



RACGP Rural

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Rural Generalist Fellowship

Guidelines for a rural general practice
community-focused project



Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Rural Generalist Fellowship: Guidelines for a rural general practice community-focused project

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Introduction

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Rural Generalist Fellowship (RACGP RG Fellowship) is a qualification awarded by RACGP in addition to the vocational Fellowship of the RACGP (FRACGP).

The RACGP RG Fellowship requirements are completion of:

- learning plan and reflection activity
- 12 months in a rural general practice setting
- 12 months of Advanced Rural Skills Training (ARST) in an accredited training post
- six-month core emergency medicine training
- a six-month rural general practice community-focused project (**mandatory for those completing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health ARST and optional for those completing other ARSTs**)

This document provides guidance for the completion of a six-month rural general practice community-focused project. The guidelines are in two parts:

- Part 1: Community project framework
- Part 2: Assessment guidelines

The community project is not a full-time commitment, but should be conducted over a six-month timeframe. The project gives you an opportunity to engage with your community and improve health outcomes. The project report will need to demonstrate your ability to complete a community needs assessment; identify needs or gaps in the community; and demonstrate skills in planning, carrying out, evaluating and presenting a project.

Ethics approval

The requirement of obtaining ethics approval differs for candidates on a case-by-case basis.

RACGP Rural recommends you first consult with your medical educator or supervisor, to discuss whether ethics approval is required for your project. If ethics approval is required, you must obtain approval prior to commencing the project.

Ethics approval is not required for the community project if it is considered a quality improvement, quality assurance or evaluation activity; that is, an activity undertaken within a general practice where the primary purpose is to monitor, evaluate or improve the quality of healthcare delivered by the practice.

If you are considering publishing your results, ethics approval will be required. The NHMRC document [Ethical considerations in quality assurance and evaluation activities](#) provides guidance for the consideration of ethical issues and assists in identifying triggers for the consideration of ethical review.

Research projects involving humans will require approval from a human research ethics committee (HREC). If the research involves Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and communities, approval from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HREC may also be required.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with expertise and experience in the subject matter of the research should be actively involved in the design and conduct of any activities affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

[The Lowitja Institute](#) and the [Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of New South Wales](#) provide useful information and resources.

It is best to find a registered HREC in your rural area or state, such as a local university or hospital, as they will have a better understanding of not just your project, but also your local community and its health standards.

Please view the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) list of [registered ethics committees](#).

Where necessary, candidates are able to apply for ethics approval with the RACGP National Research and Evaluation Ethics Committee (NREEC). Please be mindful the NREEC only meets every second month and applications should be submitted at least three weeks prior to the next scheduled meeting, so that materials can be prepared and sent to the committee members for review.

Please visit the [NREEC website](#) for further information, including ethics approval submission deadlines and committee meeting dates.

If you require advice regarding ethical approval, you can contact the NREEC secretariat at ethics@racgp.org.au or telephone 03 8699 0385.

Part 1: Community project framework

Part 1 of the guidelines will help you to develop a framework for your community project using the following stages:

- completing your community profile
- identifying the needs of your community
- addressing the identified needs of your community.

Using this framework, you will be able to identify a topic for your community project and progress through each project stage to completion.

Community profile

It is necessary to complete a community profile as the data will set the scene and help you to identify the needs of the community.

There are many places you can source data from, including:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics
- local government websites
- local Primary Health Network
- your medical practice.

Identifying needs

Think about the community in which you live and work and use the data you have collected in your community profile to identify:

- demographics
- infrastructure
- services delivered
- workforce
- patients
- health issues.

An audit of both the material and human resources available in your community may be useful. You should include the resources that are available in allied health services, the local hospital (where relevant) and community support groups.

Addressing needs

In building a community profile with your data and undertaking an audit of the resources available, you should now have identified the needs or gaps in the community on which you can focus your community project.

When you are selecting a project topic you should consider:

- your own interests and the situation of your medical practice
- how the topic will address the community needs
- if the timeframe is achievable
- if it is measurable.

Some examples of topics include:

- create and run a health promotion activity
- monitor a chronic disease self-management group
- investigate how to make early identification of mental health issues in a patient population
- raise awareness of a prevalent disease
- increase participation of a patient population in regular health checks
- address specific health issues of a patient population.

