

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION AIC 2016: #117

1. Title:

Implementation-informed decision making to promote health in Western Australia

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3. Keywords

Qualitative, Government and Non-Government Organisations, Health Promotion Research and Evaluation, Evidence-informed policy development

4. Abstract text:

a. Background and Aims

Evidence-informed decision making by governments is important to improve program effectiveness and impact. Quality research and evaluation (R&E) builds this evidence-base, facilitating knowledge, rigour and accountability. The Department of Health (WA) identified the need to strengthen R&E within their own policy areas and the non-government organisations (NGO) they fund to deliver health promotion services, however, capacity for R&E differs widely. The development of a Research and Evaluation Framework (REF) was proposed to strengthen evidence-informed decision making and improve health outcomes.

b. Methods

A collaborative development process with both government and non-government stakeholders was facilitated by Edith Cowan University. Qualitative methods were used including: a review of the literature and funded programs, consultation with stakeholders via focus groups, interviews and discussion forums. Implementation of the REF was refined through piloting, usability testing and ongoing process evaluation.

c. Results

Review of the literature and consultation process resulted in a REF guided by implementation theory and addressed competency and organisational drivers. Recognising the variability in capacity, the REF comprises an eight step cycle linking program planning and evaluation with online tools and training to support implementation. Process evaluation found more systematic evaluation methodology, clearer expectations of short and long term impacts and outcomes and flexibility in meeting different program complexities and capacity.

d. Conclusion

The development of the REF opened discussion on learnings to improve program effectiveness and health promotion outcomes. Funders and providers can mutually increase accountability, capacity and rigour to support decision making through institutionalising research and evaluation as routine practice.