

Action Plan

Building workforce planning
capability in the NSW Health System



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The NSW Ministry for Health acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands across NSW. We acknowledge that we live and work on Aboriginal lands. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal people.

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Purpose

This action plan is an initiative of the Workforce Planning and Talent Development Branch at the NSW Ministry of Health. It has been developed in consultation with Local Health Districts and Networks (LHD/Ns) and Pillars to support health workforce planning across NSW. It is based on feedback outlined in the report – ‘Building workforce planning capability in the NSW Health system.’

The plan identifies activities required by key stakeholders to build workforce planning capability across the NSW Health system. It is designed to support a formalised and collaborative approach to workforce planning within and between hospitals, LHD/Ns and other health organisations. The plan provides clarity on the roles and functions of the different elements of the system to support effective workforce planning.

Our vision is that workforce planners across NSW Health will be equipped and enabled to approach workforce planning in a proactive, collaborative and systematic way to ensure that NSW Health attracts and retains a fit for purpose workforce across the system with the capacity and capabilities to deliver first class, patient-centred care now and into the future. Key to achieving this vision is creating a shared language, process and resources to promote a clear understanding of workforce planning activities and how they can be integrated with facility, financial and service planning.

Scope

Workforce planners are the primary focus for most of these actions, as they are integral to achieving the desired level of capability within the NSW Health system. Improved governance, education and integration is needed to empower this small but critical workforce.

The need for capability in workforce planning is not limited to the workforce planner role. Our ultimate aim is to build capability for all NSW Health staff involved in workforce planning, leading to a future state where workforce planners can play a strategic, enabling role. Consideration will be given for the wider roles involved in workforce planning in the development of resources and education programs.

Understanding and planning for the potential impact of current and future technology is an important consideration for workforce planning.

Projects to support the implementation of this Action Plan will maintain strong links with state-wide strategic workforce planning in this area.

Access to relevant data is a significant enabler for the workforce planning process. Improving access to and the reliability of data in turn influences the strategic role played by workforce planners in the local business or organisation.

Background

The NSW Ministry of Health (the Ministry) has supported a quarterly Workforce Planning Advisory Forum since 2014. This has been the primary method for dialogue between LHD/Ns and Pillars to share resources and build capability across the health system. There are also regular meetings between the Workforce Planning and Talent Development Branch and Health Infrastructure, and the Health System Planning and Investment Branch to support a stronger alignment of workforce planning with service and infrastructure planning.

There is great potential in better aligning workforce planning and service planning to support robust planning initiatives. Health services planners facilitate the development of a LHD’s clinical services plan (CSP), which describes how services will need to be delivered into the future to reflect the changing health needs of the community, as well as changes to ways of providing care. CSPs specify changes in service delivery, models of care, technology and workforce. Workforce planners can advise how to best respond to these changes from a workforce perspective, and are critical to determining how to source the talent, skills and capabilities required for the LHD to deliver the services outlined in the CSP.

The Workforce Planning and Talent Development Branch distributed a discussion paper in August 2018. The aim of this paper was to test the suitability of a new approach to building workforce planning capability, involving increased collaboration between the Ministry and other health organisations.

Feedback on the discussion paper indicated broad support for a capability program of work and identified six key areas of focus moving forward: developing workforce planning capability in NSW Health, developing workforce planning capacity in NSW Health, a consistent state-wide approach to workforce planning, driving local process improvement, maintaining a future focus and a strong and engaged network of stakeholders.

These have been reflected in the action plan below.

This work was done in parallel to a project which investigated workforce planners as a ‘small but critical’ workforce. This involved interviews with planners from across the state, a literature review and exploration of the scope of the profession in a national and international context. This review was completed in May 2019 and identified several challenges such as the fluid nature of the role required to meet the changing needs of organisations, limited access to tools and resources, and the transition to incorporate skills mix as part of a system based approach to workforce planning.

