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Research and Evaluation Framework

1. Purpose

The Research and Evaluation Framework (the Framework) outlines the Department for Child Protection's (DCP) strategic approach to research and evaluation and the associated governance processes. The Framework recognises that research and evaluation build an evidence-base to meaningfully advance DCP's vision for all children and young people to grow up safe, healthy, connected and feeling loved so they reach their full potential.

To advance DCP's vision, the Framework informs processes and structures for the:

- establishment and operation of the Research and Evaluation Management Committee (REMC) to be responsible for overseeing the approval and monitoring of all research and evaluation requests
- establishment of an ongoing register and monitoring system for the periodic review of all research and evaluation projects
- approval and distribution of publications or other intellectual property developed through research and evaluation projects.

The Research and Evaluation team (DCPResearchandEvaluation@sa.gov.au) works alongside DCP staff and external providers to facilitate high quality research and evaluation according to the Framework.

2. Scope

The Framework applies to all staff in DCP, research organisations, student researchers, external researchers and evaluators who are undertaking or propose to undertake research or evaluation regarding DCP. This includes, but is not limited to sites, services, policies and programs, staff, clients or data. It also applies to research and evaluation related to services, programs, projects, policies, legislation, interventions, initiatives and business processes undertaken or managed by, or on behalf of DCP.

There are three main types of projects under the Framework: research, internal evaluations and external evaluations. Each has a specified approval pathway. Research and evaluation projects in DCP are maintained on an internal register which is coordinated, recorded and managed by the Research and Evaluation team.

The Framework recognises the importance of conducting research and evaluation that is culturally safe and improves the services provided to Aboriginal[1] children, young people, families, and carers.

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[1] Please note that in the Framework, the term Aboriginal, refers to all people who identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. This term is used as the First Nations Peoples of South Australia are predominantly Aboriginal peoples and it is their preferred term. We acknowledge and respect that it is preferable to identify Aboriginal peoples, where possible, by their specific Language group or Nation.

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3. Authority

3.1 Legislative context

DCP's legislative requirements are contained within the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* (the Act). The Framework will assist in understanding and applying the following sections of the Act:

- Section 14 (c), which instructs the promotion, support and adequate resource of evidence-based programs delivering preventative and support services directed towards strengthening and supporting families, reducing the incidence of child abuse and neglect and maximising the wellbeing of children and young people.
- Section 14 (d), which charges the Minister and DCP with promoting, encouraging or undertaking research into matters affecting children and young people.

The *SA Public Sector (Data Sharing) Act 2016* directs the sharing of data between the public sector and other agencies and guides the Framework and its intersection with the DCP Data Governance Framework.

Pursuant to the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016*, all persons conducting research or evaluation with or within DCP must hold a working with children check.

3.2 Whole of Government requirements

All research and evaluation must comply with:

- the appropriate collection and storage of personal information based on the Department of the Premier and Cabinet *Information Privacy Principles*
- the allocation and sharing of intellectual property as identified by the *Intellectual Property Policy (2017)* and as specified by a signed Research/Evaluation Agreement
- the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) updated 2018
- the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

3.3 DCP requirements

Research and evaluation approaches must align with the following documentation:

- Safe and Well: Supporting Families, Protecting Children
- DCP Strategic Plan 2022-2026
- DCP Aboriginal Action Plan 2021-2022
- DCP Practice Approach
- Quality and Safeguarding Framework
- Data Governance Framework
- Commissioning Framework
- Procurement Governance Framework.

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3.4 Principles

The Framework highlights principles that prioritise the safety of children and young people as the paramount consideration and incorporate the Wardliparingga principles for research[2] and nationally recognised guidelines for research[3][4] and evaluation[5][6] involving children:

- **Ethical:** research and evaluation will strive to minimise risk and intrusiveness to participants and demonstrate abiding respect and concern for those involved in the research. Researchers and evaluators must continuously assess whether the research or evaluation process will result in any risk, burden, inconvenience, or possible breach of privacy.
- **Child-centred**: research and evaluation should prioritise the needs of children and young people and be conducted in ways that are developmentally appropriate and trauma informed.
- **Quality**: research and evaluation will be of high quality, relevant and translational to add value to the strategic agenda and promote practice that helps deliver a better child protection system.
- **Partnership**: research and evaluation will ensure the voices of children, young people, families and carers are heard and will recognise the professional expertise and experience of our staff. The way in which research and evaluation outcomes are communicated will demonstrate respect for children, young people, families, carers, and staff.
- **Culturally safe:** research and evaluation affecting Aboriginal children, young people, families, carers or staff should be based on mutual trust and partnerships. Research and evaluation affecting culturally and linguistically diverse children, young people, families, carers or staff should be designed to be culturally appropriate. Guidance must be provided by professionals with respective cultural authority throughout every phase of the project.
- **Ownership**: researchers and evaluators must demonstrate respect for Aboriginal knowledge, Aboriginal knowledge systems and custodianship of that knowledge. All research and evaluation must align with Priority Reform Four of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap as specified in the Data Development Plan 2022-2030. This includes acknowledging, respecting and protecting Aboriginal intellectual property rights, and ensuring transparent negotiation of intellectual property use and benefit sharing.

