

Research and Evaluation Strategic Action Plan

February 2024



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Primary Health Network**

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Disclaimer

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Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the people of the Kulin nations as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our work in the community takes place. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We also recognise, respect and affirm the central role played in our work by people with lived experience, their families and/or carers.

Images by Leigh Henningham 1826.

P 5 Members of NWMPHN council and the board

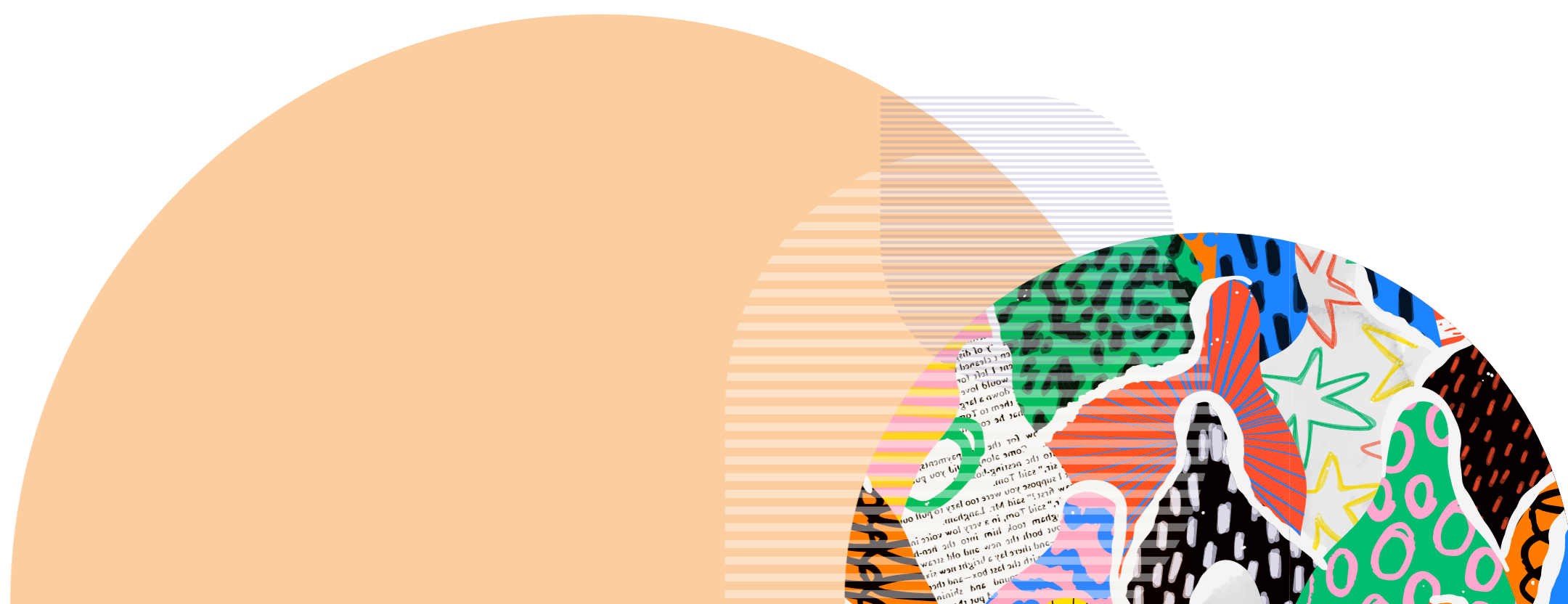
P 7 Mental health intake and referral staff

P 8 Collaborative pairs workshop



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Introduction

What is the purpose of the Research and Evaluation Strategic Action Plan?

North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHN) helps people stay well by commissioning health services to deliver better, more accessible primary care across Melbourne’s northern, western and inner-city areas.

We do this through a commitment to transforming primary care, using evidence-based commissioning and active partnerships with community and health sector stakeholders, while striving for organisational excellence and impact.

This Research and Evaluation Strategic Action Plan articulates the overarching strategic aims for NWMPHN, as well as the actions required to achieve them.

It was developed with the help of NWMPHN staff and senior leadership team, Community and Clinical Councils, the MPCN Board and through engagement with our local research partners.