This project identified similar themes to the discussion paper, regarding capability development and integration with other planning and its recommendations have been incorporated into the table below. Considerable feedback was received through interviews conducted as part of the ‘small but critical’ project so it was determined that there was not currently a need to undertake the focus groups originally identified as a strategy in the discussion paper report. However, ongoing consultation will be an integral feature to the further development and delivery of these activities.

Next steps

This action plan was distributed to the Workforce Planners Advisory Group and relevant workforce executive for feedback prior to implementation in late 2019. Project plans will be developed for larger or more complex actions.

The Workforce Planners Advisory Group will play a key role to support the progression of these activities. Their regular forums will involve collaboration to workshop and implement fit for purpose solutions under the identified areas of focus.

The Workforce Planning and Talent Development Branch will also continue to collaborate with Health Infrastructure and Health System Planning and Investment Branch to integrate and streamline workforce planning with service and infrastructure planning.

Governance and reporting

Key stakeholders and their governance responsibilities have been outlined in the table below.

	Name / Group	Responsibilities
Project Sponsor(s)	Director – Workforce Planning and Performance (Ministry of Health) Director – Workforce Policy and Development (Ministry of Health)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authorisers and overall accountability for the project. The Sponsors also act as an escalation point and champion of the project
Reference Group	Workforce Executive Committee (Ministry of Health and LHD/N representatives)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide input on all existing and potential issues of the project Help identify suitable options for managing the issues
Key Stakeholder Group	Workforce Planners Advisory Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration to workshop and implement fit for purpose solutions under the identified areas of focus Provide subject matter expertise
Project Working Group	End users and their representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specify the needs of all users Provide subject matter expertise Generate and test ideas to drive improvement and innovation Actively participate in the development of tools and resources Represent interested parties outside the project team by facilitating the flow of information and ideas Ensure that the project’s product will meet the end users’ needs
Project Team	Representatives from Workforce Planning and Performance Unit and Workforce Policy and Development Unit (Ministry of Health)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for contributing to and coordinating the project planning and reporting

Action Plan

The action plan contains targeted activities to address the challenges and opportunities identified in each of the six focus areas.

These focus areas are to develop:

1. **Capability** – A training program will help to address the diverse background of workforce planners and support a consistent business approach. This will also be supported with the creation of tools and resources, and the facilitation of broader support within and between LHDs.
2. **Capacity** – Workforce Planners are a small but critical workforce and under increasing pressure from increasing service and facility redevelopments. Building organisational commitment, funding, resources, value propositions, networking, data access including from rostering and recruitment platforms are expected to help the system to address this challenge.
3. **Consistency** – An agreed state-wide approach, supported by processes, role consistency, tools and resources, more references in state-wide strategies, and supported with standards for evaluation. This will be balanced with support for local flexibility where needed (particularly in regards to rural and remote).
4. **Local processes** – This includes succession planning, culture considerations, change management, integration with service planning, and taking a redesign approach.
5. **Future focus** – Incorporating technology, innovation, horizon scanning, data and information, training and recruitment, and an evidence based skill mix into planning.
6. **Engaged stakeholders** – Integration with broader stakeholder networks is imperative. This includes internal collaboration with management and clinicians, LHD leadership, and linking to patient needs. External partners include other agencies, shared services, streamlining through Health Infrastructure with redevelopments, training organisations, incorporating interstate and overseas best practice, cross agency government departments, and a whole of community focus (especially in regional, rural and remote areas).

The following table outlines the planned actions to progress development in the focus areas, lead agencies, and a breakdown of milestones for the 1, 2 and 5 year marks.

