



In Western Australia (WA), the Area of Need (AoN) program provides temporary assistance to health services (i.e. employers) to recruit international medical graduates (IMGs) when unable to fill vacant positions with suitable Australian-qualified medical practitioners.

AoN applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis against the following criteria:

1. Evidence of a vacant position(s)

The purpose of this section is to ensure there is a bona-fide vacant position(s). This is demonstrated by advertising the vacant position within state and national forums to attract a suitable Australian-qualified medical practitioner.

1.1. Advertising

At a minimum, advertisements should include the following details to attract applications from suitable Australian-qualified medical practitioners:

- Position title
- Name of the health service
- Location
- Hours of work
- Required qualifications
- Skills, duties and benefits for the position

1.2. Job Description Form

At a minimum, the Job Description Form should include the following details:

- The location(s) of the position
- Required skills, duties and benefits for the position
- Working hours and full-time equivalent

2. Evidence of need - labour market testing

Applicants must be able to demonstrate a workforce shortage and the inability to successfully recruit a suitable Australian-qualified medical practitioner through a fair and equitable recruitment process.

Prior to applying for an AoN determination, there must be documented evidence that labour market testing within Australia was designed and conducted to attract the best possible response, and that no suitable Australian-qualified medical practitioner was identified through this process.

Draft advertisements are encouraged to be sent to areaofneed@health.wa.gov.au prior to advertising to ensure they meet the minimum requirements for assessment.

The following are the **minimum requirements** for proof of evidence of labour market testing:

2.1. Location of advertising

- All vacant positions must be advertised on three separate forums; at a state and national level.
- One forum must be the relevant medical college.
- International advertisements are not admissible and should not be included in the application.

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Examples of appropriate forums for advertisements include:

- The relevant medical college (**mandatory**)
- The WA Department of Health vacancy website: <http://www.jobs.health.wa.gov.au> (public sector positions must use this forum)
- Medical magazines/journals
- Medical recruitment websites (e.g. jobactive, MedJobsWA website, AusDoctorJobs website and Rural Health West website)
- National job search websites (e.g. Career One, Indeed and Seek)
- National newspapers

2.2. Timing and duration of advertising

A minimum of four consecutive weeks of advertising must have taken place; within six months of the application being lodged.

Applicants must provide copies of advertisements and payment invoices; confirming the dates and duration of advertising.

2.3. Content of advertising

Each advertisement must contain the minimum requirements as stated in point 1.1.

For labour market testing, advertising must not refer to vocationally registered (VR) or non-VR positions, be gender specific or be designed to specifically attract an IMG.

2.4. Outcome of labour market testing

In addition to providing evidence of labour market testing, the application will need to demonstrate that no suitable Australian-qualified medical practitioner could be recruited and appointed to the position, by indicating:

- The number of Australian-qualified medical practitioners who applied for the position
- If there were Australian-qualified applicants; a brief explanation of why they were not suitable

Important: Australian-qualified medical practitioners will only be considered unsuitable by the WA Department of Health, if the applicant:

- Did not meet the essential requirements in the Job Description Form
- Had a pre-employment screen which precluded employment (e.g. criminal or disciplinary history)
- Applied for the position and subsequently withdrew interest (a written copy of the practitioner's withdrawal of interest must be supplied)
- Where relevant, is unable to be credentialed by the applicable *Credentialing and Defining Scope of Clinical Practice Committee* (Credentialing Committee). Australian-qualified medical practitioners that meet the mandatory requirements outlined in the Job Description Form and do not have a pre-employment screen which precludes them from employment, are to be processed through the Credentialing Committee and a written copy of the outcome from the Credentialing Committee delegate must be supplied.

Please note: The term 'labour market testing' is used by the WA Department of Health in relation to the AoN application process and by the Australian (i.e. Federal) Government Department of Home Affairs in relation to migration. Conditions of labour market testing may differ. For more information regarding labour market testing for migration purposes please refer to the Australian Government's Department of Home Affairs website: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/>.

3. Distribution priority area or district of workforce shortage status

Applicants must demonstrate that the proposed location is a distribution priority area (DPA) for general practitioners (GPs) or a district of workforce shortage (DWS) for non-GP specialists, classified by the Australian Government Department of Health (Australian Government). DPA and DWS determinations are required for IMGs to be eligible for an exemption to section 19AB (s19AB) of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* and obtain a Medicare Provider Number (MPN).

AoN and DPA/DWS determinations are separate processes. DPA and DWS determinations are managed by the Australian Government and bound by national legislation. Neither the WA Minister for Health nor the WA Department of Health has authority to intervene in these matters.

3.1. Evidence of distribution priority area and district of workforce shortage

- 3.1.1.** To determine the DPA or DWS status of a proposed location(s) for GP and select non-GP specialist services respectively, please refer to the Australian Government [Health Workforce Locator Map](#).
- A printout of the DPA or DWS confirmation from the Health Workforce Locator Map must support an AoN application.
- 3.1.2.** For those specialties not listed in the [Health Workforce Locator Map](#), applicants are required to email the Australian Government 19AB Team (19AB Team) at 19AB@health.gov.au to confirm the DWS status of a proposed AoN location(s).
- Email evidence from the 19AB Team confirming DWS status must support an AoN application.

Further information regarding exemptions in areas not classified as DPA or DWS can be found on the Australian Government's website: <https://www.health.gov.au/health-workforce/medicare-billing-restrictions/section-19ab>

Please note: Submission of an AoN application for a non-DPA or non-DWS location where IMGs would not be eligible for a s19AB exemption to obtain a MPN is not recommended.

4. Additional information

Applicants may choose to include additional information that is relevant to support their application.

Letters of support may be provided by organisations holding a service contract with the employer, who have specific knowledge of the medical workforce needs of the proposed location.

If you have any questions, please contact the Area of Need Team by emailing areaofneed@health.wa.gov.au.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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