



Government of South Australia
Department for Correctional Services

**RESEARCH AND EVALUATION
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

Information Package for Research Applicants

Updated: April 19

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SECTION 1 – GENERAL INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

The South Australian Department for Correctional Services (DCS) encourages external research in a vast range of areas that are of interest to DCS. The role of external research is to enhance the ability of DCS to achieve the goals established through the Strategic Plan and Business Plan, whilst upholding and promoting the Service Principles – Shaping Corrections.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (REMC)

The REMC is composed of a core group of DCS staff, stakeholders and key personnel with varied specialist knowledge. In cases where additional knowledge or skills are required to aid the decision-making process, the REMC will consult with relevant internal and external specialists as required.

Purpose and Role

The REMC aims to ensure that the applications received to conduct research within DCS are applicable to the Strategic and Business Plans and in accordance with legislative requirements. The REMC will also provide comments, advice and suggestions on any proposed research applications.

The REMC does not formally consider the human ethics perspective of research proposals; however, final approval to proceed is dependent upon evidence of approval by a recognised human research ethics committee (registered with the National Health Medical Research Council), for example, university ethics committees.

On approval of the research application, the REMC reviews and monitors the progress of approved research projects and receives and comments, where appropriate, on completed research.

Department for Correctional Services (DCS) Obligations

The following are obligations, which will be taken into account by DCS, when considering a research application:

- safety of the researcher
- management of the range and extent of research to ensure DCS operations are not jeopardised and research topics are not duplicated
- appropriateness of research methodologies from an operational perspective
- the cost of providing research assistance and supervision/monitoring, against potential benefits.

STRATEGIC RESEARCH AGENDA

The Strategic Research Agenda provides a focus for research activity within DCS by encouraging research in specific areas to develop or inform existing Departmental policy and practice. The Agenda is reviewed on an annual basis and is aligned to the DCS Strategic Plan.

WHO CAN APPLY?

Research applications are invited from Undergraduate and Post-Graduate Students, Senior Academics, and in limited cases, non-Academics. DCS staff members who wish to undertake research within the Department must also apply. All applicants should note that in the event of high demand for access to offenders or DCS resources, preference will be given to research questions that address key DCS Strategic objectives.

Undergraduate Students

The REMC recognises that undergraduate research is primarily an exercise in developing research skills, and that it is obviously unrealistic to expect research at this level to bring about changes in practice or policy; however desirable this may be. While the number of undergraduate students allowed access for research purposes is limited, the following research assistance will be provided if the application is approved.

- published information and statistics
- assistance in identifying possible participants
- interview access to staff
- limited access to prisoners/offenders, where practicable

Senior Academics/Post Graduate Students

Assistance provided to this category of researcher is likely to be more intensive, but is subject to work priorities and availability of DCS resources. Generally, the following assistance will be provided.

- tailored information and statistics
- assistance in identifying possible participants
- interview access to staff
- access to prisoners/offenders, subject to the discretion of the REMC

Please note:

Prior to submitting a research application, applicants are required to:

- Address the needs of the DCS Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022.
- Demonstrate/ align the research to the DCS Research Agenda; and Servicing Principles – Shaping Corrections.
- Avoid doubling up on previous research topics – See the Research Register.

*Any application that does not address **all** of these areas will automatically not be considered.*

Non-Academic Researchers

Applications from non-academic groups or individuals will be examined on merit and any decision reached will be subject to the overriding issues of confidentiality, cost and additional workload imposed on staff against the potential benefits for the Department for Correctional Services of the research.

FUNDING

The REMC has no funding available to support external research proposals. The Researcher is free to source external funding, where the REMC has approved the proposal in principle. Where external sources of funding which require a DCS contribution (i.e. CRC, SPIRT grants) are sought, the REMC will forward the research proposal to the DCS Executive for consideration.

RESEARCH REGISTER

The REMC manages a central register of all completed research. It is a condition of approval that all Researchers forward a copy of the completed research and a summary paper to the Executive Officer of the REMC. The research outcomes will be considered by the REMC and where appropriate, forwarded on to DCS Executive for consideration and further action. The REMC will not support proposals which duplicate previous research undertaken within the Department. All completed research is available from the Executive Officer of the REMC.