FOCUS AREA ONE: Developing workforce planning capability in NSW Health						
Activity	Lead	Goal at 1 year	Goal at 2 years	Goal at 5 years	Priority	
1.1 Develop a suite of state-wide workforce planning tools and resources	Ministry of Health Workforce Planning and Performance Unit (WPPU)	Establish working group. Develop and test draft tools. Share with LHD/Ns.	Evaluate and refine tools based on use and experience. Promote their use state-wide.	Continue to use, refine and develop tools.	High	
1.2a Partner with HETI to deliver a workforce planning capability program	Ministry of Health Workforce Policy and Development Unit (WPDU)	Establish a project plan. Develop a draft capability document.	Final capability document endorsed. Proof of concept education program based on this document.	All current LHD/N workforce planners have undertaken capability development education. Clear education pathway established.	Medium	
1.2b Partner with Tertiary Education providers to develop and offer health workforce planning components into relevant courses, recognising prior learning.		Determine the best method of delivering education for these capability areas.				
1.3 Support education and training opportunities to build workforce planning capability (<i>not limited to workforce planner role</i>)	LHD/Ns (locally)	Develop an understanding of the education and training gaps for workforce planning in their LHD.	Support staff to attend capability development opportunities to fill gaps.	Regular professional development pathway. Monitoring of gaps.	Medium	
FOCUS AREA TWO: Developing workforce planning capacity in NSW Health						
Activity	Lead	Goal at 1 year	Goal at 2 years	Goal at 5 years	Priority	
2.1 Investigate Workforce planners as a small but critical workforce	Ministry of Health WPDU	Information gathering to determine if workforce planners are a small but critical workforce	Develop and implement strategies to support the growth and closing of number or capability gaps.	Monitor the development of this workforce and review any issues or new gaps.	Commenced	
2.2 Develop a central network for workforce planners	Ministry of Health WPPU	Refine and reformat Workforce Planners Advisory Forum. Engage with stakeholders to determine the most effective format a 'network' could take.	Build Community of Practice and other networking enablers. Encourage sharing of information and data where appropriate.	Emerging and growing talent supported. Increased awareness of system-wide workforce challenges. Sharing of information and data.	High	
2.3 Improve data quality and availability (linked project)	Ministry of Health WPPU	Enhancing data reach, quality and real time availability – People, Culture and Governance signature project			Commenced	

FOCUS AREA THREE: A consistent state-wide approach to workforce planning					
Lead	Goal at 1 year	Goal at 2 years	Goal at 5 years	Priority	Priority
3.1 Identify 'core capabilities' of workforce planners in position descriptions to ensure their role is fit-for-purpose	Ministry of Health WPDU	Develop clear and consistent position descriptions for workforce planners. Promote an understanding of what workforce planners do to other parts of the organisation.	A PD that reflects the reality of the workforce planner position. Consistency/clarity in roles and responsibilities for workforce planning at the LHD level.	An accurate PD resulting in effective workforce planning and increased capacity. All LHD/Ns have implemented a dedicated workforce planning position.	Medium
3.2 Review existing workforce planning processes to identify gaps	Ministry of Health WPPU	Identify a timeframe to undertake workforce planning in each LHD. Improve data integrity and forecasting.	Feed this information into the workforce planning toolkit.	Best practice workforce planning. Align workforce planning process to a 'modernised' approach.	Medium
3.3 Conduct a specific program of work to support the rural workforce (linked project)	Ministry of Health WPPU	Rural and Regional workforce strategy and interventions – Governance signature project			Commenced
FOCUS AREA FOUR: Driving local process improvement					
Activity	Lead	Goal at 1 year	Goal at 2 years	Goal at 5 years	Priority
4.1 Enable effective succession planning	LHD/Ns	Regularly review workforce gaps.	Develop strategies for succession planning.	Implement strategies aligned to workforce gaps.	Low
4.2 Support integrated workforce planning	Ministry of Health Workforce Planning and Talent Development branch and LHD/Ns	Better align workforce planning with other functions and departments, improving collaboration and understanding of the role function integration of workforce planning.	Strengthening local workforce planning governance and processes. Shift focus from redevelopment towards redesign.	Identify and address barriers to workforce planning (esp. governance)	Medium
4.3 Culture (linked project)	Ministry of Health Workforce Strategy and Culture Unit	System-wide common methodology for assessing cultural health – People, Culture and Governance signature project			Commenced

