



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE



AUSTRALIA

Supporting mental health recovery

# Research and Evaluation Framework

Mind Australia  
in partnership with the  
Centre for Health Policy, Programs and Economics,  
Melbourne School of Population Health,  
The University of Melbourne

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The Mental Health Research Team at The Centre for Health Policy, Programs and Economics

Mr Ray Judd was the inaugural Chair of the Mind Research Reference Group and was instrumental in leading this project. He has subsequently retired and Dr Margaret Grigg is now General Manager of Research, Advocacy and Development for Mind and Chair of the Reference Group.

Thanks are also extended to consumers, carers and staff in Mind who contributed to consultations and members of the Mind Board who provided helpful comments and feedback as the framework developed.

Dr Lisa Brophy – Director of Research

# 1. Introduction

Mind is committed to improving the quality and effectiveness of its services to consumers. It is also committed to influencing the public policy and community attitudes which impact on the wellbeing and status of people facing serious mental health related challenges.

Mind will encourage research activity that focuses on:

- **Recovery and Social Inclusion** in order to enable people with serious mental health challenges to maximise their potential to be positively engaged in community life, have access to secure housing, improve their physical health and economic well being
- **Partnerships across mental health service systems** such that all specialist mental health services collaborate to produce research that acknowledges the complexity of mental health problems and the potential solutions
- **Partnership with other research specialists** in areas such as housing and physical health to enable improved knowledge transfer between researchers as well as in relation to research activity and findings.

Internally, Mind intends to use research and evaluation to investigate and enable:

- **Service Improvement** through improved accountability, effectiveness and efficiency
- **Better outcomes** for consumers and carers
- **Development and innovation** by making use of knowledge (practice wisdom) and evidence.

This strategy establishes the priorities for Mind's research and evaluation activities over the next three years.

This framework is supported by The University of Melbourne's strategic goals. The "Growing Esteem" strategy for the University emphasises the value of partnership and engagement. Therefore, this framework is developed in the context of the full, ongoing support of both organisations to maximise the opportunities that this partnership enables.

The framework introduces and describes three complementary platforms to shape our efforts as follows:

- Improvement
- Outcomes
- Development

Furthermore, the framework recognises that to achieve the goals related to each of these platforms, and facilitate Mind's capacity to embed research and evaluation activities, the following enablers are required:

- Governance
- Capabilities
- Resources

The expected outcomes for the Framework include the development of a research team that has active partnerships and the potential to develop into a Centre of Excellence in Recovery and Social Inclusion research and evaluation. This framework will inform the development of an implementation plan that will more specifically address key performance indicators and timelines.

## 2. Background

Mind is the largest community managed specialist mental health service in Victoria and South Australia and delivers a broad suite of recovery focused services to young people, adults and families. The organisation has grown considerably in recent years and anticipates further growth over the next decade.

The Mind Strategic Plan 2010-2015 articulates the goals, directions and priorities of the organisation. It states that:

‘Mind will be a resource to people who are facing serious mental health challenges to support them to actively participate in social and economic life by the provision of advocacy for evidence based services and policies which achieve positive social outcomes’.

Furthermore the Plan includes a commitment to:

‘Establish a robust and effective research and program evaluation capability shared with academic and service delivery partners’.

The Strategic Plan documents a far reaching approach to developing and repositioning Mind. The plan involves refining the approach to recovery and social inclusion, restructuring to better enable services to be tailored to individual needs and changes to the workforce to better utilise and recognise the skills of staff. The plan also requires the organisation to better articulate its intellectual property, ensure consistent quality of service delivery and public engagement with the issues that affect the client population.

In 2010 the Board decided that the commitment to research and evaluation should be initiated through a partnership with The Centre for Health Policy, Programs and Economics (CHPPE), Melbourne School of Population Health, The University of Melbourne. This has enabled the three year appointment of a Director of Research.