It is important to note that you will not be assessed on the topic chosen. The assessment will focus on how well you follow project processes. Undertaking these three steps before you start the project will help smooth the way and ensure your project is relevant to your community needs assessment.

Also note that your project must address one or more of the Five Domains of General Practice:³

- Domain 1: Communication skills and the patient–doctor relationship
- Domain 2: Applied professional knowledge and skills
- Domain 3: Population health in the context of rural general practice
- Domain 4: Professional and ethical role
- Domain 5: Organisational and legal dimensions

Part 2: Assessment guidelines

The assessment guidelines outline what the **RACGP RG Fellowship** assessors are looking for when marking the rural general practice community-focused project.

All requirements of the project will need to be completed via the online learning platform, *glearning*.⁴ The project is supported by easy-to-follow steps and resources that are outlined below.

Complete a literature review

The literature review should include at least five contemporary references (ie no more than five years old) and a summary of findings. Correct referencing should be used (any recognised style such as Vancouver, Harvard or APA is acceptable). The finished literature review should be approximately 1000 words.

Develop a project plan

The project plan should be presented using an acceptable project template that includes:

- name of the project
- background to the project – reason for selecting the project
- demographic of people participating
- description of the project – what will you do and how
- domains of general practice that will be addressed
- at least two measurable outcomes
- key stakeholders, including allies and those that may oppose or need convincing
- a timeline
- milestones – the stages in the project that will define its progress
- any risks and the strategies to address them
- an evaluation plan.

Conduct a community consultation

A consultation needs to be conducted with at least three stakeholders, preferably consumers/carers. The consultation might be by telephone, focus group, survey or face-to-face. In addition to the interview questions, you should include:

- thematic analysis of results
- a short report
- recommendations.

Conduct the project

You should keep notes of key events and activities that occur as part of the project; this will assist you when you come to evaluate the project.

Write case studies for at least three patients who are participating in the project. It does not matter if the cases have a successful outcome. The process of undertaking the project and noting its outcomes is of more value when describing the cases.

Evaluate the project

Evidence of the evaluation of the project should include:

- examples of the evaluation tools
- an evaluation conducted part way into the project
- adjustments to the project based on the results of the evaluation completed part way into the project
- a final evaluation at the end of the project
- findings from the evaluation.

The project does not necessarily have to succeed in reaching its outcomes. In this event, you will need to identify the obstacles and what could be done to address them.

Write an abstract

When the project is finished, write either a short abstract for a workshop or a poster presentation that would be suitable for presenting to other GPs at a conference. Materials to help you with this stage are listed in the recommended resources.

Complete your reflection

The reflection should be a short piece (approximately 250 words) that describes the impact of undertaking the project on you, your practice and your community. You can include the challenges and what you did to overcome them, what you learnt, what worked well, and what you would do differently if you repeated the process.

Contact

We wish you luck in your community project. Should you have any questions please contact the RACGP RG Fellowship team on 1800 636 764 or email rg@racgp.org.au

Recommended resources

- Abstract guidelines for papers, www.academic-conferences.org/policies/abstract-guidelines-for-papers
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, www.abs.gov.au
- Community consultation checklist, www.communityfirst.org.uk/images/documents/CLP_resources/Planning%20consultation%20checklist.pdf
- Evaluation framework for health promotion and disease prevention programs, www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/Evaluation-framework-for-health-promotion-and-disease-prevention-programs
- Literature review tutorial, <http://libguides.library.cqu.edu.au/litreview>
- Local government directory, www.gov.au
- Primary Health Networks, www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/PHN-Home
- RACGP John Murtagh Library, www.racgp.org.au/support/library
- Risk management... the what, why and how, <http://bia.ca/risk-management-the-what-why-and-how>
- Scientific poster tutorials, www.makesigns.com/tutorials/scientific-poster-parts.aspx
- Writing an abstract, www.adelaide.edu.au/writingcentre/docs/learningguide-writinganabstract.pdf
- Writing a literature review, www.citewrite.qut.edu.au/write/litreview.jsp

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