Area of Need NT Framework

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| Acronyms | Full form |
| **Area of Need (AON)** | A location where there are insufficient health practitioners practising in a health profession to meet the needs of people living in the location, and the relevant Minister (or delegate) has decided the location is an Area of Need under section 67(5) of the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (NT)*. |
| **AON Framework** | The criteria and information required for a Health Service to achieve Area of Need status in the Northern Territory, as set out in this document. |
| **AON Position** | A specified position occupied by an AON Practitioner in a location declared an Area of Need by the Chief Medical Officer. |
| **AON Practitioner** | A medical graduate who has graduated from a medical school which has not been accredited by the Australian Medical Council, and who has been granted limited registration by the Medical Board of Australia to practice in an AON Position. |
| **Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)** | The organisation that works with National Boards to implement the [National Registration and Accreditation Scheme](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/~/link.aspx?_id=D4E5EF420D3C4EAB8B247FDB72CA6E0A&_z=z) across Australia. |
| **Australian Medical Council** | The organisation responsible for developing standards for medical education and training in all phases of medical education. In its accreditation processes, it assesses education providers and their medical programs against these standards and monitors them to ensure they continue to meet the standards. |
| **Chief Medical Officer (CMO)** | The Chief Medical Officer of the Northern Territory employed in the NT Department of Health. Under section 67(7) of the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (NT)*, the NT Minister for Health has delegated the power to declare AON locations to the Chief Medical Officer. |
| **Employer Applicant** | An employing Health Service that applies to the CMO to be declared an AON location. |
| **General Practitioner (GP)** | Refers to any medical practitioner holding general and/or specialist registration who has graduated from a Board-approved, accredited program of study in general practice. |
| **General Practice Registered Training Provider** | An education institution providing vocational training for medical graduates wishing to specialise in general practice. |
| **Health Service** | Includes NT public health services, private hospitals, day procedure centres, Aboriginal medical services, general practices and other health service providers. |
| **NT Primary Health Network (NTPHN)** | A primary health care organisation established to coordinate primary health care delivery and address local health care needs and service gaps.  |
| **Medical Board of Australia (Medical Board**) | Registers medical practitioners and medical students and develops standards, codes and guidelines for the medical profession. |
| **Specialty College** | An Australian Medical Council accredited training organisation whose specialist medical training programs lead to qualifications for practice in recognised medical specialties. |

Contents

[Applicability 5](#_Toc136607741)

[Position Statement 5](#_Toc136607742)

[Principles 5](#_Toc136607743)

[Limitations 5](#_Toc136607744)

[Background 5](#_Toc136607745)

[About Area of Need 5](#_Toc136607746)

[Legislative Framework 6](#_Toc136607747)

[Area of Need Assessment Criteria 6](#_Toc136607748)

[Criterion 1 – Labour Market Testing 6](#_Toc136607749)

[Criterion 2 – Evidence of Need 7](#_Toc136607750)

[Criterion 3 – Evidence of Capacity to Support an AON Practitioner to Achieve Full Registration 7](#_Toc136607751)

[How to Apply for AON Status 7](#_Toc136607752)

[Approval Period 7](#_Toc136607753)

[How to Extend AON for an AON Position 7](#_Toc136607754)

[How to Modify AON for an AON Position 8](#_Toc136607755)

[Timeframe for Assessment 8](#_Toc136607756)

[Review 8](#_Toc136607757)

[National Safety and Quality Health Standards 9](#_Toc136607758)

# Applicability

This framework applies to all Health Services that employ medical officers for the provision of care within the Northern Territory.

# Position Statement

The NT Area of Need (AON) Framework (the Framework) only applies to the medical profession and assists in the provision of medical services to NT locations that have limited access to medical services. The Framework objective is to provide temporary assistance in the provision of general practice and specialist medical services to locations and services in the NT experiencing medical workforce shortages. The Framework assists employers to recruit suitably qualified AON practitioners to vacant positions in locations that have been declared by the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) as an AON.