SECTION 2 – RESEARCH APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

APPLICATION PROCESS

Research applications with a primary focus on Aboriginal issues

All applications received by the Executive Officer, which have a primary focus on Aboriginal issues, will be forwarded to Aboriginal Services for consideration and comment prior to being distributed to REMC members.

Consideration by the REMC

The REMC meet on a regular basis. Once an application to conduct research within DCS is received, the application will be forwarded to committee members for consideration and comment.

There are no deadlines in place for when applications need to be received by DCS; however, as REMC members have an extensive and demanding workload, it is important to allow sufficient time between submitting the application and the desired research commencement date.

Applicants are requested not to approach individual sites or individual correctional staff members with their research proposal.

Submissions including all relevant forms, documentation, questionnaires or research materials should be forwarded to:

Executive Officer
Research and Evaluation Management Committee
DCSResearch@sa.gov.au

Expression of Interest for Research (Appendix A)

The first step of research approval requires completion of the Expressions of Interest Form. The Expression of Interest will be considered and the applicant will be notified in writing of the decision.

Detailed Research Application Form (Appendix B)

If the Expression of Interest is supported, a detailed application will be sought from the applicant. The application will be tabled at the next scheduled REMC meeting. It is possible for applicants to request to address the REMC if the applicant considers this is appropriate. Likewise, the REMC may request the applicant to address the committee. Both successful and unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing of the decision.

Research Register (Appendix C)

The Research Register lists all research previously conducted within DCS. The REMC will not support any duplication of previous research and, as such, it is important to ensure that any research application submitted to the REMC does not replicate or emulate previously conducted research topics.

Participant Information Form (Appendix D)

Applicants undertaking research that requires personal contact with prisoners and/or offenders should clearly outline how they intend to ensure that participants give their informed and voluntary consent.

Applicants are required to compose an Information Sheet or equivalent, for distribution to prisoners and/or offenders, which explains, in simple terms, who is conducting the research, the purpose of the project and how confidentiality will be maintained. This should be included with the Detailed Research Application Form. Appendix D provides an example.

Participant Consent Form (Appendix E)

Researchers must also provide evidence of how informed consent is intended to be obtained from participants. This should be included with the Detailed Research Application Form. Appendix E provides an example.

DCS Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022

The Strategic Plan identifies and outlines key focus areas and goals within DCS. The Plan governs the manner in which DCS conducts its business practices and management, delivers critical services, in addition to further building upon the capacity and capability of DCS to better perform varied functions. As mentioned previously, it is essential that all applications to conduct research within DCS address the key components outlined within the Strategic Plan.

DCS Research Agenda

In line with South Australia's Strategic Priorities and complemented by the department's own Strategic Plan, the Research Agenda aims to significantly contribute in directing specific approaches for the management and rehabilitation of Correction's prisoner and offender populations. It will, in turn, also contribute to the broader research community and through greater collaboration with partners - aid in identifying areas of research that can benefit and build on the existing evidence and correctional knowledge base. DCS endeavours to pursue research and evaluation in a way that can inform and support policy development, program and service design and, effective decision making.

Servicing Principles – Shaping Corrections

The Servicing Principles – Shaping Corrections outlines the manner in which all DCS employees conduct their business and perform their specific work functions. As mentioned previously, it is essential that all applications to conduct research within DCS demonstrate how the research proposal is closely aligned to the key points identified in Service Principles – Shaping Corrections.

National Police Check Informed Consent Form

Applicants requiring access to Departmental sites and offenders or confidential offender information will also be required to complete and include a police clearance form with the Detailed Research Application Form. This form is forwarded to the South Australian Police Department by the REMC who will then be advised of any offending history. This is then taken into account when considering the application.

Human Ethics Committee Approval

As the REMC does not formally consider the human ethics perspective of research proposals, there is a requirement that all research involving offender subjects be approved by a recognised human research ethics committee (registered with the NHMRC), for example, university ethics committees. This documentation should be included with the Research Application Form or forwarded as soon as practicable, to secure final REMC approval.

APPROVAL PROCESS

Expression of Interest

Upon receipt of the Expressions of Interest Form, the proposal will be considered by the REMC. The applicant will then be notified in writing of the outcome. If the expression of interest is considered to have merit, the applicant will then be asked to submit a detailed application.

