

## FAQ: Strengthening Medicare – General Practice Grants Program

### Investment stream activities – general guidance

The Australian Government is investing \$220 million in grants, through the Strengthening Medicare – General Practice Grants Program, to support eligible general practices and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) to expand patient access and support safe, accessible, quality primary care.

This resource provides general practices with general guidance, rather than direction, on what to purchase and it is not exhaustive.

**Please note: The examples in the tables below are only a guide and other items and ideas may also be eligible as long as they fit the objective and intended outcome for the different investment streams.**

### Enhancing digital health capability – examples of investment activities

#### Objective

To fast track the benefits of a more connected health care system in readiness to meet future standards.

#### Intended outcome:

Increase take-up of contemporary digital health solutions – including video telehealth, secure data storage and interoperable software – that support seamless, secure communication of patient data.

<p><b>General Practice IT systems</b></p>	<p><i>Hardware examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase of new IT equipment to support the practice (computers, digital portable devices etc)</li> <li>• Purchase of video conferencing equipment to support video telehealth services</li> </ul> <p><i>Software examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase of video conferencing software to support video telehealth services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Internet connectivity improvements</b></p>	<p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase of, or upgrade to, hardware or infrastructure to enable better internet service reliability and high-speed connectivity</li> </ul>





<b>Upskilling staff in digital capability</b>	<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expenditure related to change in management processes for the adoption of new digital services such as ePrescribing and video telehealth (This could include reimbursement for staff time incurred for additional hours of training, or developing policies, processes, or training materials for practice staff)</li> <li>• Digital skills and literacy training courses delivered by a recognised Australian training service provider</li> </ul>
<b>Professional assessment of existing digital/cyber security capability and arrangements</b>	<p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paying for professional IT advice, to assess existing digital/cyber security capability and arrangements, to identify improvements</li> </ul>

## Upgrading infection prevention and control arrangements – examples of investment activities

### Objective

To support the safe, face-to-face assessment of patients with symptoms of potentially infectious respiratory diseases (e.g. COVID, influenza).

### Intended outcome:

Increase the proportion of COVID positive and other respiratory patients treated in a general practice setting (by increasing practices' capacity to treat more of these patients).

You may wish to consult the [RACGP Infection Prevention and Control Guidelines](#) to identify and address areas for improvements.

<b>Professional assessment of existing infection prevention and control arrangements</b>	<p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paying for a professional to assess existing heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, to identify repair/maintenance/upgrade needs.</li> </ul>
<b>Infection prevention and control infrastructure</b>	<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving on infrastructure to more safely manage patients with potentially transmissible infections (e.g. better separating and equipping of areas designated for potentially infectious patients)</li> <li>• Upgrading infrastructure to minimise infection risk between all patients (e.g. replacement of older surfaces and fixtures with more easily cleanable ones)</li> </ul>

<b>Infection prevention and control equipment</b>	<i>Example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buying new, updated or replacement high-efficiency particulate absorbing (HEPA) filters, sterilising equipment, upgrade/install air conditioning systems that minimise infection risk</li> </ul>
<b>Improving infection prevention and control procedures including upskilling of staff</b>	<i>Examples:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reimbursement of staff time reviewing and updating practice protocols in relation to, for example, triage and patient flow in the context of likely further COVID-19 waves</li> <li>Paying for initial or refresher staff training on any aspect of infection prevention and control including completion of recognised training courses and/or reimbursement of in-practice training time</li> </ul>

## Maintaining or achieving accreditation against the RACGP Standards for General Practices – examples of investment activities

### Objective

To promote quality and safety in general practice

### Intended outcome:

Increase the number of accredited general practices

You may invest in any activities that increase accessibility, quality and safety in general practice, and therefore support your practice to become accredited within the next 12 months, or maintain accreditation, against [RACGP Standards for General Practices](#).

For practices seeking to maintain accreditation, you may wish to identify priority investments based on areas identified in your last accreditation report.

<b>Supporting health and safety of staff</b>	<i>Example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buying new, updated or replacement high-efficiency particulate absorbing (HEPA) filters, sterilising equipment, upgrade/install air conditioning systems that minimise infection risk</li> </ul>
<b>Accessibility improvements for patients</b>	<i>Examples:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving access for those who may have difficulties (e.g. those with communication difficulties, those with disabilities including intellectual disability): improvements to infrastructure e.g. to improve wheelchair access; gathering information to identify priority groups (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, patients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds), to support better health outcomes and access to services</li> <li>Improvements for detection and management of development delay and disability, e.g. establishing prompts to ask about child</li> </ul>

	<p>development at immunisation appointments; development of a system to flag patients with intellectual disability for administrative and clinical staff; offer health assessments/chronic disease management plans for flagged patients; redesign of clinic flows/waiting rooms, e.g. establishing low sensory waiting area</p>
<p><b>Quality and safety improvements for patients</b></p>	<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving infrastructure to ensure privacy and confidentiality of consultation spaces</li> <li>• Reimbursement of staff time to: review and update patient medical records including health summaries; conduct quality assurance activities to improve quality and safety within the practice. Activities may include practice meetings, audits of selected patient records, developing/documenting and improving systems, training in extracting and using data from clinical information systems and may target particular accreditation areas, e.g.: ensuring matters raised in previous consultations are followed up; improving reminder systems</li> <li>• Establishing or improving medicines storage and/or management systems</li> <li>• Purchasing mandatory equipment in line with recent update to the Standards e.g. automated external defibrillator and the electrocardiogram</li> </ul>
<p><b>Improving infection prevention and control procedures including upskilling staff</b></p>	<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducting activities that support the health and safety of practice staff</li> <li>• Provision of designated professional support services and reimbursement of staff time to attend these</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consultant services to undertake the practice improvements required to meet RACGP accreditation requirements</b></p>	<p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may consider engaging the services of a consultant to assist with the process of accreditation and any improvements required</li> </ul>

For further information, refer to the links below:

- [How the accessibility of your general practice affects those who may have difficulties](#)
- [Defibrillators and buying one for your practice](#)

If you have any questions about the General Practice Grants Program, please contact the NQPHN at [grants@nqphn.com.au](mailto:grants@nqphn.com.au)