



What is an Area of Need?

The state based Area of Need (AON) process was established to ensure the most appropriate distribution of the medical workforce, ensuring that medical services are provided to areas most in need.

Who needs to work in an Area of Need?

An area where there is evidence of substantial difficulty in the recruitment of an additional medical practitioner(s) can be declared an Area of Need by the State Department of Health.

The declaration of Area of Need status enables the recruitment and employment of a conditionally registered overseas trained doctor (OTD) to that location for the time period of the Area of Need determination.

In Australia, an overseas trained doctor who is registered under 'Limited registration for area of need' (s.67 of the National Law) with the Medical Board of Australia can only work in an AON.

Once recognised specialist qualifications and experience (for example has achieved the FRACGP) is achieved or 'general registration' is granted the requirement to work in an AON is no longer obligatory for the doctor.

Who can apply to declare an Area of Need?

An application for AON can be made by a Shire, City Council, a practice or any other stakeholder.

The employer must submit a completed application form and the required supporting documentation to the WA Department of Health for assessment.

A detailed description of the application criteria and further details on the preparation of an application for Area of Need may be found at the WA Department of Health website:

http://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Applying-for-an-area-of-need-determination

Under the headings:

- Guidelines, form and templates

Position description

A position description for the vacant position should be attached to the submission. The position description should outline the key duties that the medical practitioner will be required to undertake. This will assist in providing information on the nature and scope of the position. The essential skills, knowledge and experience which are essential to the position must be included. A position description template can be found on the Department of Health overseas trained doctor's website.

Labour market testing

Labour market testing is required to demonstrate that the vacancy could not be filled by an Australian trained medical practitioner. The rationale for overseas recruitment is that no Australian trained medical practitioner will be disadvantaged by this process. It is therefore essential that the medical community is made aware of this vacancy before a submission for Area of Need can be submitted for assessment. Refer to Area of Need Application Guidelines.

Whilst all care has been taken in preparing this document, this information is a guide only and subject to change without notice.

Practice Assist is an initiative of



WA Primary Health Alliance is supported by funding from the Australian Government under the PHN Program.

Rural Health West is funded by the Australian Government and the WA Country Health Service.

Expired determination for Areas of Need

Determinations for an AON are granted for one to three years depending on the circumstances on which the determination is based.

Once this time has lapsed it is the responsibility of the original applicant to submit a new application to WA Health if the AON is to continue to enable the ongoing employment of overseas trained doctors (OTDs) in that location.

More information

For the complete application, assessment criteria and guiding principles visit:

http://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Applying-for-an-area-of-need-determination

Or contact the Medical Workforce Branch at the Department of Health, Western Australia:

Level 1 B Block
189 Royal Street
EAST PERTH WA 6004
Telephone: 08 9222 4276

See also

Practice Assist Fact Sheet:

- What is a District of Workforce Shortage?
- Section 19AB of the Health Insurance Act 1973

Practice Assist Template:

- Position Description – General Practitioner

Practice Assist Check List:

- GP Start-Up Pack