



Research and Evaluation Framework



To guide applications, delivery and reporting related to corrections and offender related research undertaken within the SA Department for Correctional Services

2014 - 2017

Strategic Policy, Projects and Partnerships
Offender Development Directorate



Government of South Australia
Department for Correctional Services

South Australian Department for Correctional Services

Level 2, 400 King William Street

ADELAIDE SA 5000

Telephone: 08 8226 9000

Facsimile: 08 8226 9226

Internet: www.corrections.sa.gov.au

Email: DCSResearch@sa.gov.au

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the SA Department for Correctional Services (DCS) *Research and Evaluation Framework 2014 -2017*.

The Framework provides the foundation and context for DCS's *Research Agenda* and reflects the growing importance that research and evaluation is assuming within our department as well as a commitment to evidence based policy and practice as a basis for effective outcomes.

The Framework plays an integral part toward the department's longer-term goal of applying insight gained from research and evaluation activity to delivering change that will benefit the community as well as impact outcomes related to the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders.

The development of a *Research and Evaluation Framework* is a key step towards a more holistic and systematic undertaking and the use of research and evaluation by the department. It will ensure that our research efforts support the achievement of the organisation's key strategic priorities and yield findings that are both useful at a policy and operational level as well as compliment endeavours across the broader criminal justice sector both here in South Australia and at wider jurisdictional level.

As the advantages and benefits of evidence-based decision making becomes clearer, our need to engage with and generate research as well as evaluate policy and practice in corrections will grow.

I look forward to sharing information in the coming years on the progress with the department's research priorities progressed by this framework and its companion documents – DCSs *Research Strategy* and *Research Agenda*.

David Brown

Chief Executive

Department for Correctional Services

South Australia

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1. Definitions

Research	In the context of this document, Research is a purposeful investigation that produces information that can be analysed and drawn upon to create new insight or ideas that contribute to a body of knowledge that helps refine future departmental strategy and promotes effective and sustainable offender / prisoner policy, programs and practice.
Evaluation	Evaluation can be defined as the process of making a value judgement. This includes the systematic collection and analysis of information to facilitate understanding and judgement regarding the effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness of a policy, program or service ¹
Mixed Methods Research	A research approach or methodology that; aims for real-life contextual understandings, multi-level perspectives, and cultural influences, employs both quantitative to assess magnitude and frequency of constructs as well as qualitative research to explore the meaning and understanding of constructs, utilizes multiple methods (e.g., intervention trials and in-depth interviews), intentionally integrates or combines these methods to draw on the strengths of each; and frames investigation within philosophical and theoretical positions.
Quantitative research	The systematic empirical investigation of social phenomena via statistical, mathematical or numerical data or computational techniques. The objective of quantitative research is to develop and employ mathematical models, theories and/ or hypotheses pertaining to phenomena. Is concerned with testing theory.
Qualitative research	Qualitative Research is concerned with collecting, analysing, and interpreting data by observing what people do and say. The nature of this type of research is exploratory and open-ended and is concerned with developing theory.
Pure research	Pure or basic research aims to explore and test general theories, ideas, and questions for own sake or increasing knowledge, without regard to how those finding might apply in a real world context.
Applied research	Applied research involves actual investigation of a real subject/ problem with the aim of addressing, answering as well as applying new understandings to real-world problems.
Outcome Evaluation	Outcome evaluation is concerned with longer term changes and effects of the policy, program or service and is linked to stated objectives
Impact Evaluation	Impact evaluation is concerned with the immediate and short-term effects of the policy, program or service, or those factors that are known to contribute to or cause a particular issue, and usually correlate to the stated objectives

¹ Criminal Justice Evaluation Framework, 2007, Queensland Government.

Indicator	A way to measure, indicate, point out or point to a change with more or less exactness
Program logic	Program logic is a simplified model of expected cause-and-effect relationships between activities, immediate changes, intermediate outcomes and final outcomes.

2. Introduction

The Department for Correctional Services (DCS) serves a vital role in the criminal justice system in South Australia. This is broadly reflected in the Department's strategic vision which seeks to achieve 'a safer community by protecting the public and reducing reoffending'.