FOCUS AREA FIVE: Maintaining a future focus					
Activity	Lead	Goal at 1 year	Goal at 2 years	Goal at 5 years	Priority
5.1 Build understanding of the future workforce	Ministry of Health WPPDU	Focus on the Future Workforce project	Initiative – People, Culture and Governance signature		Commenced
5.2 Investigate innovative models of care, revisiting traditional skills mix and embracing technology	LHD/Ns and Agency for Clinical Innovation	Data analysis to build better models to inform decisions and enable better delivery and improvements	Develop and test new operating models / demand-based scenario planning / etc.	Evaluate, implement and scale models.	Medium
FOCUS AREA SIX: A strong and engaged network of stakeholders					
Activity	Lead	Goal at 1 year	Goal at 2 years	Goal at 5 years	Priority
6.1 Engage and communicate regularly with other health agencies to share learnings and avoid duplication across LHD/Ns	LHD/Ns	Ministry to support sharing of information through Workforce Planners Advisory Forum.	LHD/N's sharing information through this forum and collaborating where opportunities arise.	LHD/N's seek information from each other, interstate and overseas on best practice.	Medium
6.2 Develop a stakeholder toolkit (linked to 1.1)	Ministry of Health WPPU	Identify key stakeholders and purpose/value of interacting with them in workforce planning.	Document/tools to support effective stakeholder engagement are developed and used.	LHD/Ns communicate with shared services to align shared service needs with workforce planning.	High
6.3 Build understanding of education pipelines	Ministry of Health WPPDU	Identify key education and training organisations such as higher education, VET, and specialist training bodies.	Support LHD/Ns to develop strategies to match the workforce to the education pipeline. Build understanding of supply and demand.	Incorporate understanding of supply and demand into workforce planning. Use these relationships to support development of effective strategies.	Low
6.4 Collaborate with other government stakeholders to consider multidisciplinary and cross agency planning	Ministry of Health	Identify shared challenges and key opportunities to collaborate with other stakeholders.	Build relationship with relevant stakeholders.	Workforce planning considers a whole of community focus (especially in rural areas), and engages with wider community groups, including consumers.	High

Strategic, Tactical and Operational Workforce Planning

Developing a common language, scope of work and governance is an important first step for developing consistency in workforce planning across NSW Health. NSW Health understands that workforce planning typically involves the following steps: Understand the context, Analyse current workforce supply and demand, Determine current and future workforce needs, Identification of gaps, Develop and prioritise strategies to address workforce needs, Implement monitor and evaluate plans and strategies.

NSW Health also defines workforce planning on Strategic, Tactical and Operational levels.