The University of Melbourne has adopted the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)’s definition of research and therefore describes research as:

‘Comprising creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humanity,

culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications. This includes pure basic research, strategic basic research, applied research and experimental development’.<sup>1</sup>

Evaluation has been defined as:

‘The process of determining the worth, merit, or value of things, or ... the result of that process’<sup>2</sup>

‘Program evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and/or outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming’<sup>3</sup>

Mind has made the commitment to research and evaluation in recognition of the benefits that the organisation will derive but is also mindful of the leadership role that an organisation such as Mind can play.

The Mind Research and Evaluation Framework is guided by the following underlying principles:

- **Expressing Mind values:**
  - Consumer focus
  - Making a difference
  - Integrity
  - Hope
  - Creativity and innovation
- **Consistent** with the goals in the Mind strategic plan:
  - Consumer recovery supported
  - Improving economic and social participation
  - Collaborating for better outcomes
  - Growing a productive and rewarding organisation
- **Organisationally appropriate** and expressing organisational priorities
- **Participatory** in that consumers, family/carers and staff are active participants and have opportunities to lead research

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.research.unimelb.edu.au/azservices/research\\_definition#active](http://www.research.unimelb.edu.au/azservices/research_definition#active)

<sup>2</sup> Scriven M. (1991) *Evaluation Thesaurus 4th Edition*, Sage Publications Newbury Park, CA. (pvii)

<sup>3</sup> Patton M.Q. (1997) *Utilisation-Focused evaluation: The New Century Text*. 3rd ed. Sage publications, Thousand Oaks, CA (p23)

## 3. Context

In recent years there has been a growing interest in documenting outcomes in mental health service delivery.<sup>4</sup> This is partly due to increased attention to ensuring that best practice approaches are supported by a solid evidence base. Mind faces pressure to demonstrate the impact of its work in supporting recovery and social inclusion and gain evidence about the quality, effectiveness and value for money of its services.

Mind also needs to ensure that current research evidence is integrated into service delivery both to refresh and inspire existing programs and also to assist in the development of new initiatives. Furthermore, monitoring implementation and ensuring that Mind is able to demonstrate that practice is informed by evidence is an ongoing expectation.

Research and innovation will provide platforms to enable opportunities for embedding evidence into practice and support further organisational growth. Research and evaluation findings are tools that can internally inform practice and service development. These findings can also be used in advocacy as Mind seeks to assist in ensuring government policy and service development initiatives are supported by research evidence.

This plan will contribute to the recognition of Mind, in partnership with CHPPE and The University of Melbourne, providing leadership in research and evaluation in the community managed mental health sector.

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<sup>4</sup> Trauer, T. (Ed) (2010) *Outcome Measurement in Mental Health: Theory and practice*. Cambridge University Press, UK

## 4. Strategic goals

The research and evaluation program will enable Mind to:

### a. Outcomes

Monitor outcomes for clients and to use outcomes data to guide an ongoing cycle of service improvement.

### b. Evidence

Investigate and assess evidence of the effectiveness of its services and programs through:

- use of internally generated findings
- integration of existing and emerging evidence from external sources.

### c. Innovation

Proactively trial and evaluate innovation in key aspects of service delivery.

### d. Partnerships

Develop partnerships that contribute to enhancing and stimulating research activity in relation to recovery and social inclusion. These partnerships will also extend to the implementation of research informed practice and evaluation.

### e. Influence

Undertake advocacy and influence policy in the mental health sector. Mind's research findings will inform government funding decision making and growth in the community managed mental health sector.

### f. Culture

Establish an organisational culture which supports staff engagement in research and evaluation activities.

### g. Leadership

Mind's research and evaluation activities are recognised and make a difference to the lives of people with serious mental health challenges through improved service delivery and positive outcomes in relation to recovery and social inclusion. Mind will seek to play a leadership role in promoting evidence informed policy and program development. Mind will attract support via increased government and philanthropic funding to further develop its research activities. By 2014 Mind's research department will develop into a Centre of Excellence in Recovery and Social Inclusion Research.