The department aims to achieve this through the delivery of safe, secure and humane management of offenders and prisoners through the provision of opportunity for rehabilitation and reintegration.

Within the context of DCS's vision, mission and values, the *Research and Evaluation Framework* (R&EF) sets out the organisation's research context, structures and principles to support decision-making for sustained and developmental improvement. The Framework aims to establish a more strategic and collaborative evidence-based approach to correction's policy development and practice.

The key purpose to the department's research and evaluation effort is to help understand and anticipate emerging correctional issues and challenges and – importantly, help to determine which interventions (policy and practice) are most successful, why they are successful, and what might work in the future.

It is expected that DCS's investment in research and evaluation will ensure the organisation builds a body of knowledge that helps anticipate and respond to change and environmental challenges in a planned, coordinated and strategic manner.

Three undertakings are central to maximizing Correction's R&E outcomes² and include:

1. The alignment of research activity with the organisation's strategic priorities (which are aligned with broader Government priorities)
2. Building research and evaluation as a core organisation competencies
3. Ensuring that research findings are disseminated and implemented as part of everyday corrections practice.

The *Research and Evaluation Framework* will also aim to ensure that:

- Research undertaken, within departmental sites or commissioned by the department are of high quality and that processes are open, transparent and accountable
- Resources dedicated to R&E activity are increasingly focused on identified and agreed areas of strategic priority to DCS and the wider criminal justice sector
- A critical body of research in priority areas is established, shared and used in policy decision-making and practice development
- The research capacity of DCS staff is enhanced at all levels
- Communication is strengthened with external researchers and funding bodies to ensure that research effort is focused toward areas of strategic priority to corrections and the wider criminal justice sector
- Collaboration is fostered with criminal justice institutions and research bodies locally, nationally and internationally.

² Corrections Victoria. (2009) Corrections Victoria's Research Strategy 2009-2012, p.2.

3. Context

The Department is interested in research and evaluation that informs and supports policy development, program design and delivery. To this end, the context for DCS's research and evaluation is an applied rather than pure research approach to enable the organization to draw more readily upon research findings, integrate these into policy development and program design, and make a positive difference to the corrections system.

R&E topics and questions will be identified through consultation with key DCS stakeholders and then prioritised based on emerging issues, trends and challenges for the organisation as well as the broader criminal justice sector. These priorities will be collated into a time-bound (three year) *Research Agenda* that will be made publically available to inform and guide engagement with the research community.

Research proposals and applications will be assessed (and given priority) based on:

- Alignment to DCS's strategic objectives and priorities
- Research contribution to an increased understanding and responsiveness to current issues and challenges
- Promotes inquiry into the technical and practical aspects involved in containing, managing and rehabilitating offenders.
- Anticipates emerging trends and assists DCS to respond in a proactive manner
- Contributes to DCS's capability to achieve its strategic objectives amid a changing environment
- Evaluates program, policy or service delivery effectiveness against key performance and outcome measures
- Contributes to a broader criminal justice and correctional knowledge base

Additionally, proposals / applications will be reviewed in light of;

- the potential operational implications arising from research activities on DCS
- the likelihood of the research making an original contribution to criminological knowledge
- any perceived risks associated with the research
- ethical considerations related to the conduct of research or impact on offender population
- the suitability of the research methodology
- whether the research is consistent with the legislation
- the competence of the applicant(s) or principal investigator(s) to undertake the research
- data availability, and
- cost effectiveness of the research.

DCS research and evaluation process

The Department encourages quality research process with a particular emphasis on generating evidence to inform and support DCS's strategic and emerging directions. The research and evaluation lifecycle is outlined in Figure 1.

Research or evaluation (R&E) may be large or small scale and may be undertaken by practitioners, corporate, community corrections or custodial staff, students, academics, collaborations across agencies or jurisdictions or research institutions.