4. Framework requirements

Approval must be obtained before a research or evaluation project commences. The approval process ensures that the privacy and confidentiality of children, young people, families and carers are maintained, the focus meets DCP's strategic research and evaluation priorities, and the project receives appropriate governance.

The Framework acknowledges that Aboriginal children and young people, and children and young people with disability and developmental delay are overrepresented in the child protection system. Children, young people, families and carers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may require different approaches and methodologies to ensure research and evaluation is culturally safe.

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[2] SAHMRI. (2014). Wardliparingga: Aboriginal research in Aboriginal hands.
[3] Spriggs, M. (2010). Understanding Consent in Research Involving Children: The Ethical Issues.
[4] NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2018 update)
[5] NHMRC (2014). Ethical Considerations in Quality Assurance and Evaluation Activities
[6] Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) (2020) Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research.

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Researchers and evaluators should specifically consider the direct and indirect impacts the process and outcomes of research and evaluation may have on these cohorts. The research and evaluation approval process ensures the needs of all these cohorts are clearly considered by relevant DCP staff who provide recommendations.

4.1 Research and Evaluation Management Committee (REMC)

The REMC provides governance across all research and evaluation associated with DCP as further outlined in its Terms of Reference:

- Prospective research and evaluation projects are first submitted to the Research and Evaluation team who apply assessment criteria considerations and table applications at the REMC.
- The REMC meets regularly to consider evaluation applications, and make recommendations to the Chief Executive on research applications.
- After being considered by the REMC, research and evaluation applications are forwarded for the final approval decision. No research may commence without Chief Executive approval and no evaluation may commence without approval of the sponsoring Director.
- The REMC reports to the Senior Executive Group (SEG) who set the strategic research and evaluation agenda to deliver against DCP's strategic goals.

The REMC also serves as an information conduit to monitor all research and evaluation, and raise awareness about new DCP initiatives. Research and evaluation serve to inform the evidence-based practice approaches and frameworks within DCP. The REMC is responsible for ensuring research and evaluation undertaken with/for DCP are meaningful, relevant to DCP's strategic agenda and produce translational outputs. To achieve this, DCP may seek information from researchers or evaluators relating to their progress as per the signed Agreement.

The REMC is not an ethics committee and projects requiring ethics approval must seek approval from a fully constituted Human Research Ethics Committee. Projects focused on Aboriginal children, young people, families, carers or staff must additionally seek approval from an appropriate Aboriginal Health Research Ethics Committee.

DCP is committed to providing children and young people, their families, carers, staff and members of the community with access to an open, transparent and responsive complaints and feedback process. Complaints about research or evaluation approval decisions or the process of decision-making, can be lodged through the Complaints and Feedback Management Unit. DCP is committed to providing children and young people, their families of origin, carers, staff and members of the community with access to an open, transparent and responsive complaints and feedback process.

4.2 Types of projects

4.2.1 Research projects

Research projects may be commissioned by DCP or be conducted by DCP staff, researchers or students using DCP data (upon approval). Data is defined as any facts, statistics, instructions, concepts or other information in a form that is capable of being communicated, analysed or processed whether by an individual or by a computer or other automated means (*SA Public Sector (Data Sharing) Act 2016)*

Application

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Applications for research must be initiated through completion of the Research Application Form. Assistance and/or advice can be sought from the Research and Evaluation team and once completed, submitted to DCPResearchandEvaluation@sa.gov.au. An acknowledgement will be forwarded to the applicant within two business days receipt of the application, and the application will be registered onto the DCP Research and Evaluation Register. The Research and Evaluation team will prepare the application for the REMC, which may require researchers to provide additional information to fulfil the Research Assessment Criteria.

Please note that the REMC meets according to the timeframes outlined in the Terms of Reference. Therefore, applications must be made in a timely manner to ensure the appropriate approval is received prior to the anticipated project start date.