### h. Resource consumers and family/carers

Ensure that consumers and family/carers have access to up-to date research evidence that enables them to make informed choices about their treatment and care, service providers and self-management strategies.

# 5. The Framework

The diagram which follows provides a visual overview of the Mind approach. The framework operates on three levels. They are:

## 1. Objectives

The focus of the framework will be upon achieving specified outcomes.

## 2. Platforms

Mind's research and evaluation will utilise three complementary platforms to shape our effort. They are:

- a. Improvement** This platform will support the delivery of high quality evidence based services.
- b. Outcomes** The outcomes platform will support initiatives designed to inform Mind about the recovery and social inclusion outcomes being achieved by consumers and to assess the contribution our efforts are making to these outcomes.
- c. Development** This platform will support research and evaluation which brings new knowledge into Mind.

Each of these platforms will support the following actions or initiatives:

- a. Projects** Initiatives which provide specific evidence or information about substantive components or functions of the organisation.
- b. Organisational Systems** Processes which build the organisations systems and capacities to undertake research and evaluation.
- c. Research** Activities that investigate key questions for the organisation and the sector and make significant contributions to knowledge development.

## 3. Enablers

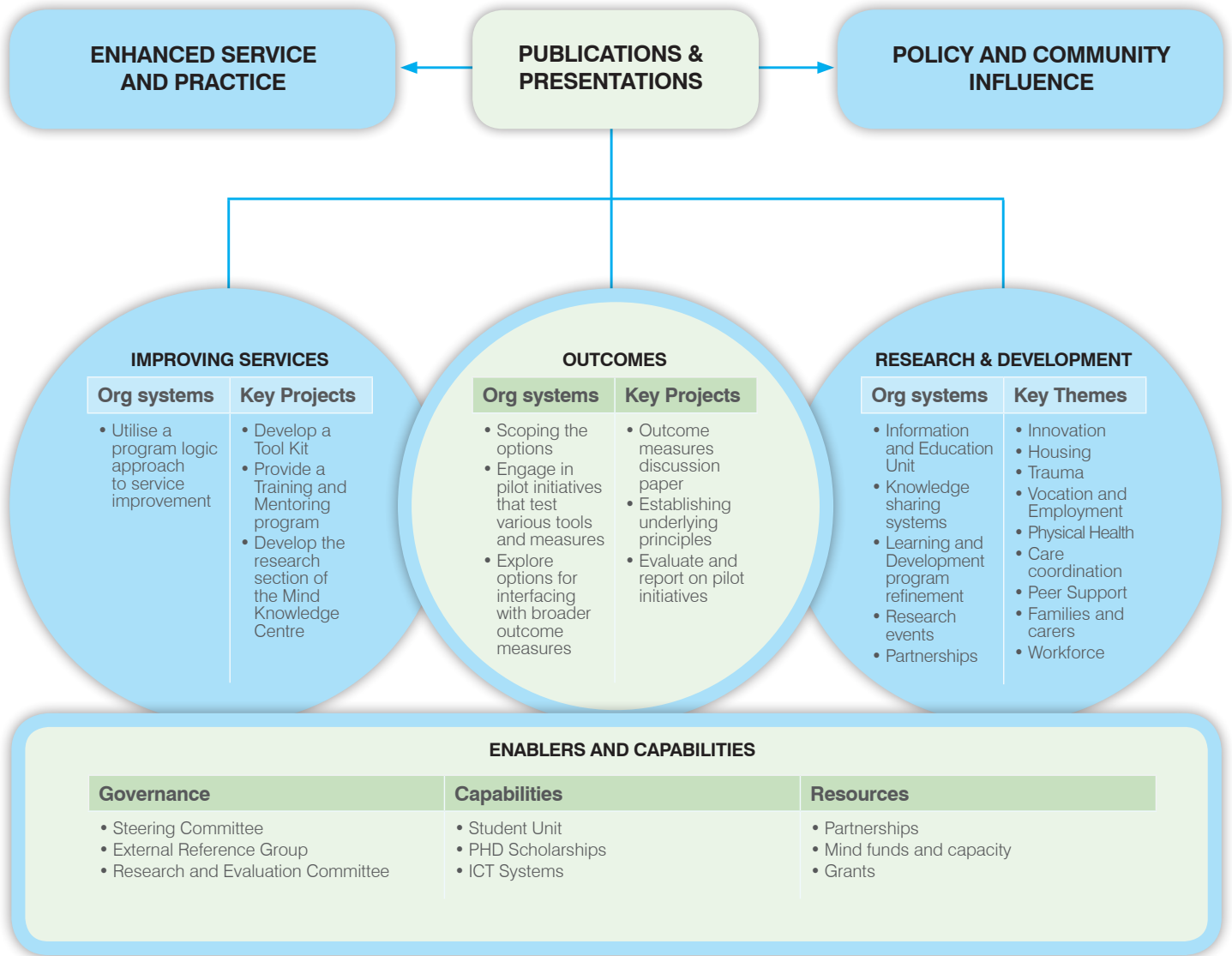
Enablers support the achievement of the activities which make up the platform. In this case they involve:

- a. Governance**
- b. Capabilities**
- c. Resources**

Details on each level are provided in the following sections. The specific initiatives and proposals outlined in the diagram represent either early or very significant priorities. The specific initiatives which will become the research program are a 'work in progress'. Additional activities and priorities will be addressed as new information and/or resources become available. The framework and the program will evolve through decisions of the governance structures outlined later in this paper.



MIND RESEARCH AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK



## A. The Framework – in Detail

### Platform a: Improvement

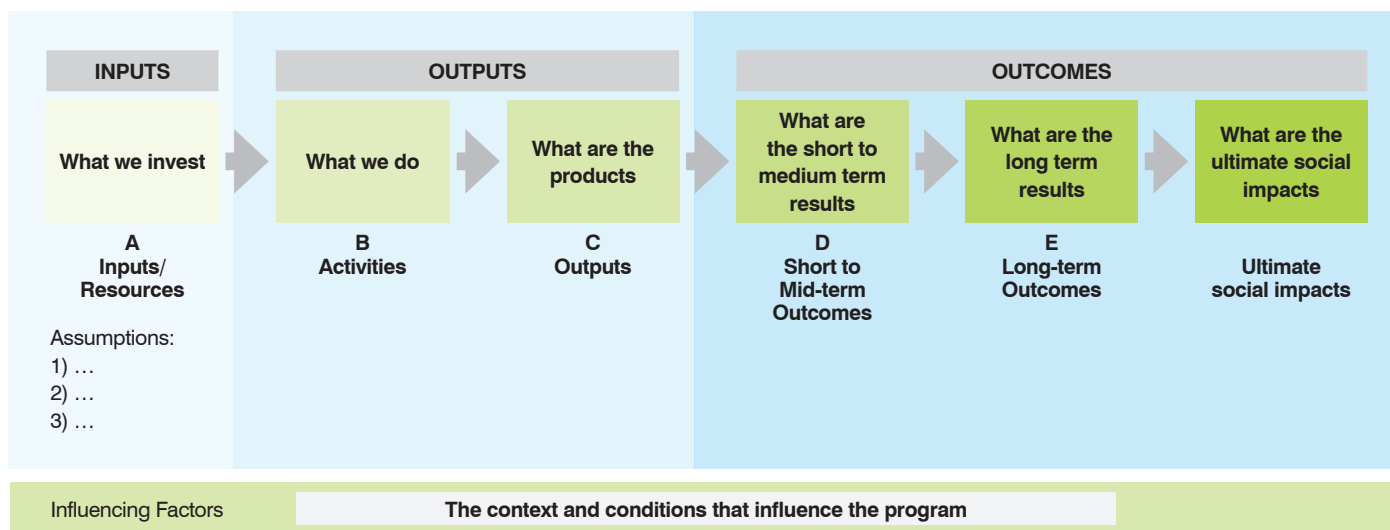
In broad terms the focus of this platform is upon two questions. They are:

- Are we doing what we say we are doing?
- Are we making the best use of our resources?