Methods may include;

- Literature reviews, document analysis and other desktop research
- Applied research that seeks to address a particular question, issue or emerging trend and contributes to DCS policy and/or practice
- Social research involving interviews, focus groups, surveys, case studies and observations
- Action research involving a reflective process of progressive problem solving
- Evaluation and reviews which assess the costs, benefits and effectiveness of DCS policies, programs and services.

Note: All R&E requires approval from the DCS Research and Evaluation Committee. This Committee is not an ethics committee but requires, before approval to proceed, ethics approval being given by fully constituted ethics committees, such as at a university or other recognised body. All R&E projects need to be consistent with the National Guidelines.



Figure 1

4. R&E goals and principles

DCS research and evaluation (R&E) activity will enable the organisation to;

1. **Monitor** policy, program and service outcomes to guide an ongoing cycle of service improvement
2. **Evidence** the effectiveness of its policy, programs and services through the use of internally generated findings and the integration of existing and emerging evidence from external sources
3. **Innovate** by proactively trialing and evaluating in key aspects of policy and practice delivery
4. **Partner** with researchers, clinical or professional staff, institutions, third sector organisations, other government agencies and other jurisdictions to enhance and stimulate research activity in relation to corrections and the criminal justice. These partnerships will also extend to the implementation of research informed policy, practice and evaluation.
5. **Influence** policy and practice in the corrections and criminal justice sector.
6. **Establish a culture** that supports staff engagement in research and evaluation activities.
7. **Play a leadership role** in promoting evidence informed policy, program and service development.

The Department's key goals for research and evaluation activity are to:

- Help to describe, explain and sometimes predict events or trends.
- Inform the department's strategic planning process and policy development.
- Generate findings that can be used to influence decision-makers and lead correctional practice.
- Guide and maximize the department's resource investment.
- Help evaluate the effectiveness of policy, projects, programs and services.
- Inform the design and development of future policy, projects, programs and services.
- Proactively trial and evaluate new and innovative corrections practice.
- Monitor outcomes for prisoners and offenders and through the use of performance and outcomes data, guides an ongoing cycle of continuous improvement.
- Promote partnerships that enhance and stimulate DCS and justice related research relating to offending, rehabilitation and reintegration. These partnerships will also extend to the implementation of research.
- Inform corrections practice and promotes continuous improvement.
- Build DCS internal research and evaluation capabilities.
- Establish SA Correctional Services as a leader both state and nationally in promoting evidence-informed policy, program and service development.

R&E will be guided by the following key principles³;

- Ethical conduct

Research will be conducted in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and *Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector*. All researchers will be required to gain ethics approval from either universities or other agencies (i.e. Department for Communities and Social Inclusion Ethics Committee) following research 'in principal' support from DCS's Research and Evaluation Management Committee.

Research will be carried out with diligence and due care and, meeting any specified requirement's set out by the department.

Researchers will also respect the privacy of those involved and ensure informed consent and confidentiality is respected while conforming to requirements related to data ownership, storage, and use.

- Transparency and engagement

Transparent processes will be used when engaging with research participants. Data collection, storage, analysis and reporting processes will be specifically outlined.

- Relevance and coherence

Research and evaluation efforts will focus on current strategic and emerging DCS priority areas informed by the current criminal justice reform agenda, South Australia's Strategic Plan and DCS Strategic plan. However this does not preclude research that does not directly address these drivers though consideration will be given against the criteria outlined in the previous section.

- Collaboration and academic rigor

DCS fosters alliances and partnerships with the broader research community to build the department's own research capacity and to ensure a critical body of qualitative and quantitative research is established and shared. Optimisation of departmental investment in commissioned research will occur through seeking partnerships and co-investment opportunities.

- Minimising negative impact on sites and the department

DCS will ensure research participation does not negatively impact on the department or its sites or services. Existing data sources will be used where possible and data coordination reviewed to facilitate the use of data for multiple purposes or gain new insight about DCS's offender and prison populations.

- Accountability and Sustainability

Research outcomes will be monitored, analysed and disseminated to inform policy and practice development and service delivery, maximise potential research benefits and facilitate broader discussion and understanding about research processes and the role and practical application of research in improving policy and practice.

³ Adapted from SA Department of Education and Child Development (2013) Research and Evaluation Framework. p.5.

