incumbent does not necessarily need to be recruited permanently to the role (see question 4 below).
- **Temporary:** The position is established temporarily in the work unit. This is most likely when there is non-recurrent support funding.

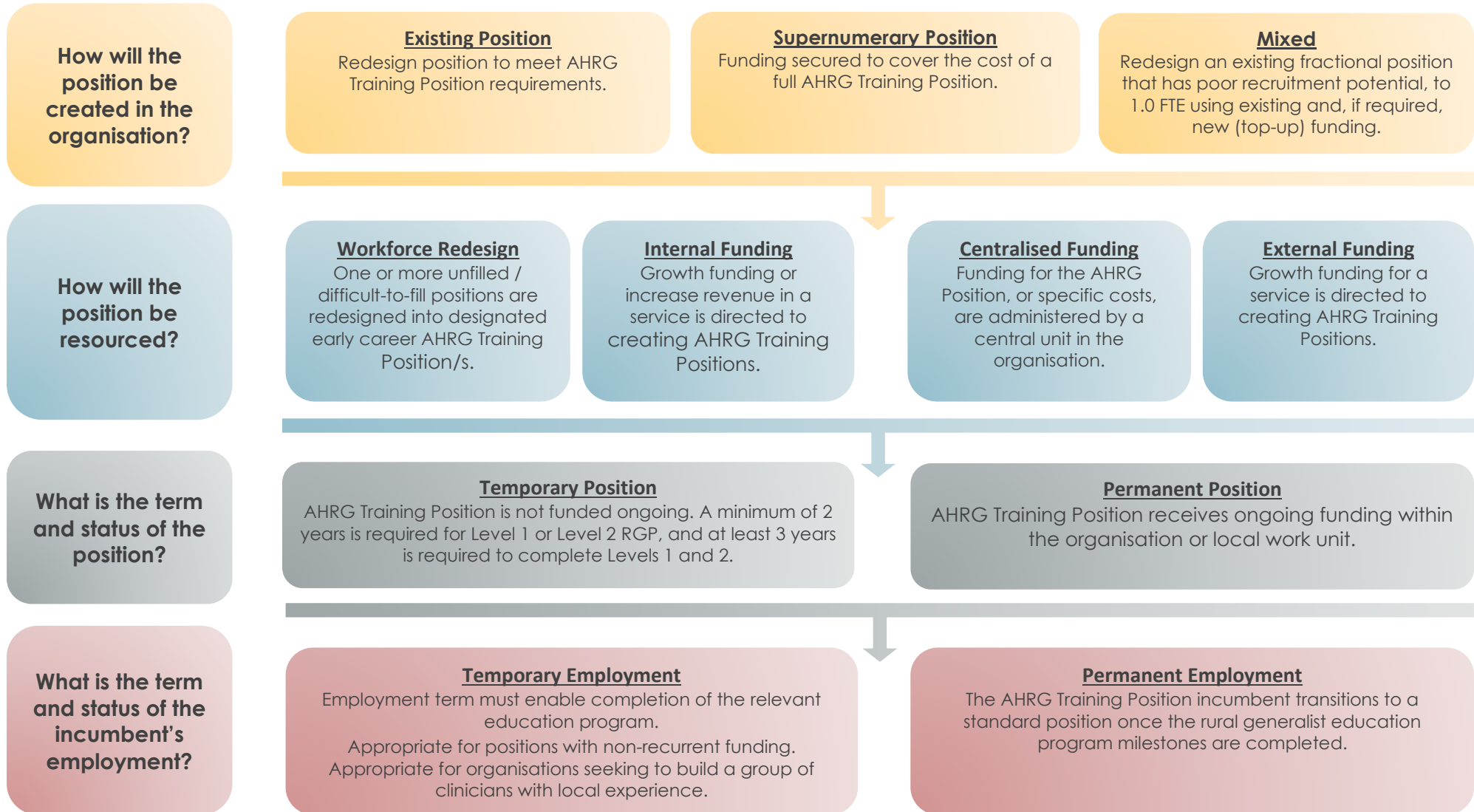
**NOTE:** The minimum term a position may be established is 2 years if the incumbent will be required to complete Level 1 or Level 2 of the Rural Generalist Program; or at least 3 years is required to complete both the Level 1 and Level 2 Rural Generalist Programs.

### **4) WHAT IS THE TERM AND STATUS OF THE INCUMBENT'S EMPLOYMENT?**

- **Temporary employment:** The incumbent is employed on a temporary basis in the role. The term of employment must be adequate to meet the rural generalist education program requirements (see above). Temporary employment is most relevant for non-recurrently funded (temporary) positions, and positions that the service wants to use as an ongoing graduate / early career role to build an expanding group of clinicians with local experience. This can support services in high growth areas to have an ongoing cycle of intake to the roles that leads to recruitment opportunities as other roles become available in the organisation.
- **Permanent employment:** The incumbent is permanently employed by the service. The employment model will need to be established such that the incumbent will transition to a standard position once the education milestones are met i.e. completion of the Level 1, Level 2, or the Level 1 and Level 2 Rural Generalist Program. Details of the terms of training support arrangements should be specified in the offer of employment. Permanent employment may be feasible even if the position is non-recurrently funded if turnover in the work unit produces an acceptable risk of managing the incumbent's appointment.



**FIGURE 1: KEY QUESTIONS TO GUIDE AHRG TRAINING POSITION PLANNING**





Once decisions have been made regarding the four questions, refer to the information sheet Role descriptions and recruitment to Allied Health Rural Generalist Training Positions available on the SARRAH website.

## **SUPPORTS AVAILABLE FOR AHRG TRAINING POSITION SITES**

AHRG Training Positions are being implemented across the country. To build collaboration, share resources, and facilitate learning and problem solving across sites. SARRAH can facilitate links between sites implementing AHRG Training Positions, to share experiences and resources, problem solve and access peer support.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Allied Health Rural Generalist Pathway is a collaborative initiative comprising a broad variety of organisations across the Australian and New Zealand healthcare sectors. The full list of organisations is available on the SARRAH website at [www.sarrah.org.au](http://www.sarrah.org.au).

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Resources relevant to AHRG Training Positions and the Rural Generalist Program are available through SARRAH at [www.sarrah.org.au](http://www.sarrah.org.au). SARRAH can provide advice to healthcare providers, commissioning agencies and other stakeholders to support scoping, development and implementation of the AHRGP.