# Principles

Area of Need is an interim measure designed to ensure Territorians have access to appropriate levels of medical care during periods of medical workforce shortage.

The priority remains on continued efforts to attract medical practitioners with general and/or specialist registration to vacancies in the Northern Territory (NT).

An AON declaration for a location is attached to a particular position (AON Position). Once a medical practitioner employed in an AON Position obtains the relevant general and/or specialist registration, the need has been met and AON status will expire.

# Limitations

Requests for prospective approval of AON (for example, for a practice not yet open) will not be considered on the basis that the market has not been tested.

# Background

## About Area of Need

Area of Need is designed to provide temporary assistance to Health Services experiencing workforce shortages of medical practitioners with general and/or specialist registration. The objective of AON is to assist in the provision of general practice and specialist medical services to locations that are considered to have insufficient medical practitioners and limited access to such services.

This AON Framework sets out the requirements for achieving AON status in the Northern Territory. A Health Service experiencing difficulty recruiting a suitably qualified medical practitioner can apply to the CMO to be declared an AON; allowing the Health Service to employ a medical practitioner who holds limited registration for Area of Need.

The Medical Board or relevant Specialty College is responsible for deciding whether an individual practitioner is eligible, qualified and suitable for limited registration. This includes assessing if the individual has the necessary skills, training and experience to safely perform the role; as well as ensuring compliance with a supervision plan, a professional development plan, satisfactory performance and satisfactory progress towards gaining general and/or specialist registration.

## Legislative Framework

Area of Need (AON) is a provision under the [*Health Practitioner Regulation National Law 2009*](https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2009-045#sch)(National Law)*,* which is the Schedule of theQueensland National Law. The Schedule applies as a law in the NT by virtue of adoption under Section 4 of the [*Health Practitioner Regulation (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2010 (NT)*](https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/HEALTH-PRACTITIONER-REGULATION-NATIONAL-UNIFORM-LEGISLATION-ACT-2010).

Section 67(5) of the National Law empowers the responsible Minister for Health in each state/territory to decide that a location in that jurisdiction is an AON. The National Law permits the Minister to delegate this power to an appropriately qualified person (s.67(7)). In the NT, the Minister for Health has delegated this authority to the CMO.

# Area of Need Assessment Criteria

## Criterion 1 – Labour Market Testing

Employer Applicants for an AON Position must provide documented evidence of labour market testing, demonstrating genuine attempts to recruit to the position within the previous 6 months.

The duration of advertising required to satisfy this criteria is:

* Within a 6 month period.
* Two cycles of genuine advertising for a minimum of 2 weeks each.

Employer Applicants should take every reasonable step to advertise/publicise the vacancy. Advertising in one of each of the following would be considered favourably:

* The major employment advertising section of a relevant national or local newspaper.
* A national careers website e.g. Seek; Career One or My Careers.
* A relevant health related website such as a Specialist College or Society website or Australian Doctor Website.
* NT Primary Health Network (NTPHN).
* General Practice Regional Training Provider if recruiting a GP.

NT Government vacancies must be published on the **NT Government Job Search Page**.

Documented evidence means:

* Copies of the published advertisements from both cycles and with evidence of the date and name of the newspaper/website in which they were placed. Please do not submit invoices and/or copies of booking forms.
* Evidence the NTPHN and General Practice Regional Training Provider has been consulted.
* All advertisements should show the position title, name of the NT Health Regional Health Service and location, qualifications, skills, duties, remuneration range and other benefits of the position to try and attract a maximum response from medical practitioners. These details must be consistent with the application being made.

The CMO may determine that an advertisement does not demonstrate a genuine attempt to test the market if any of the elements included indicate standards and conditions that are generally accepted for that location are not met. After an unsuccessful first round, employers are encouraged to consult with the Office of the CMO to check whether the above elements are being met.

In addition to supplying proof of advertising, an AON application will need to advise of the number of applicants who applied for the position and a brief explanation as to why they were not suitable for recruitment.