5. The Framework

The DCS *Research and Evaluation Framework* (REF) sets out the objectives, platforms and enablers for research and evaluation activity. The framework aims to promote the generation of evidence to inform and support DCS meet current and emerging needs and be strategic and planned in response.

Figure 2 provides a visual overview of DCS research and evaluation approach⁴.

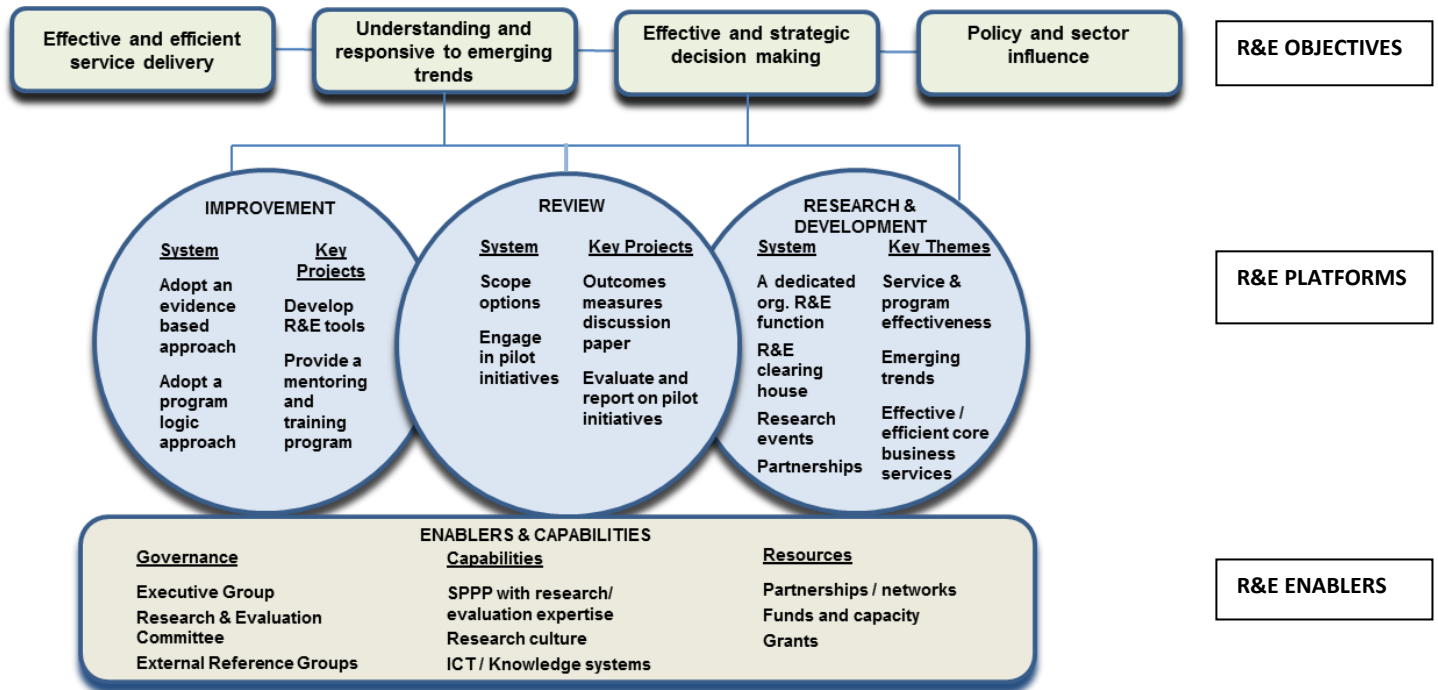


Figure 2

The framework operates on three levels:

1. Objectives

The specific organizational outcomes the R&E framework aims to achieve.

