

Rural Generalist Consolidation Program

2021 Transition Guidelines

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Introduction

The Rural Generalist Consolidation (RGC) program enables rural medical practitioners who have completed procedural advanced skills training with opportunities to maintain, refresh or update their advanced skills to transition to becoming independent Rural Generalists. This program was previously known as Consolidation of Skills (CoS).

In recognition of the important role of Rural Generalists to Victoria's public health system, the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (the department) funds the RGC program to contribute to development and retention of an adequately skilled Rural Generalist workforce in rural and regional Victoria.

Rural health services and rural general practices are provided funding to be allocated towards salary support and resource needs for prospective medical practitioners to consolidate their advanced skills. This includes supervised practice in advanced skills in procedural disciplines (such as anaesthetics, obstetrics and emergency medicine) and non-procedural disciplines (such as mental health, adult internal medicine and palliative care). Allocation will be based on identified need for advanced skills in rural health services.

2021 Transition Update

The RGC program will now be coordinated by the Victorian Rural Generalist Program (VRGP) and 2021 will therefore be a transition year while the RGC program is updated for 2022. Through consultation with many stakeholders and trainees, several key focus areas have been identified to help RGC funds better achieve the goal of supporting newly trained independent Rural Generalists. These key areas include:

- Emphasis on transitioning and developing independence in their chosen advanced skill in a rural hospital setting, with more of the consolidation occurring in the smaller health service of their intended future practice. This includes provision of direct and indirect supervision at the site of the intended future practice.
- A greater focus on using funds for specific and identified training purposes rather than just service provision in the hospital workforce.
- Greater flexibility and transparency in distribution of funding between smaller health services, regional health services and general practice.
- Developing support for smaller health services to manage and distribute RGC funds.

Definitions

The following definitions apply to this document:

Clinical Lead	Supports the delivery of Advanced Skills Training for GP in rural and regional Victoria.
Funding body	Refers to Department of Health Human & Services (DHHS).
Fund Holder	A Health Service nominated by VRGP that has been allocated the funding for the Trainee.
RGC Trainee	The applicant/participant in the RG Consolidation program. This includes all eligible participants as per the eligibility criteria below. Fellows are considered trainees whilst undertaking their Advanced Skills term only.
Supervisor	Doctor providing supervision during RG Consolidation placement, they may be a GP proceduralist, or a visiting specialist in the Health Service.
Training Organisation	The organisation that provides the training for RG registrars. This includes Regional Training Organisations (RTO's) for Australian General Practice Training Program (AGPT) participants, Remote Vocational Training Scheme (RVTS) and the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) for their Independent or RG100 Pathway.

Eligibility

Support under the RGC program is available to medical practitioners who have undertaken advanced skills training within the preceding 24-months or require upskilling in an existing skill after significant time away from advanced skill practice. Where medical practitioners have completed department funded advanced skills training outside Victoria, their advanced skill must be recognised by a third party e.g. an Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM) emergency certificate, Joint Consultative Committee on Anaesthesia (JCCA) certification or regional or rural hospital credentialing.

Medical practitioners eligible for support are:

- Victorian Rural Generalist registrars on a recognised training pathway such as the:
 - Australian General Practice Training Program (AGPT)
 - Remote Vocational Training Scheme (RVTS)
 - Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) Independent or RG100 Pathway

- Felloed General Practitioners obtaining advanced skills to sub-specialise as Rural Generalists. This includes RACGP fellows who have completed an advanced skill are part of obtaining the Fellowship in Advanced Rural General Practice (FARGP).
- Rural Generalists who have significantly de-skilled in a previously obtained advanced skill and require upskilling to return to advanced skill practice or have obtained a second (new) advanced skill and can demonstrate workforce need for the skill. Applications for this category will be considered on a case-by-case basis. As a guide, significant de-skilling would generally be considered to have been absent from advanced practice for a period of greater than 12 months and/or where a practitioner has been unable to utilise existing professional development programs such as the Commonwealth procedural grant. The VRGP may need guidance from the relevant college with regards to recency of practice and continuing professional development requirements as to whether the RGC program is suitable for these applicants.