Application Acknowledgement

Upon receipt of the research application, a letter of acknowledgment will be forwarded to the applicant, the proposal will be forwarded to the REMC and key departmental officers (stakeholders) who are affected by the proposal.

Referees

The REMC reserves the right to ask for reports from referees if deemed necessary.

Final Approval

Both successful and unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing of REMC decisions. Applicants should note that the REMC must seek access approval from the relevant Regional/General Manager(s) for intended site visits and that access approval can be withdrawn at any time in accordance with management needs.

Nomination of Departmental Contact Officer

Approved research projects will be assigned a “Departmental contact”. From that time on, all communication with the Department should be directed to that person. The purpose of the Departmental contact is to make any necessary access arrangements, to monitor the progress of the research and advise the REMC of any issues. He/she should not be seen to intrude upon the role of academic supervisors (if applicable) and it should not be assumed that they will be automatically available to provide assistance.

Induction Process

For Researchers requiring entry to Departmental sites, the Departmental contact will arrange for an “induction” to take place. This involves providing the Researcher with information on emergency procedures, occupational health and safety issues, procedures for entering sites and securing personal property.

Approval Variations

The REMC reserves the right to withdraw approval or vary conditions, applying to an approved research project, at any time. Accordingly, applicants are advised to provide information on any possible issues during the application process or during the conduct of the research so that they may be resolved to the mutual satisfaction of the researcher and the REMC. The REMC must be notified of, and approve any changes to, the original research design.

Submission of Draft Report

Arrangements must be made with the Departmental contact to read and certify having read the finished paper prior to publication or submission to the academic body. The purpose of this precaution is to ensure that confidentiality, the rights of

subjects and copyright rules have been observed. There is also a requirement that the report clearly states that the views expressed therein are those of the author and not necessarily the Department for Correctional Services. The purpose of reading the draft is not to impose censorship or editorial changes.

Progress Reports

It is a requirement of the REMC, that progress reports are provided by the researcher to the REMC during the research process. The frequency of providing progress reports may be negotiated between the researcher and the Chair of the REMC or through the nominated contact officer.

Submission of Final Report and Summary

It is a condition of approval that the researcher agrees to provide a copy of the final report, to the REMC, at the completion of their study. The research will be entered on the Research Register, the summary will be distributed to stakeholders and the copy of the final report will be held by the Executive Officer of the REMC.

Publication of Research

Permission must be sought from the REMC, in instances where the completed research makes reference to, or use of, DCS data, information or clients. This permission must be sought prior to the publication of the report or before allowing the report to be made publicly available.

Additionally, the words “The views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the Department for Correctional Services” must be displayed clearly on the report.

APPROVAL CRITERIA

Approval Criteria

1. REMC reserves the right to not grant approval to all applications received
2. The REMC reserves the right to withdraw approval or vary conditions, applying to an approved research project, at any time. Accordingly, applicants are advised to provide information on any possible issues during the application process or during the conduct of the research so that they may be resolved to the mutual satisfaction of the researcher and the REMC. The REMC must be notified of, and approve any changes to, the original research design.

Submission of Final Report and Summary

It is a condition of approval that the researcher agrees to provide a copy of the final report, to the REMC, at the completion of their study. As outlined previously, the words “The views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the Department for Correctional Services” must be displayed clearly on the report.

**An approved expression of interest does not automatically assume approval of the research project.*

RESEARCHER OBLIGATIONS

- Permission must be sought from the REMC, in instances where the completed research makes reference to, or use of, DCS data, information or clients. This permission must be sought prior to the publication of the report or before allowing the report to be made publicly available. An advance copy of the material must be provided to the REMC. This is also a condition of approval to which the applicant must agree.
- Researchers must provide written notice prior to engaging in any form of media with respect to their projects, irrespective of what stage the project is up to. Consent should be forwarded to DCSResearch@sa.gov.au.
- 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 or identifying information that may identify or could assist in identifying a person named in the records.
- The Department for Correctional Services retains the copyright on all records, data, film, etc; and any unauthorised copying of these records may constitute a breach of copyright.
- As outlined previously, the words “The views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the Department for Correctional Services” will be displayed clearly on the report.
- The REMC will advise when progress reports are required to be submitted to the Committee.

We thank you for your interest in carrying out research in the Department for Correctional Services and look forward to receiving your application.