Research and evaluation will be strongly linked to service improvement through emphasising evaluation activities and also in ensuring that all service delivery improvement programs are evidence informed.

Mind will utilise a program logic model approach to service improvement. This methodology has benefits at the service development as well as evaluation points. The approach is summarised in the diagram which follows:

#### GENERAL FORMAT OF LOGIC MODEL



### Key Projects

In order to foster and build capacity for ongoing local evaluation work it is proposed to develop a tool kit which teams can utilise for small scale evaluations. The tool kit will be complemented by a training and mentoring program. Furthermore, Mind's knowledge centre (see the section on enablers) will include an active research section that will be accessible to both the Mind community and other stakeholders.

The section on governance also outlines the proposed processes through which local evaluations can be authorised.

### Platform b: Positive Outcomes

This platform is focused on the question:

- Are consumers and carers benefiting from Mind's services?

Developing high quality and consistent approaches to assessing outcomes across Mind will allow improved understanding of the quality of the work and also support internal service development initiatives. A consistent approach to outcome measures will also enable and encourage research activity with improved opportunities to access, use and interpret data.

Consistent use of outcome measures will enable Mind to identify and track how our services are performing. It will enable celebration of achievements and also ensure that we recognise when our services appear to not be meeting expectations. This may initiate the review of these expectations or trigger the need for extra support or other changes that will enable service improvement. Mind is a large and complex organisation so there will be differences in how positive outcomes are defined and what measures are emphasised depending on the service or program contexts. However, there is significant value in demonstrating a consistent approach. But, even as a consistent approach is emphasised, opportunities for innovation in outcome measurement requires encouragement to enable Mind to be at the “forefront of developing and implementing effective and high quality procedures and systems for capturing outcome data” that is consistent with overall excellence in research and evaluation activities<sup>5</sup>.

Outcome measurement needs to be embedded into practice, and the research and evaluation framework. Outcome measurement needs to be meaningful and relevant and should not be dependent on complex systems of collection and interpretation. The development of MindLink, the electronic data management system, provides an opportunity to improve the consistency in data collection and reduce difficulties in both the collection of outcome data and in generating meaningful reports on that data.

There are three outcome dimensions<sup>6</sup> that Mind will focus on:

- a. Person dimension: Are services enabling consumers to develop and monitor their recovery goals?
- b. Change dimension: Are we able to measure or assess any change to the status and individual goals of the person as a result of using the service/s?
- c. Service dimension: Are we able to measure or assess whether, or to what extent, the aims of the service are being achieved?

## Key Projects

### a. Scoping the Options

There is considerable international and local interest in recovery outcome measurement. This interest has not yet resolved a common view about approaches<sup>7</sup>. It is likely that diversity will persist.

Mind proposes to:

- Prepare a discussion paper which will underpin future directions
- Consult internally on the principles which should guide our work. A preliminary set of principles, based on those developed by Rethink, are outlined as follows:

- Outcome measures are focused on recovery goals
- Outcome measures are embedded into day to day practice (including data collection and storage)
- Outcome measures encourage dialogue and support recovery
- Outcome measures are appropriate to the needs and circumstances of particular services
- Outcome measures are done with – not to
- Outcome measures used in Mind are well tested and recognized for validity and policy impact

### b. Supporting pilot initiatives

In order to inform future decisions Mind will be involved in a series of outcomes projects internally involving, as appropriate, clinical mental health service providers and other partners in service provision.