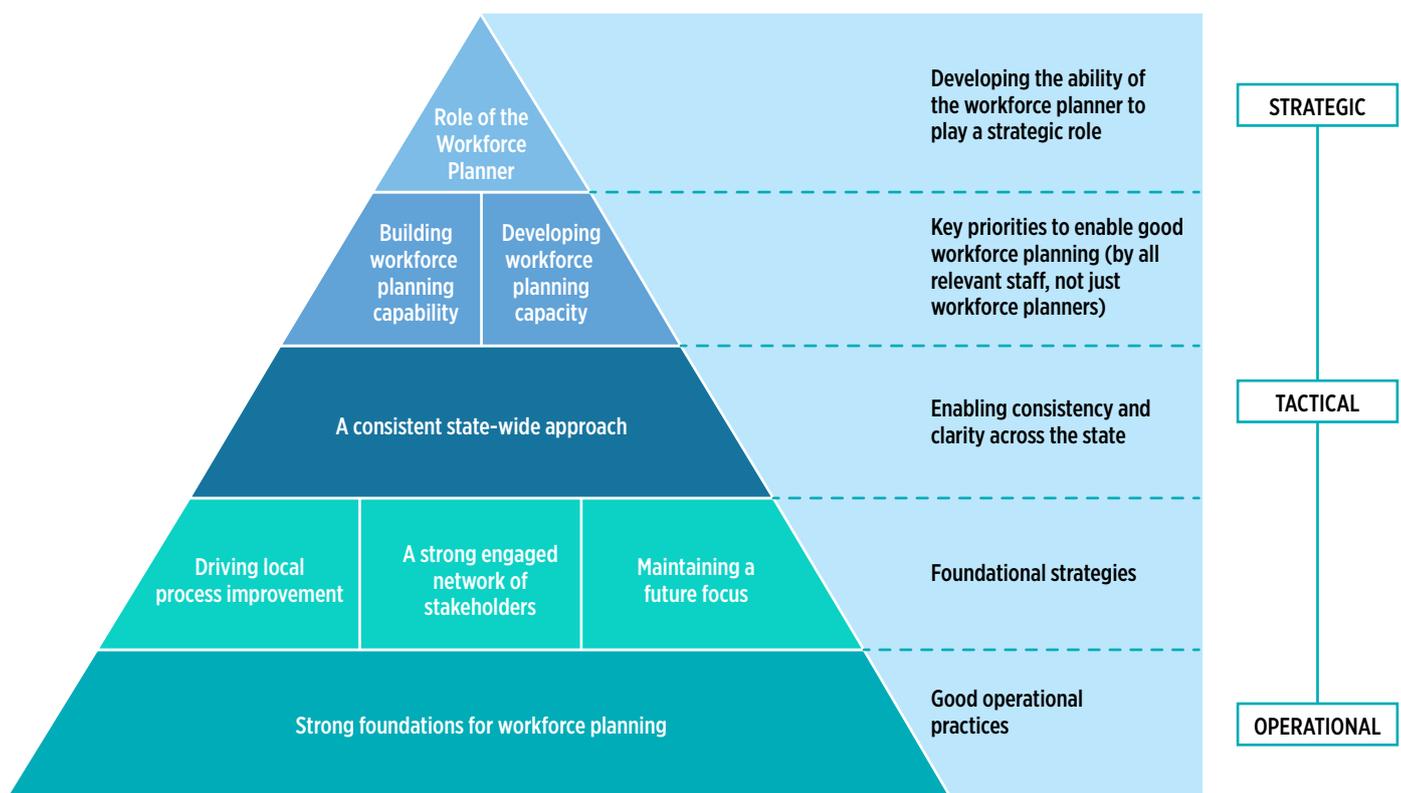
Strategic planning is typically longer than five years and primarily coordinated by the Ministry of Health. These long term requirements and anticipated demand is often informed within a national and global context. The reference document for this activity is the 'NSW Health Professionals Workforce Plan 2012-2022'. Other targeted planning at this level includes the 'NSW Health Good Health - Great Jobs: Aboriginal Workforce Strategic Framework 2016 - 2020' framework and other priority planning such as for Small but Critical, and the non-metropolitan workforce.

This work should also be supported by and strongly linked with community demand forecasting which is done by health service planners.

Tactical planning is increasingly a collaboration between agencies such as LHDs and Ministry of Health to align local workforce and clinical needs. This links to local business planning, workforce management and governance. It is typically focussed on 1-3 years with a high number of redevelopments a particular challenge at this level.

Operational planning is the ongoing local context of the above plans. It includes specific milestones, actions, conditions for success, and timeframes. These Business As Usual activities include addressing workforce optimisation including rostering and recruitment and the holiday and winter periods. The Ministry of Health is working to provide systems, tools, and capabilities to build capacity for this level of planning.

The pyramid below provides an overview of how each of the identified focus areas can support workforce planning on a Strategic, Tactical and Operational level.





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