

CAPACITY BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS WORKSHOP

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In 1996, the NSW Department of Health implemented a competitive Infrastructure Grants Program, which awarded infrastructure grants to biomedical–clinical, public health, and health services research organisations in NSW. Since 1996, infrastructure funding to public health and health services research organisations has been provided through Stream 3 of the Infrastructure Grants Program.

The NSW Department of Health Capacity Building Infrastructure Grants (CBIG) Program replaces funding to research organisations previously awarded through Stream 3 of the Infrastructure Grants Program. The Department recently conducted the first funding round of the CBIG Program. The grants provided under the CBIG Program are designed to provide support for research infrastructure, with a focus on providing a sustainable environment in which the capacity to conduct research is enhanced, career paths are expanded, and training in public health, primary health care, and health services research is realised.

The aims of the CBIG Program are to: build the capacity and competitiveness of NSW research organisations in the fields of public health, primary health care, and health services research; and encourage research in these fields that addresses the priorities of NSW Health. The priority areas of the CBIG are: major causes of burden of disease, risks to health, the delivery of health services, and transfer of research findings into policy and practice. Applicants were required to outline a research program that addressed at least one of these priorities.

In August 2003, the NSW Minister for Health announced that six NSW research organisations would each receive \$1.5 million, over the three-year period 2003–04 to 2005–06, under the first round of the CBIG Program. These organisations are:

- Australian Rural Health Research Collaboration, Moree, Lismore, and Broken Hill;
- Centre for Health Informatics, University of NSW;
- Centre for Health Service Development, University of Wollongong;
- Centre for Infectious Diseases and Microbiology–Public Health, Westmead;
- Consortium for Social and Policy Research on HIV, Hepatitis C, and Related Diseases, University of NSW;
- Newcastle Institute of Public Health, Hunter Medical Research Institute.

In October 2003, a CBIG Workshop was held at which all successful applicants presented their capacity building plans to the NSW Department of Health, other successful applicants, and invited interested parties. The aim of the Workshop was to assist the recipients of grants to refine and finalise their plans through feedback and discussion. Dr Gregory Stewart, Chief Health Officer, welcomed applicants to the Workshop and Dr Louisa Jorm, Director of the Centre for Epidemiology and Research, provided an overview of the Program and discussed potential research opportunities.

The presentations from the successful applicants illustrated the diversity of research being undertaken in NSW. The Australian Rural Health Research Collaboration described research into cost effective and sustainable models of falls prevention in older people. The Centre for Health Informatics provided an overview of Home Telecare, whereby the development of new processes and technologies will improve the delivery of health services to elderly people in their homes. The Centre for Health Service Development provided an overview of five of their research themes: casemix classification across settings, health and community care financing, care coordination, health service delivery and organisation, and management decision-making. The Centre for Infectious Diseases and Microbiology–Public Health outlined their participation in the national serosurveillance of vaccine preventable diseases and provided an example of an educational initiative of developing a new postgraduate lecture series in medical microbiology. The Consortium for Social and Policy Research on HIV, Hepatitis C and Related Diseases outlined a plan to establish a research and policy ‘clearinghouse’, which would be designed to facilitate the sharing of information and resources. The clearinghouse will have a national search capability for sites relating to HIV, hepatitis C and illicit drug use research and policy. The Newcastle Institute of Public Health described the ‘Hunter Cohort’, which will comprise of 10,000 people aged 60 years or older from the Hunter region, and will study factors related to health and ageing.

The CBIG Workshop also provided the opportunity for successful applicants to network with colleagues from across NSW. Final capacity building plans were submitted to the NSW Department of Health at the end of November 2003. ☒

Information about the Capacity Building Infrastructure Grants Program is available from the NSW Department of Health website at www.health.nsw.gov.au/public-health/rad.