Assessment

Applications submitted to the REMC will be reviewed and recommendations provided for approval, conditional approval or non-approval. Applications will be assessed on the:

- alignment with DCP's research strategic priorities, including avoiding duplication of research projects
- alignment with the principles outlined in the Framework
- identified risks and benefits associated with the research
- potential value of the new information to be gained from the research
- potential operational implications arising from the research activities for DCP
- technical requirements including feasibility of data requests
- applicant(s) authentication and the appropriateness of the research methodology
- information provided in the accompanying documents
- the level of cultural safety and appropriate cultural methodology of the project. The REMC will seek Aboriginal guidance to ensure there is a respectful process for discussion on these matters.

The Research and Evaluation team will submit the REMC recommendations to the Chief Executive via a briefing, providing information on the application and a clear rationale for the recommendation. The Research and Evaluation team will advise applicants of the status of their application and provide anticipated timeframes for the final decision.

Research Agreements and ethics approval

Once a final decision is made, the applicants will receive notice and, if approved by the Chief Executive, a draft Research Agreement for consideration. Research Agreements incorporate sections relating to intellectual property; project funding; confidentiality and copyright; disputes and dispute resolution; and reporting obligations.

Once the terms of the Agreement have been agreed, the Chief Executive will approve the Agreement and relevant parties will sign the Agreement. The signed Agreement should be returned to DCPResearchandEvaluation@sa.gov.au. The Research and Evaluation Register will record the status of the Agreement.

Research cannot commence until the signed Agreement is in place and full ethics approval has been received. Research with a substantive focus on Aboriginal children, young people, families, or carers will also require approval from an Aboriginal Health Research Ethics Committee.

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Publications

'Publication' includes media interviews, media releases, books, articles, newspaper writings, journal entries and journal articles, conference and seminar papers and oral presentations, essays, theses and other works of whatever kind, and whether in written form, electronic, oral or any other format and 'Publish' means making a publication available to the public.

Requests to publish should be sent to DCPResearchandEvaluation@sa.gov.au. Requests will then be sent to the Chief Executive for approval via briefing. A letter advising of the decision will be provided directly to the researcher who submitted the request. All draft publications will also be tabled at the REMC for noting. Specific timeframes and conditions pertaining to publication are agreed upon and outlined in the signed Research Agreement.

Monitoring and support

The Research and Evaluation team facilitates the governance and monitoring of research projects within DCP and provides support to ensure research is conducted in accordance with the Framework and the signed Research Agreement. Support may include planning and facilitating access to data, coordinating governance of the project, and linking researchers with other DCP staff or initiatives that will enhance the impact of the project.

4.2.2 Internal evaluation projects

Initial consultation

The Research and Evaluation team supports evaluations of all DCP initiatives. In line with the Commissioning Framework, all initiatives should consider monitoring, review, and evaluation as one of the stages of the commissioning process and seek consultation from the Research and Evaluation team. These initiatives include, but are not limited to pilot programs with non-government organisation partners, site specific initiatives, DCP training, policies, interventions, systems, services and other efforts.

Consultation for an evaluation can occur at any stage in the commissioning or delivery of an initiative by emailing DCPResearchandEvaluation@sa.gov.au. The Research and Evaluation team will consult on the evaluation objectives and other considerations to identify whether the evaluation is suited for:

- external evaluation
- internal evaluation by the Research and Evaluation team
- internal evaluation by DCP staff involved in the initiative.

Regardless of the choice of evaluation, DCP Research and Evaluation remains involved to facilitate governance and ensure the evaluation is conducted in accordance with the Framework.

Application for an internal evaluation

Business units can sponsor an internal evaluation by completing the Evaluation Application Form. Assistance and/or advice can be sought from the Research and Evaluation team and once completed, submitted to DCPResearchandEvaluation@sa.gov.au.

An acknowledgement will be forwarded to the applicant within two business days receipt of the application, and the application will be registered onto the DCP Research and Evaluation Register.

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Evaluation plan

After processing the application form, the Research and Evaluation team will work with the applicant to develop an evaluation plan.

The evaluation plan outlines how the evaluation will be undertaken, key stakeholders, methodology, key milestones and potential risks and benefits. The Evaluation plan will be provided to the evaluation sponsor for approval.

Sponsor approved plans will be submitted to the REMC for consideration and noting.

