

THE FRED HOLLOWES FOUNDATION INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIA PROGRAM

Telehealth Information Sheet 7: What are the critical success factors for telehealth-enabled models of care?

June 2018



The previous information sheet in this series discussed the promise of telehealth and the barriers to its successful uptake. Here, we discuss the critical success factors, as found by systematic reviews of a wide variety of telehealth services provided in rural and remote areas of Australia.

Enablers of success

A systematic review of telehealth services in rural and remote Australia identified six key factors associated with the success and sustainability of services¹:

Factor	Key points to consider
Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear, realistic vision of the purpose of the service
Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliberate and consultative service development with all stakeholders• Supportive management• Clinicians who champion the service by actively engaging and participating in service delivery
Adaptability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trial and modify the service model according to needs of patients and health service• Remain responsive to requirements of all stakeholders
Economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver cost savings, or facilitate prioritisation of services for health services• Provide value for patients• Achieve comparable care with clinical benefits
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have defined, efficient processes for managing activity• Quantity not necessarily the marker of success – high levels of activity are not required to be sustainable
Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Careful consideration of the equipment used and the technical requirements for support

In addition to the above six factors, the following have been identified as enablers to effective and sustainable telehealth services²:

- Initial capital investment
- Provider reimbursement
- Technological capability
- Organisational structures and protocols
- Integration into routine services
- Collaborative relationships, positive beliefs and well-functioning service models
- Future planning of services
- Champions to initiate services
- Participant acceptance creates sustainability
- Senior executive support
- Standards and policies developed
- Demonstrably delivers value

The following model (Figure 1) has been proposed for sustainable telehealth services after conducting a qualitative interview study of 36 Australian telehealth services². Services were sampled for maximum variation, and authors used grounded theory methods to develop a model from which to identify the *single most important factor* affecting the success of telehealth, found to be clinician acceptance.

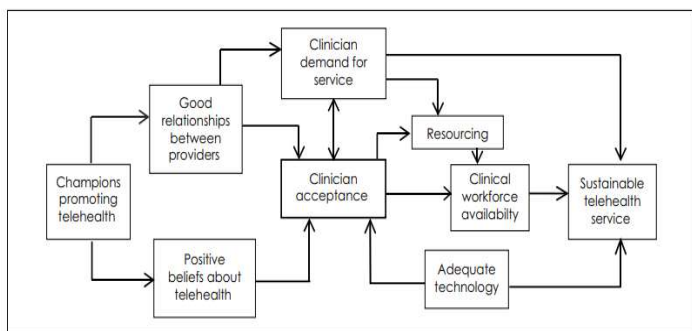


Figure 1. A model of telehealth service sustainability.

In addition, a systematic review of studies reporting on telediabetes services, the majority of which included screening for diabetic retinopathy, within Indigenous communities in Canada, Australia, India and the US found that key enablers included³:

- the use of cultural and spiritual elements
- acknowledgement of local beliefs and traditions
- appropriate community engagement
- involvement of Indigenous health workers (in communication in local language, helping clinicians understand the community, and the transportation of patients).

This information sheet has been prepared by an external consultant in collaboration with the Indigenous Australia Program.

This is a live document and any corrections, additions or other feedback is most appreciated.

Please Contact

Annie Ingram
Senior Program Officer
Indigenous Australia Program
The Fred Hollows Foundation
Tel: 08 8920 1400
Email: aingram@hollows.org

Reference

¹Bradford N, Caffery L, Smith A. Telehealth services in rural and remote Australia: a systematic review of models of care and factors influencing success and sustainability. *Rural and Remote Health* 2016; 16: 3808. Available: www.rrh.org.au/journal/article/3808

²Wade VA, Elliott, JA and Hiller JE. Clinician acceptance is the key factor for sustainable telehealth services. *Qualitative Health Research* 2014; 5: 682-694. DOI: 10.1177/1049732314528809. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1049732314528809>

³Wickramasinghe, Sumudu I., Liam J. Caffery, Natalie K. Bradford, and Anthony C. Smith. 2016. "Enablers and Barriers in Providing Telediabetes Services for Indigenous Communities: A Systematic Review." *Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare* 22(8): 465-71.