



CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

DUE DATE: 16 January 2012

Two Policy Projects

Titles:

- 1. Model for flexible career pathways into the health professions for existing Aboriginal health staff**
- 2. The 'new workforce' and allied- and para-professional roles for Aboriginal people**

Duration of projects: 18-24 months, commencing in April 2012.

Expressions of interest in one or both of these projects are invited from suitably qualified teams. These projects have been shaped by discussions at a Workforce Roundtable held in September 2011, involving practitioners, educators and researchers with an interest in the Aboriginal health workforce. Interested parties are invited to consider the projects as defined below, and respond to the request for Expressions of Interest.

Responses may include proposed variations to the scope and objectives, argued on the basis of evidence and expert knowledge.

Project One: Model for flexible career pathways into the health professions for existing Aboriginal health staff

Background

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enter the health workforce later in working life and are employed at lower levels in the hierarchy of professions/occupations than the mainstream population. The professional profile is dominated by Aboriginal Health Worker positions, while numbers of nurses, doctors, managers and other health professionals are increasing slowly. A significant proportion are in clerical and technical occupations (such as orderly, porter, sterile supply), as well as in identified positions such as Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer. Increasing the number of Aboriginal health professionals, and their leadership in policy and practice, is seen as an important strategy for improving the capability of the health system.

The work of governments, the professions, education providers and employers to increase the numbers of Aboriginal people entering into and succeeding in traditional career pathways is vital, and there is evidence of improved recruitment of students and quality of curriculum for Aboriginal health in the higher education sector. However, it is suggested that there is important untapped potential for increasing participation and improving the status and influence of Aboriginal staff already working in the health sector (including their entry into the professions and leadership positions). While significant investment in development of existing Aboriginal staff may be required to enable progression into or between professions (for those with the desire and potential), the average return on that investment may be high given their existing knowledge of and commitment to working life in health care.

Focus and Scope

In this context, the Lowitja Institute seeks to commission an investigation into strategies and models that could be implemented nationally, and that could bring about opportunities to enable motivated and capable Aboriginal people already in the health workforce to transition into the health professions. This is not primarily about education providers. Rather it is about policies and programs to enable employers and workplaces to be active in identifying, mentoring and supporting the development of their existing Aboriginal staff. Education providers would be critical partners in such a model, for example by assisting employers in the selection process, and enabling entry based on 'readiness' as well as traditional criteria.

The purpose of this work is to influence high level policy makers, employers, education and training providers and Aboriginal staff by presenting a clear analysis of the existing approaches, opportunities and barriers as well as the basis for an innovative approach, including analysis/modeling of potential costs and benefits.

The expected outputs will be one or more papers to be published by the Institute; and a knowledge exchange plan developed and implemented jointly with the Institute.

Objectives

- 1) To analyse existing knowledge and understandings of the position of Aboriginal people in the health workforce and the factors affecting their capacity to develop their skills, knowledge and careers.
- 2) To identify existing and potential policies and strategies that would enable Aboriginal people to pursue non-traditional pathways within the health workforce, including transition to positions that require further full-time study.
- 3) If feasible, to propose policies and programs that would enable the required changes; and model the costs and benefits.
- 4) To prepare brief policy discussion paper/s that explain the problems and options and are written to communicate with a broad audience.
- 5) To work with the Institute to ensure effective communication and knowledge exchange of the model with stakeholders.

Project Two: The 'new workforce' and allied and para-professional roles for Aboriginal people

Background

National registration of Aboriginal Health Workers, and other current initiatives to strengthen their roles and career structures will make important changes for this workforce. At the same time, government initiatives to improve health and health care for Aboriginal people, most recently as part of COAG Closing the Gap strategies, require a significant increase in the Aboriginal workforce in health, with unknown impacts on career pathways and long-term opportunities for Aboriginal people. The situation of the existing Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer workforce is a related issue.

These changes also highlight the potential of other allied and para-professional roles as opportunities for Aboriginal people at entry or mid-career, such as dental assistants, allied health assistants, community health workers, population health workers etc.

Focus and scope

This project is focused on an examination of the potential workforce opportunities for Aboriginal people in para-professional roles (both identified Aboriginal positions and others), as both an entry point for recruiting more Aboriginal people into the health workforce and as an answer to the question 'what else can I do?' for those who are in mid-career in non-professional or para-professional roles and seek new opportunities.

The purpose of this work is to influence high level policy makers, employers, education and training providers and Aboriginal staff by presenting an overview of the available job opportunities and an analysis of enablers and barriers to movement and flexibility for Aboriginal people.

The expected outputs will be one or more papers to be published by the Institute; and a knowledge exchange plan developed and implemented jointly with the Institute.

Objectives

- 1) To examine the existing representation of Aboriginal people in non-professional and para-professional roles across the health industry; and analyse the range of para-professional and allied roles that could be available.
- 2) To analyse the educational and experience requirements for these roles. Also, to identify the nature of further education, training, development and support needed for Aboriginal people in the 'new' and 'old' workforce to enter or transition into those roles. To identify the potential funding methods.
- 3) To propose a systemic approach or strategies for making these opportunities broadly accessible for this workforce.
- 4) To work with the Institute to ensure effective communication and knowledge exchange of the model with stakeholders.

How to Apply

Expressions of Interest (EOIs) need to be lodged via email to Vanessa Harris at vanessa.harris@lowitja.org.au by close of business 4.30pm EST, 16 January 2012.

Your EOI should include

- Contact details (phone, email and postal address).
- A brief CV outlining your qualifications and experience.
- A statement addressing the below selection criteria.
- A breakdown of your proposed budget.

Selection Criteria

1. Capability as evidenced by proposal, qualifications and track record
2. Value for money
3. Availability and timeliness.

Process

All EOIs received by the due date will be evaluated against the criteria by an expert panel convened for this purpose. The panel will make a recommendation to the Institute. The next step with the team whose EOI is ranked highest will be to enter into the development of a more detailed agreement about the project.

Contact

For further enquires please contact Vanessa Harris, Program Manager on (08) 8946 7769 or email at vanessa.harris@lowitja.org.au.