Applications will be considered based on the following criteria:

- alignment with DCP's strategic priorities
- alignment to the principles outlined in the Framework
- identified risks and benefits associated with the evaluation
- potential impact and utility of the evaluation findings
- potential operational implications and the feasibility of the evaluation requirements
- appropriateness of the evaluation methodology
- information provided in the accompanying documents
- the level of cultural safety and appropriate cultural methodology of the project. The REMC will seek Aboriginal guidance to ensure there is a respectful process for discussion on these matters.

After consideration by the REMC, applications will be sent via briefing for noting by the Chief Executive. The Research and Evaluation Register will be updated with the outcome.

Monitoring and reporting

The evaluation sponsor may request interim reports as part of the approved evaluation plan. These reports will be provided to the sponsor by the staff conducting the evaluation and then to the REMC for noting.

At the completion of the evaluation, the final draft report must be provided to the evaluation sponsor for approval. Once approved, the final report will be provided to:

- evaluation applicant (if they are not leading the evaluation)
- evaluation sponsor
- Director, Quality and Practice
- Chief Executive
- REMC for noting of the final report and to consider operational implications.

The Research and Evaluation Register will be updated to reflect the completion of the evaluation.

4.2.3 External evaluation projects

Some evaluations may be undertaken by external providers such as a university, research institute or consulting organisation. The process for procurement is outlined in the Procurement Sourcing Procedure and Procurement Governance Framework. The Research and Evaluation team provides support and monitoring throughout the evaluation's procurement and implementation.

Prior to initiating procurement of an external evaluation, DCP staff must request a consultation with the Research and Evaluation team via DCPResearchandEvaluation@sa.gov.au. The Research and Evaluation

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team will provide advice and assist with writing the evaluation specification aligned with the [Evaluation Assessment Criteria](#).

Once an external evaluator is selected, the Research and Evaluation team will provide consultation to the evaluator(s) to develop an evaluation plan. After approval by the evaluation sponsor, the evaluation plan will be submitted to the REMC for noting.

Prior to commencement, all external evaluation projects must have a signed Agreement in place specifying intellectual property; confidentiality and copyright; disputes and dispute resolution; and reporting obligations. The Research and Evaluation team will then update the Research and Evaluation Register to reflect the commencement of the evaluation.

The Research and Evaluation team will ensure the evaluation is conducted in accordance with the Framework, evaluation plan and the signed Agreement by offering individualised support.

At the completion of the evaluation, the external evaluator(s) will provide a final report to the evaluation sponsor. The Research and Evaluation team will submit the report to the REMC for noting and update the Research and Evaluation Register to reflect the completion of the evaluation.

4.3 Access to data and responsible data management

The Research and Evaluation team coordinates access to data pertaining to research and evaluation and will advise on the appropriate access requirements.

All data must be kept in line with the *[SA Public Sector (Data Sharing) Act 2016](#)* which outlines the Five Safes.

4.4 Library services and knowledge dissemination

The Research and Evaluation team proactively disseminate knowledge from research and evaluation findings. The communications plan is regularly reviewed to ensure that knowledge is being shared in ways that are practical and meaningful to DCP staff.

The Research and Evaluation team provides [library services](#) (available to DCP staff). The library regularly showcases evidence related to local and international best practice.

5. Compliance, monitoring and evaluation

The Research Performance and Evaluation Unit will monitor, evaluate and review the effectiveness of the Framework in accordance with the review date shown in the Document Control schedule.

The REMC is responsible for ensuring all research and evaluation is compliant with the Framework.

6. Related documents

Related documents, forms and templates
[DCP Research and Evaluation Management Committee Terms of Reference](#)
[DCP Evaluation Application Form](#)

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DCP Research Application Form
DCP Research Agreement Template
Research Assessment Criteria
Evaluation Assessment Criteria

7. Glossary

Research	The concept of research is broad and includes the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2018).
Evaluation	Evaluation examines the actual implementation and impacts of a policy/program to assess whether the anticipated effects, costs and benefits were in fact realised. Evaluation findings can identify 'what works', where problems arise, highlight good practice, identify unintended consequences or unanticipated results and demonstrate value for money, and hence can be fed back into the appraisal process to improve future decision-making (Gray & Bray, 2019).

Document control

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Approval Date	**Version**	**Revision description**
14 March 2017	1.0	DCP Evaluation Framework V1.0
11 February 2019	1.2	DCP Research Framework approved by CE in briefing 19DHS0070
12 August 2019	1.3	DCP Research Framework with Wardliparingga principles included
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5 July 2023	3.0	Full review of draft Research and Evaluation Framework with procedures merged into a single

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		document. This replaces the Research Framework, Evaluation Framework and Research Directive.