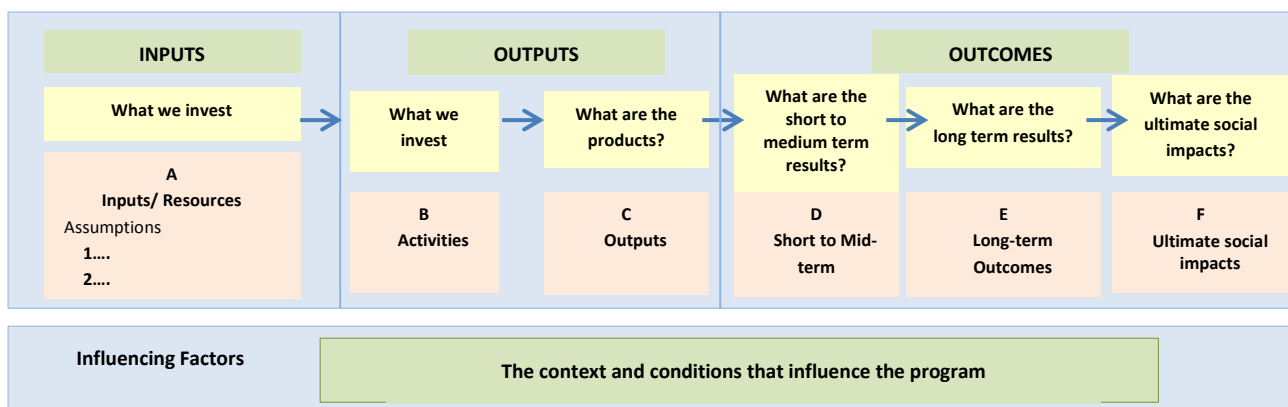
2. Platforms

DCS's R&E activities will be built on three complimentary foundations that shape R&E effort:

- Improvement – This platform is linked to policy and practice improvement through an emphasis of evaluation activities but also aims to ensure that decision making, policy and practice are evidence-based. The focus for this platform is; 'Are we doing what we say we are doing' and 'Are we making the most of our resources?'

DCS will use a 'program logic model' approach to improvement. This methodology provides benefits at policy, program or service initiation and evaluation points and is summarized below in figure 3.

⁴ Adapted from Mind Australia. (November 2011) Research and Evaluation Framework. p.7. University of Melbourne.



Outcome measurement is the cornerstone of evidence based policy and practice (UK National Audits Office, 2010).

A 'program logic model' approach emphasises the rationale between the organisation/ service or program activities and the expected or sought outcomes.

Program logic links the intended outcomes of a service or program with the planning activities, processes or investment. A 'logic approach' is concerned with demonstrating how resources invested and the services/ programs /policies/ projects delivered contribute to the achievement of longer-term change or social impacts.

Measurement of outcomes is dependent on the development of appropriate and relevant outcome indicators that capture both 'short' (early) or 'intermediate' outcomes and later and longer-term 'end' outcomes or benefits (the ultimate social impact) from change⁵.

Figure 3

- **Review** – This platform supports initiatives designed to inform DCS about the impact of its effort on the delivery and achievement of outcomes. The focus for this platform is; *'Are the recipients of our policies, programs and services benefiting from our approach?' and 'How effective are policies, programs and services in achieving change?'*
- **Research and Development** – This platform promotes the development of DCS's capability to undertake R&E and its ability to facilitate new understandings and knowledge. The focus for this platform is; *'How does new knowledge contribute to our understandings about what we do' and 'How can knowledge be integrated into our decision making, policy and practices?'*

DCS will undertake its own R&E projects, but will also engage or invite external research and become involved in interdisciplinary, cross sector and potentially international research projects.

Each platform will be supported by key actions or initiatives organised as follows;

- a. **Projects** – Initiatives that provide specific evidence or information about substantive components or functions of the organisation covering both corporate and operational areas. Actions here include; scoping options, supporting pilot initiatives, developing systems on the basis of insights gained

⁵ Adapted from Mind Australia. (November 2011) Research and Evaluation Framework. p.8. University of Melbourne.

- b. Organisational systems – Processes that build the organisation’s systems and capabilities to undertake research and evaluation. This also means contributing to and integrating new knowledge into DCS’s policy, practices and services.
- c. Research – Prioritised R&E questions that align to DCS’s Strategic Plan, assist understanding regarding current and emerging trends, or contribute to a local, national and international criminal justice body of knowledge. R&E focus will require regular review to ensure it reflects DCS changing needs and priorities as well as broader criminal justice concerns.