The Research and Evaluation Strategic Action Plan aims to ensure that:

- research and evaluation activities are embedded in our organisational systems and processes to inform decision-making and for continuous quality improvement
- we consistently use and create evidence, where the opportunity exists
- we support and undertake translational research that is high quality and aligned to NWMPHN’s strategic objectives.

Key terms and definitions

TERM	DEFINITION
Research	The creation of new knowledge and the use of existing knowledge in a new or creative way to generate new concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings. (Australian Research Council, 2019).
Research translation ¹	Bridging the gap between knowledge gained through research, and its application in policy and practice. Research translation equates with other terms used internationally, such as knowledge translation, knowledge transfer and exchange, research uptake and research utilisation.
Research skills	The ability to gather, analyse and interpret information about a particular subject through activities such as surveys or focus groups or literature review.
Evaluation	The process of judging or calculating the quality, importance, amount, or value of compiled and assessed information.

¹ <https://sydneyhealthpartners.org.au/research-translation-or-translational-research/>

Governance

The NWMPHN Executive Director, Insight, Performance and Digital Services, is the executive sponsor for this plan. The NWMPHN Evaluation and Research Team will work closely with staff to lead the implementation of the activities and associated actions.

Implementation will be monitored as part of the strategic planning and performance management framework quarterly reporting process to the MPCN Board. Regular updates will be provided to the NWMPHN Research and Data Governance Committee. Implementation progress including key achievements will also be included in our annual report.

This Research and Evaluation Strategic Action Plan will be reviewed in 2026.



Board and joint council members 2023

Focus areas and outcomes

1. Strengthen workforce capability to understand, create and apply evidence

Staff have the capability and confidence to understand and use research and evaluation evidence in their day-to-day work.

2. Build a culture of evidence-based decision-making

The PHN has a strong evaluation and research culture, and structures, processes, and practices are routinely used in business as usual.

3. Support and foster high quality primary health care research

Governance structures and processes to manage research activity are established and projects are high quality and aligned to our strategic plan and the health needs of our community.

4. Build relationships, collaborations and partnerships that are productive, strategic and transparent

NWMPHN is aware of opportunities for joint collaborative research in response to emerging health system issues and priorities.

Stakeholders understand what role PHNs can have in primary health care research, and they engage us in research, conception, design, and development.

1. Strengthen workforce capability to understand, create and apply evidence

We develop the research and evaluation capability of our staff so that we can deploy the right skill sets and knowledge where and when they are needed. Employees are able to perform their roles with increased competence and confidence.

Outcome



Staff have the capability and confidence to understand and use research and evaluation evidence in their day-to-day work.

Actions

Develop the capabilities of our staff to understand, create, and use evidence.

1. Conduct a skills audit to identify existing expertise and areas for further training in evidence-based practice.
2. Develop a set of core training modules and materials to support staff to understand, create, and apply knowledge.
3. Establish opportunities for staff to increase understanding of research and evaluation methods through workshops and activities that support continuous professional development.
4. Provide opportunities for staff collaboration and knowledge exchange.
5. Identify opportunities for staff to be involved in research and evaluation activities (for instance, literature reviews, evaluation design, data analysis, economic analysis, participation in research committees).

Ensure the community perspectives inform the design of our research and evaluation activities.

1. Embed our access and equity principles within our research and evaluation activities. This includes ensuring representation of non-English speakers, First Nations people, LGBTIQ+ people, and so on.
2. Work towards involving people with lived experience in projects relevant to their communities. This might be in project design, interpretation of findings, or assessing expressions of interest. Ensure that reports are shared and publicly accessible.
3. Establish risk management processes and procedures for staff engagement with the community.

Indicators

- **Improved** confidence and capability in working with evidence.
- **Increased** external communication on research supported by NWMPHN.
- **Increased** staff involvement in research and evaluation training and other professional development activities.
- **Increased** external communication on the evaluation of commissioned activities.



2. Build a culture of evidence-based decision-making

We build on our culture of creating and using evidence to inform our commissioning practices and decision-making, directing our actions to ensure continuous improvement.

Outcome



The PHN has a strong evaluation and research culture, and structures, processes, and practices are routinely used in business as usual.