<sup>5</sup> Larsen, J. (2008) *Rethink Outcomes Framework: Discussion paper* (p.3). [http://www.rethink.org/how\\_we\\_can\\_help/research/service\\_evaluation\\_and\\_outcomes/rethink\\_outcomes\\_fra.html](http://www.rethink.org/how_we_can_help/research/service_evaluation_and_outcomes/rethink_outcomes_fra.html)

<sup>6</sup> Based on those developed by Rethink in the 2008 discussion paper

<sup>7</sup> Burgess P, Pirkis J, Coombs T & Rosen A. (2010). *Review of Recovery Measures. Final Report, for Australian Mental Health Outcomes and Classification Network*. Parkville, Australia: The University of Melbourne

## Organisational Systems

Organisational systems will be developed on the basis of the insights gained from the discussion paper and the pilot projects. In this context the framework outlines the goals which will drive the organisational approach to outcome measures. The goals are to:

- Prepare a scoping paper on measuring outcomes
- Engage in pilot initiatives that test various tools and measures
- Explore options for interfacing with broader outcome measures.

## Platform c: Development

Development for Mind means both contributing to, and integrating, new knowledge into the Organisation's practice and the service system. Mind will undertake its own projects as well as seeking to become involved in major interdisciplinary, cross sector and potentially international research projects which we may both contribute to and learn from. The following provides a list of current and emerging priority areas for research and evaluation projects although it is not exclusive or definitive.

## Establishing Priorities in Research Activity

A number of key research themes are listed below. The themes have emerged through consultation and the development of the values and strategic objectives underlying this framework. A number of factors will influence how priorities are developed over the next three years. Consideration will be given to factors such as:

- National and state government mental health planning and development initiatives and the subsequent need for research evidence in supporting service development
- The support, interest and influence offered by Mind's research partners
- The priorities set by important funding bodies such as the National Health and Medical Research Council (NH&MRC)

- Internal developments in Mind that may set imperatives in relation to research and evaluation efforts (for example the forthcoming development of the Youth Prevention and Recovery Centres and the move to Individualized Service Packages)
- Feedback from key stakeholders (in particular consumers and family/carers)
- The interests and skills of higher degree students and
- The availability of internal funding and resources.

## Key Research Themes

The following provides a list of potential themes for research. Overall, Mind's research priorities are located in ensuring the effectiveness and evidence base of its services and in building on recovery and social inclusion research evidence. Within this broad agenda there are specific topics listed below. Some are already moving forward while others are aspirational and depend on the factors listed above. Nine potential themes for research are listed below but not in any order of priority. The development of the research program will be shaped by these potential project areas but remains dependent on other drivers.

### a. Innovation in Recovery and Social Inclusion

Mind intends to support research projects that enable a stronger evidence base to develop in relation to supporting recovery and social inclusion for people with serious mental health challenges.

### b. Housing

Mind has begun the development of a housing research strategy that has an overall aim of improving the access that Mind consumers have to stable, safe and affordable housing and reducing homelessness amongst people with serious mental health challenges. The strategy has links to the redevelopment of Mind's residential rehabilitation services, the development of the supported housing sector and Mind's new policy and services framework. The strategy is interested in developing our understanding of the needs of Mind's consumers and the current gaps in service delivery.

### **c. Trauma informed practice**

Through efforts internally and in engaging in research partnerships, Mind will seek further evidence regarding how to reduce the negative impact of trauma, particularly in relation to how trauma may contribute to mental ill health and homelessness.

### **d. Vocation and Employment**

Developing vocation and employment opportunities for people with serious mental health challenges is an important issue in the current environment. There is increased pressure in Australia to move people who are eligible for disability income support into the workforce and recognise of the value of workforce participation in recovery and social inclusion.

### **e. Physical Health**

The physical health of people with serious mental health challenges has been a neglected research topic despite findings about high mortality rates and lower life expectancy.

### **f. Care coordination**

The move to extend the options for people with serious mental health challenges to develop their own individualised service packages is currently under investigated but an important topic for research as government policy and funding allocation increasingly supports this opportunity. Mind is positioned to be a leading provider in this area and wants to ensure a strong evidence base to future activity.