3. Enablers

Enablers support the achievement of each platform and include governance, DCS research supports and capabilities and, resources.

The specific initiatives and research priorities detailed in Figure 2 represent early or very significant priorities. The specific initiatives which will become the research and evaluation program are a ‘work in progress’.

Additional activities and priorities will be addressed and included as new information, priorities and / or resources become available. The Framework and DCS’s research and evaluation activity will evolve as priorities and needs change as identified in DCS Strategic Plan or, as a result of decisions made by the various governance structures outlined later in this document.

6. Framework outcomes

A Framework for DCS Research and Evaluation Investment

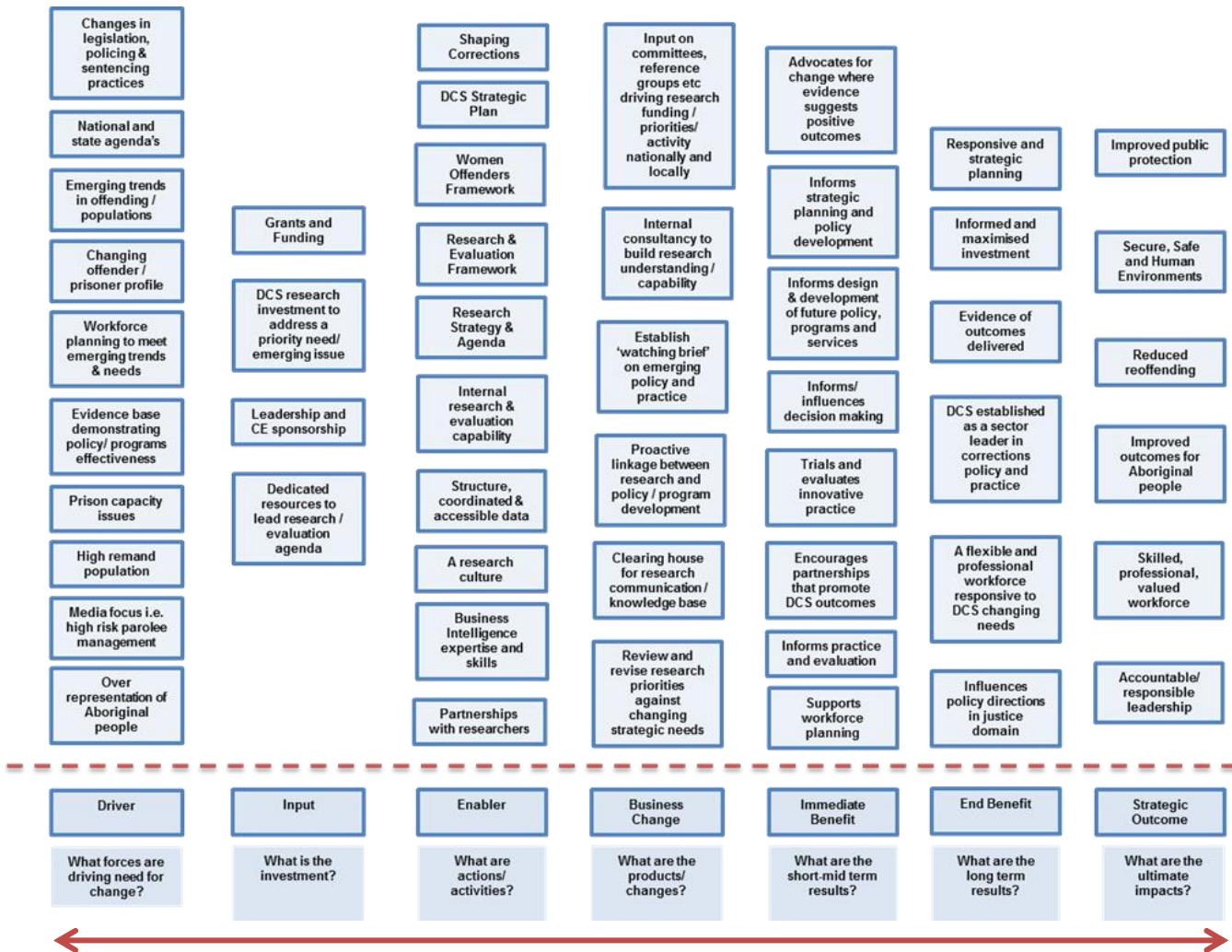


Figure 4

The R&E Framework key outcome measures include;