Requirements

RGC applicants will be required to identify the broad training and support that they will require to develop independent practice in their advanced skill and how the RGC funding will be used to provide this support. This includes identifying the community in which the applicant intends to practice their skill (Primary Location).

It is anticipated that the majority of support needed for the applicant will be learning to use their skill independently in the small health service context (Primary Location) and therefore the distribution of funds should reflect this. Where further training or skill development is not able to be obtained in the smaller health service, then it is appropriate for trainees to return to their initial site of training or regional health service for ongoing training (Secondary Location).

Funding

The total amount of the RG Consolidation grant is a maximum of \$45,000 per applicant. Management of the funds is the responsibility of the identified health service (Fund Holder). During the transition year, there will be several funding models available and assistance can be provided by the VRGP Regional Networks as required to establish the most suitable models. Examples include:

- Funds managed entirely by the small rural health service or the regional health service
- Split funding between health services with a percentage provided to each as required by the identified training needs.

The VRGP Regional Network will coordinate the distribution of funds for RGC.

Funding is allocated to the Fund Holder and can be accessed for:

- Salary support for the RGC Trainees
- Payment for the Supervisor e.g. Supervising GPO
Note: Supervisors will not receive this funding if they are already being paid to provide supervision to the trainee by the Health Service.
- Payment for resources and activities that have been included in the Training Plan for the Trainee.

The Fund Holder and the RGC Trainee must review the learning plan and agree to the funding disbursements at the beginning of the placement.

All funds must be used towards activities for training and development of independent practice. Funds may not be used solely to address workforce shortages in a health service.

Training Plan

Each trainee undertaking an RGC placement must have a Training Plan in place that clearly states the learning outcomes to be achieved during the placement. The RGC training plan can cover multiple health services and multiple activities as agreed by the Fund Holder and Trainee prior to the RGC placement commencing.

RG Registrars are required to develop their Training Plan with their training organisation in accordance with the identified training needs determined by the registrar and the training organisation - such as how RG Consolidation will be integrated with training in Primary Care.

Formal monitoring of the trainees progression according to the Training Plan, is to be undertaken by the trainee and the RG Consolidation Supervisor at 3 monthly intervals for the duration of the RG Consolidation. The Training Organisation will be responsible for monitoring this progress and notify the VRGP early of any concerns in a trainee's progress towards reaching the goals on their Training Plan. The VRGP can provide assistance and/or intervention as required.

Duration of RG Consolidation

RG Consolidation funding is allocated for a 12-month period. Should extended leave be required during this time, then this is to be negotiated with the Fund Holder. Consideration will be given at the time of application to Training Plans that extend over a longer time frame, such as in the case of a trainee who completes their advanced skill earlier in their training and may require longer to consolidate that skill while working towards fellowship. Applications for a 12-month extension (to total 24-months) may also be considered and should be made directly to the VRGP.

Applications

To be considered for funding under the RGC program, VRGP requires a completed application.

Fellowed GPs and Rural Generalists

Support is available for rural and regional health services and general practices to provide opportunities for Victorian Fellowed GPs and Rural Generalists who have undertaken (or near completion) of advanced skills training and are looking to consolidate their skills with the intention to:

- meet an identified community and workforce need (details specified upon application)
- provide quality care and safe practice;
- support succession planning; and
- maintain advanced skills.

Applications should be made directly to the VRGP as per the details below. Support can be provided by the VRGP Clinical Leads and VRGP Regional Coordinators to applicants as required.

Eligible Victorian Rural Generalist Trainees

Before a trainee successfully completes the requirements of a 12-month full time advanced skills training post they should discuss their consolidation training needs with their training provider (Regional Training Organisation or college). Support can be provided by the VRGP Clinical Leads and Coordinators to training providers and applicants as required.

Rural Generalist Trainees on the AGPT should contact their RTO. The RTO's are responsible for the RGC applications for their trainees in collaboration with the VRGP.

- Eastern Victoria GP Training (EVGPT)
- Murray City Country Coast GP Training (MCCC).

Trainees under the RVTS or college specific pathways (such as ACRRM IP and RG100) should discuss their RGC training needs with their training organisation.

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