### **g. Peer support**

Mind currently employs peer support workers and supports the development of future opportunities for consumers and their family/carers to gain greater access to peer support. However, again, at least in Australia, the implementation of peer support and its potential benefits is under investigated.

### **h. Family and carer sensitive practice**

This is an ongoing challenge for Mind and depends on opportunities for family members and carers to provide feedback about their lived experience as well as being able to demonstrate practice that expresses Mind's commitment to families and carers.

### **i. Workforce**

Employing, supporting and retaining competent staff who readily express Mind's organisational values in their day to day practice inevitably requires the support of evaluation and research activities that will enable Mind to consistently meet this challenge over the long term.

#### **Partnerships**

In order to ensure research undertaken within the development platform is broadly supported and has high impact, Mind will seek to become a partner in major interdisciplinary, cross sector and, potentially, international research projects on these priority development areas as well as other emerging and relevant recovery and social inclusion research initiatives.

#### **Organisational Systems**

A critical goal of the development platform is to ensure that knowledge is identified, synthesised, disseminated and utilised. Mind is:

- Establishing an Information and Education Unit to support this process
- Introducing a searchable data base that will enable staff to access relevant literature
- Refining the overall learning and development strategy of the organisation to support the translation of evidence into practice
- Encouraging and mentoring staff in their participation in evaluation and research activities and planning to develop incentive and reward programs.



## B. Enablers

The activities outlined above will be supported, resourced and built upon over time. The mechanisms which will be utilised are outlined in this section of the framework.

### Governance

There are three complementary components to the governance structures which will be used.

#### The Steering Committee

This framework is fundamentally dependant on the partnership that has been established between Mind and The University of Melbourne, Melbourne School of Population Health, Centre for Health Policy, Programs and Economics. The Steering committee members are the Head of School, The CHPPE director, the General Manager of Research, Development and Advocacy and other Mind nominees.

The functions of the Steering committee are to:

- Oversee the conduct of the Research Project (all the activities outlined in this framework)
- Develop and agree on the annual work plans for the Research Project
- Review the work of the Senior Research Fellow (Mind Research Director) and discuss and agree on the work plan for the Senior Research Fellow
- Consider emerging opportunities for further shared research projects (outside the scope of the current Research Agreement) with broad benefits.

#### The Mind Research Reference Group

In order to ensure that the Research and Evaluation Framework is informed by a range of expertise and insights about research and evaluation and the needs of those involved in supporting the recovery and social inclusion of people facing serious challenges as a result of their mental health a Mind research reference group has been established. The reference group membership is mainly external key stakeholders and research experts who will enable systematic input into the program and its work.

The Reference Group will:

- Provide expert advice on the development of the Mind Research and Evaluation Framework
- Review internal projects, initiatives and priorities
- Consider emerging opportunities for shared research projects of broad benefit
- Support dissemination of research findings as appropriate.

## The Mind Research and Evaluation Committee

The overall goal of the Mind Research and Evaluation Committee will be to ensure that all research and evaluation activities conducted in Mind are accountable and consistent with Mind's values and strategic direction. It is anticipated that Research and Evaluation activities will be more credible and successful as a result of improved mutual co-operation and support between Mind and researchers and those undertaking evaluation of Mind programs.

The Mind Research and Evaluation committee will<sup>8</sup>:

- Review and approve all research and evaluation projects to be conducted or initiated within Mind
- Ensure that all research and evaluation activities have obtained appropriate ethics approvals and are conducted in a manner consistent with that approval
- Ensure that all research and evaluation activities conducted in Mind are consistent with Mind's values and strategic directions
- Develop a process for making decisions about how projects will be evaluated including the development of a set of criteria against which all research projects will be accepted, modified or not accepted (with reasons)
- Establish policies and procedures for conducting research and evaluation in Mind
- Develop a process for undertaking consultation with a wide range of stakeholders on the new policies and procedures
- Establish a regular process of monitoring and review for all research and evaluation activities across Mind
- Provide support and guidance to enhance the successful completion of approved projects
- Assist in ensuring all research and evaluation findings are disseminated
- Identify the implications for policy and practice in Mind from research and evaluation findings and recommendations.