- A regularly reviewed Research Agenda and implementation plan that is driven, monitored and reviewed by the DCS Research and Evaluation Management Committee and supports the organisation address current and emerging needs.
- Improved outcomes for vulnerable offenders including people with a mental health issue or disability, women, Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) offenders
- Decision making, policy, program and practice development that is enabled and informed by evidence and outcome measures routinely embedded in everything we do.
- Piloting of innovative projects based on research evidence that are subject to rigorous evaluation and contribute to a correctional and criminal justice body of knowledge.

- The attraction of external research funding that supports active program of research and evaluation activity within the organisation.
- The strong research reputation and profile both at state and federal level as well as internationally.
- A strong research and evaluation culture across the organisation in which staff have the expertise/ skills to reflect and improve of current policy, practice and service delivery as well as drive innovation.
- DCS enters research partnerships with individual researchers or other organisations when this is consistent with established priorities.
- DCS or partners publish findings from research and evaluation activities in a variety of publications including reports and peer reviewed journals.
- DCS or partners present findings at a variety of forums including national and international criminal justice or corrections conferences.

7. Governance

Governance focuses on identifying and establishing key strategic directions for the department's research and evaluation activities, identifying opportunities for collaboration and investment, building an evidence-informed culture, management of communication related to R&E activity and outcomes, application and research implementation quality assurance and accountability reviews.

DCS's Research and Evaluation Management Committee (REMC) will take overall responsibility for leading the implementation of the department's R&E Framework and.

The committee will meet six times a year chaired by the Director, Strategic Policy, Projects and Partnerships (SPPP) and report regularly and provide recommendations to DCS Chief Executive and Executive Leadership Group on research proposals and approved applications.

The REMC will be broad in representation to reflect the diversity of DCS research and evaluation interests will aim to strategic and overarching research perspective to research planning and implementation.

The committee will provide 'first point of approval' for all research proposals ensuring there is appropriate business level engagement, identifying ethical considerations as well as potential impacts or implications for DCS resulting from the research.

The REMC key aims are to;

- Oversee and lead the implementation of the DCS Research and Evaluation Framework (REF)
- Provide leadership and advice regarding the department's strategic research priorities and directions, including alignment of research to DCS strategic priorities
- Facilitate partnerships and collaborative activity with internal / external stakeholders, including universities, clinical or professional staff, other research institutions, other government agencies, third sector organisations, and other jurisdictions
- Review all research and evaluation applications and consider the merit of each on a case by case basis for the benefit of all parties involved and against the department's strategic priorities.
- Strengthen investment opportunities in collaborative projects
- Monitor and review research activity against the department's Research Agenda and Strategy, DCS Strategic Plan, and regular review of the research guidelines and processes
- Provide advice and support for research communication and dissemination and facilitate the promotion of research across DCS with external bodies.
- Facilitate DCS's research and evaluation capacity building including development of guidelines, processes and resources to assist and inform researchers and evaluators undertaking research or evaluation in DCS.
- Report regularly, seek direction and provide recommendations to DCS Chief Executive and Executive Leadership Group regarding the department's current and future research and evaluation activity.

- Ensure a quality research and evaluation governance process is maintained for the effective implementation of R&E activities.

Suggested representation may include;

Internal:

- Statewide operations
- Community corrections
- Business Intelligence / data expertise
- Sentence Management Unit
- Aboriginal Services Unit
- Female Offender Principal Policy Officer
- DCS corporate i.e. either workforce development, organization culture, asset management

External

- Academic with expertise in research or evaluation
- Community representation
- Aboriginal representation

This group will seek input/ subject matter expertise as required, from key resources from within DCS to guide / inform decision-making i.e. research related to a criminogenic need, specific cohort group or a programmatic response or, specific to victim specific concerns.