## Criterion 2 – Evidence of Need

Information must be provided to describe the impact on service delivery if the position is left vacant. For example, information on how the vacancy will impact upon the delivery of medical services to the community, or information on the factors the Employer Applicant believes are preventing the successful recruitment of a medical practitioner with general and/or specialist registration.

## Criterion 3 – Evidence of Capacity to Support an AON Practitioner to Achieve Full Registration

While the supervision arrangements of an AON Practitioner are determined by the Medical Board through an individual practitioner’s registration, the Employer Applicant must demonstrate to the CMO that the Health Service has sufficient resources and capacity to meet the supervision, training and integration support requirements of an AON Practitioner.

This may include:

* Availability of a supervisor.
* Training schedules.
* Training resources.
* Personal support programs.

# How to Apply for AON Status

A Health Service wishing to apply for status as an AON location to fill a vacant specialist or GP position will need to address all three criteria mentioned above.

Applications for AON should be emailed to the CMO, NT Department of Health at: chiefmedicalofficer.doh@nt.gov.au.

If the AON application includes more than one AON Position at the same location, justification must be provided as to why the declaration should include more than one AON Position. The CMO declaration may include additional AON Positions at the same location, without the requirement for further advertising, if in the CMO’s view the market or recruitment environment has not changed.

Area of Need will not be granted before the market has been tested.

# Approval Period

AON status may be declared for a period of up to four years and an AON certificate stating the details of the declaration will be issued by the CMO to the Employer Applicant.

# How to Extend AON for an AON Position

At least six months before the expiry date for an AON Position, the Employer Applicant must apply to the CMO to extend the AON period. The application must provide information addressing the above criteria two and three, and include a report on progress of the AON Practitioner towards full registration.

The CMO may declare AON to extend the AON Position for a further period of up to four years.

Once a medical practitioner employed in an AON Position obtains the relevant general and/or specialist registration, the need has been met and that AON Position will expire.

Where an Employer Applicant has AON status for only one AON Position and the medical practitioner employed in that position obtains the relevant general and/or specialist registration, AON status for the location will expire. Any further request for AON will require a new application.

Applications for extension should be emailed to the CMO, NT Department of Health at: chiefmedicalofficer.doh@nt.gov.au.

# How to Modify AON for an AON Position

An AON declaration attaches to a specific position within the AON location and is not transferrable to another position or location, unless exceptional circumstances exist. An application relying on exceptional circumstances will need to fully justify the request and address the above criteria, if applicable.

Requests for minor modifications (e.g. change in practice name) will require supporting information.

All requests for modification should be emailed to the CMO, NT Department of Health at:
chiefmedicalofficer.doh@nt.gov.au.

# Timeframe for Assessment

New applications will be processed within approximately 28 working days, provided all necessary information is submitted with the application.

Incomplete applications will not be assessed and will only be processed when all required information is submitted. The Employer Applicant will be notified if further information is required. Incomplete applications will be kept open for a maximum of 90 calendar days from the date the initial application is received to enable Employer Applicants to provide all required information. Generally, if the required information is not received in this time-frame the application will be closed.

On completion of the assessment process Employer Applicants will be advised of the outcome of the application and if successful, be provided with an AON certificate.

# Review

If an application is declined, the CMO will provide a statement outlining the reasons for the decision. The CMO will only reconsider the decision if the Employer Applicant disputes those reasons, based on information that was either not available or not previously considered by the CMO.

All requests for review must be received by the CMO within 28 working days of receipt of the decision.

# National Safety and Quality Health Standards

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| **National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards** |
| cid:image001.jpg@01D658ED.D030F090Clinical Governance | cid:image002.jpg@01D658ED.D030F090Partnering with Consumers | cid:image003.jpg@01D658ED.D030F090Preventing and Controlling Healthcare Associated Infection | cid:image004.jpg@01D658ED.D030F090Medication Safety | Comprehensive care iconComprehensive Care | cid:image006.jpg@01D658ED.D030F090Communicating for Safety | cid:image007.jpg@01D658ED.D030F090Blood Management | cid:image008.jpg@01D658ED.D030F090Recognising & Responding to Acute Deterioration |
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