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<sup>8</sup> Many of these objectives were informed by: Two Can Associates (2008) *Getting it right for service users and carers. Getting it right for research. How to decide whether to help researchers find people to take part in research. Guidance for research staff working in health charities.* <http://www.twocanassociates.co.uk/pdfs/WellcomeGuideFINAL.pdf>

## Capabilities

### Building a research and evaluation team

The aspirations outlined in this framework cannot be achieved without additional resources and skills. It is therefore intended that steps be taken to establish:

- The Mind multidisciplinary research and evaluation Student Unit (in collaboration with The University of Melbourne and other tertiary institutions)
- The Mind PhD Scholarship program (In collaboration with the CHPPE, Melbourne School of Population Health, The University of Melbourne)

## Knowledge dissemination

Mind is determined that the research and evaluation work undertaken impacts on practice, policy and public awareness. In the first phase of the development of this framework the focus of effort will be upon:

- The Mind Colloquium Series. This regular series, which Mind will sponsor in collaboration with VICSERV, will expose Mind and sector staff to the work of researchers and structured discussions regarding the implications of the findings.
- An annual Oration. From 2012 Mind will sponsor a prominent researcher or leader to present an oration on a major reform, initiative or issue.
- An evaluation training and mentoring program which will be offered to Mind staff and staff from partner agencies to build greater competence. This program will complement the evaluation tool kit proposed in the section of this framework on improvement.
- Media profile – building a media profile through various forms of media including the internet (potentially using social networking opportunities such as Twitter and Facebook), the University Voice and other opportunities.
- Publication and presentation of research and evaluation findings. This will depend on ensuring rigorous ethics approval processes, well designed and analysed projects plus support and mentoring regarding preparing papers for conferences and publication.
- The development of the Mind Knowledge Centre that will include a research section and improved access to databases, library services and other information and knowledge resources.

## Resources

The resources which will need to be assembled in order to support implementation are based on the following themes:

### Partnerships

Partnerships will be central to the Mind Research and Evaluation Framework. Building scale and sustainability and contributing to knowledge distribution and uptake can only be achieved through collaborations.

There are some existing partnerships and potential for further partnerships with, in particular, the following:

- Within the University, particularly as research partners and in building and supporting the student unit
- Other University partners
- VICSERV and other PDRSS and Community Managed Sector providers
- Consumer and Carer Networks
- Clinical mental health service providers
- The housing and employment sectors

## Funds and capacity

Mind has already committed considerable resources to support this initiative. It is anticipated that further resources will be provided. The key resources are:

- i. Financial. It is anticipated that the existing funds will be supplemented over time with additional contributions from Mind's funds and from specific grants which will be sought from philanthropic bodies and research funding organisations.
- ii. Personnel. Mind staff will also make ongoing contributions directly and in-directly.

## 6. Expected Outcomes

Mind's research and evaluation program will lead to the following outcomes:

- The development of an implementation plan that will be monitored and reviewed by the Steering Committee and the Research Reference group
- Research activity in Mind will be enabled and informed through outcome measures being routinely embedded into everyday practice.
- Mind will be regularly piloting innovations based on research evidence that will be subject to rigorous program evaluation enabling an on-going contribution to the development of knowledge.
- Mind will attract external research funding that enables an active program of research activity.
- Mind will develop a 'research' section of its website where information about current research activities and recently generated research findings will be available.
- Mind will enter research partnerships with other organisations when this is consistent with established priorities.
- Mind will regularly publish findings from research and evaluation activities in a variety of publications including reports and peer reviewed journals.
- Mind will regularly present findings at a variety of forums including local and international conferences.
- Mind will establish an expert panel to review the program after 5 years.







Supporting mental health recovery

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