The REMC will be supported in the delivery of the Framework, Research Agenda and Strategy by Strategic Policy, Projects and Partnerships (SPPP) a business unit within Offender Development.

SPPP will provide the following research and evaluation support;

- Respond to initial research enquiries and manage approvals, monitoring and reporting of research and evaluation activity undertaken within DCS.
- Undertake research and evaluation activity on behalf of the organisation as required.
- Support and monitor internal and external research and evaluation activity.
- Liaise with key funding agencies and facilitate /commission collaborative research partnership projects.
- Develop and maintain information / resources on DCS public and internal websites.
- Support and coordinate research forums as a means of information sharing and discussion about topics of research interest and outcomes in conjunction with other research partners.
- Investigate and develop research training opportunities.
- Provide a clearing house for internal/ external research collections with a focus on corrections, criminology and associated topics.
- Maintain a repository of current and completed corrections-related research projects and papers.
- Expand networks to relevant research communities to build knowledge of national research priorities, funding, QA frameworks, governance and ethics issues.
- Establish an internal consultancy to build understanding of research ethics process, research design principles, methodological approaches, applications and limitations, data collection and analysis.
- Develop a strong research presence i.e. report regularly on research trends and issues.

- Develop research tools – minimize risk to participants, manage risk to organization, review available data sets and potential inputs/ application.
- Build relationships across justice sector (and broader government sector), key committees, reference groups and policy/ decision bodies.
- Work with Executive to increase engagement in research and establish protocols to encourage staff to draw on research and develop evidence-based policy and programs and – monitor and evaluate outcomes.
- Provide a mentoring and advice service to support staff implement research findings.
- Conduct informal forums to share research findings and discuss implications for policy and program development.
- Support staff to present findings of research projects to wider sector both locally and nationally.

Copyright

The Department of Correctional Services (DCS) will retain copyright in the records, file notes, data etc. that may be made available to researchers. Unauthorised copying or publication of these records, data, film, photographs etc. will be in breach of the department’s copyright.

Publication and Intellectual Property

DCS supports the publication of approved research work undertaken independently of or in partnership with the department. However, researchers must comply with the terms and conditions contained in the Researcher’s Deed of Agreement.

Researchers are obliged to recognise that the information contained in Departmental records is highly confidential. Researchers are not to reveal, either verbally or in written work, any personal details identifying information that may identify or could assist in identifying a person named in records.

Permission must be sought from DCS prior to publication or making publically known, all or part of research that makes use of DCS data or information. The term ‘publication’ is defined to include reports, thesis, papers, journal articles or presentations.

The notification and provision of any proposed publications must be made to DCS at least 30 days prior to intended release. This should be sent to the key DCS research contact in Strategic Policy, Projects and Partnerships.

In the case of partnership research, notification and submission of proposed publications should also be sent to the DCS contact nominated in the MOU or project plan.

All publications arising from approved research shall acknowledge the contributions of DCS.

DCS will not publically release information contained in these publications without the consent of relevant external researchers.

DCS will not claim ownership of any intellectual property created as a result of approved research unless it is otherwise agreed between involved parties or the researcher is an employee of the department and conducts approved research in the course of researcher’s duties as an employee.

8. References

SA Department of Communities and Social Inclusion. (March 2014). Families and Communities Research Ethics Committee: Terms of Reference and Operational Procedures.

Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Queensland Government. Criminal Justice Evaluation Framework – Guidelines for evaluating criminal justice initiatives.

Mind Australia. (November 2011). Research and Evaluation Framework. University of Melbourne.

Queensland Corrective Services. Research Committee Handbook – Application to Conduct Research, Information and Guidelines.

SA Department of Education and Child Development (2013) Research and Evaluation Framework.

9. Appendices

Download as separate documents from www.corrections.sa.gov.au

- DCS Research Agenda 2015-17
- REMC Terms of Reference and membership
- Research Application Package