Action

Embed the use of evidence into our ways of working

1. Assess current structures, practices and actions to identify factors that might help or hinder developing an evidence-based culture.
2. Create a plan for organisational cultural change by developing a vision for evaluation and research, an internal engagement plan, and identification of research and evaluation champions.
3. Develop and implement an organisation-wide monitoring, evaluation, research and learning (MERL) framework that provides guidance to staff.
4. Strengthen organisational systems that can support research and evaluation, including committing necessary resources, accountability practices, reward systems, and management of knowledge.
5. Identify opportunities to make data more accessible and usable for research and evaluation purposes. This might include developing knowledge hubs, creating an NWMPHN publication library, and so on.
6. Publicise case studies internally illustrating how monitoring and evaluation data has been used. This might include how the process informs decision-making, informs practice or service design, and saves money.

Sharing excellence across the health system and supporting continuous quality improvement.

1. Support staff to publish and present the impact of research and evaluation projects.
2. Establish opportunities for knowledge and idea exchange between NWMPHN staff, researchers, organisations and service providers.
3. Collaborate with service providers to participate in or conduct research and evaluation activities.
4. Establish transparent reporting on the monitoring and evaluation of NWMPHN initiatives and activities through for instance our Research Strategy, Community Participation Plan, and commissioned programs.

Indicators

- **Improved** structures and processes to support the use of research and data to inform PHN practices.
- **Increased** investment in research and evaluation activities within the PHN.

3. Support and foster high quality primary health care research

Prioritising translational research, we seek out opportunities to support or undertake research that is high quality, beneficial to our community, and aligned to NWMPHN's strategic objectives.

Outcome



Governance structures and processes to manage research activity are established and projects are high quality and aligned to our strategic plan and the health needs of our community.

Actions

Ensure the external research we support and engage in is well governed and aligned to NWMPHN priorities.

1. Develop a set of criteria and formal processes to receive and assess external research partnership requests based on NWMPHN strategic objectives, capacity, and available resources.
2. Establish an internal research and data governance committee, comprising representatives from across the organisation, to review, make decisions on, oversee and support research collaborations. External subject matter experts, persons with lived experience and community representatives will be invited on a case-by-case basis.
3. Establish procedures for reporting and publishing of research supported by or involving the NWMPHN.

Undertake research and evaluation activities to identify the needs of our communities, the health system, and our organisation.

1. Develop an annual research and evaluation plan / agenda that describes our priorities for the year.
2. Support or initiate research and evaluation activities that address gaps identified in our health needs assessments, including prioritising population sub-groups evidence shows experience health inequities, and other projects that align with our strategic plan.
3. Take a lead role in data sharing principles that improve system efficiencies and effectiveness, including initiating projects to establish data linkage.

Indicators

- **Improved** visibility and coordination of external research partnership requests.
- **Increased** investment in research that supports key health priorities or population groups.

4. Build relationships, collaborations and partnerships that are productive, strategic and transparent

We establish and maintain strong relationships and collaborations and seek to develop partnerships with leading external research organisations, researchers and other PHNs or community organisations. We do this so that we can bring together differing perspectives, skills, and strengths, leading to greater potential for innovation, translation, and discovery.

Outcome



NWMPHN is aware of opportunities for joint collaborative research in response to emerging health system issues and priorities. Stakeholders understand what role PHNs can have in primary health care research, and they engage us in research, conception, design, and development.

Actions

Partner and collaborate with health experts to share skills and knowledge, and find innovative ways to use evidence to improve the health of our community.

1. Undertake a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify potential partners and collaborators, including research organisations, community organisations, and peak bodies.
2. Establish an engagement and collaboration plan, considering the annual research and evaluation agenda and findings from our health needs assessments.

3. Develop and deliver a communication plan that clearly outlines our research strategy and implementation plans to current and potential internal and external collaborators. These might include universities, NWMPHN Community and Clinical Councils, and service providers. Work with them to identify opportunities for partnerships and collaboration.
4. Actively participate in national and state research collaborations, looking for opportunities to drive or lead the research agenda.
5. Establish transparent reporting on partnerships and collaborations.

Indicators

- **Increased** collaborations with external organisations on research and evaluation.
- **Improved** coordination with PHNs (state and nationally) on research opportunities.

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