

OCHRE Evaluation | Stage 1: Implementation and early outcomes

Gumbaynggirr Language & Culture Nest

Evaluation Plan

October 2017

The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest operates on Gumbaynggirr Country.

The research team from the Social Policy Research Centre acknowledges the Gumbaynggirr people as the traditional custodians of the land we work on and pay our respect to Elders past, present and future.

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The Social Policy Research Centre is based in the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences at UNSW Sydney. This report is an output of the *OCHRE* Evaluation, funded by Aboriginal Affairs NSW.

1 Introduction

The Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Australia (the research team) have been contracted by Aboriginal Affairs NSW, Department of Education to conduct an evaluation of *OCHRE* including the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest (the Nest). *OCHRE* is the community-focused plan for Aboriginal affairs in NSW.

The evaluation will be based on the principles of decolonising research, consistent with the underlying philosophy of *OCHRE* to facilitate the self-determination of Aboriginal peoples in NSW. For more information on the approach, see Section 3.1 of the *OCHRE Evaluation Plan: Overview and Stage 1*.

This plan sets out how the first stage of the evaluation of the Nest will be conducted. This is an abridged version of the detailed data collection plan developed and approved by the community. For more information on this stage of the evaluation, see Section 5 of the *OCHRE Evaluation Plan: Overview and Stage 1*. This plan identifies key stakeholders, what local community view as success and how it might be measured (where identified), method and timing of data collection.

2 About the Gumbaynggirr Language & Culture Nest

The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest is one of five state government funded Language and Culture Nests operating in NSW and run through the Department of Education.

The Nest was launched in Coffs Harbour on 19 February 2014. Based at William Bayldon Public School in Coffs Harbour, the purpose of the Nest is to revitalise the Gumbaynggirr language as an integral part of culture and identity.

Through the Nest, opportunities to learn the Gumbaynggirr language are available to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and young people enrolled in government preschools and schools in these communities. More information on the Nest can be found here

<http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/ochre-a-continuing-conversation/about-the-communities-involved>.

3 Ethics and permissions

On 9 August 2016, ethics approval was received from the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council Human Research Ethics Committee (AH&MRC HREC). For further information, see Section 5.3.3 of the *OCHRE Evaluation Plan: Overview and Stage 1*.

In May and June 2017, the research team received approval of the Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Nambucca Valley communities, to continue the conversation with the Aboriginal community about the Nest.

In September 2017, the NSW Department of Education, through the State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP), provided permission for the research team to talk to staff and students in Year 8 and above, within the school grounds with the consent of the Principal.

4 Gathering information

There are three broad communities that fall within the Nest footprint: Coffs Harbour, the Nambucca Valley (including Bowraville, Macksville and Nambucca), and Grafton located in the Clarence Valley. For the collection of information, each of these will be managed as a separate site.

4.1 Focusing the evaluation through co-design

This plan is built from co-design conversations that occurred with local Aboriginal community members at Coffs Harbour, Nambucca and Grafton held over the period February to June 2017. For further information on co-design see Section 5.4.1 of the *OCHRE Evaluation Plan: Overview and Stage 1*.

During the co-design process the criteria against which the local Aboriginal communities would assess success focused on the extent of community control and ownership of the Nest, specifically control over funding and how the funding is allocated, decision-making power over what is required for people to teach the language, and determination of how the language course is taught and assessed.

The core evaluation questions are outlined in Section 4.3 of the *OCHRE Evaluation Plan: Overview and Stage 1*.

4.2 Stakeholder groups

There are many different people and organisations who have been or are involved in implementing the Nest. The research team will approach the following groups:

- Peoples of the Gumbaynggirr Nation, including Elders, Local Aboriginal Land Councils
- The Nest, including the Nest teacher, tutors, and Reference Group
- Government school and pre-school communities, including Principals/Preschool Directors, teachers who supervise language tutors, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students/children and parents/carers from participating and non-participating schools and pre-schools
- Aboriginal language program providers, specifically Muurrbay, and Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan
- Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, including central and local regional staff
- Department of Education, including the Nest Program Manager, Aboriginal Education and Community Engagement Directorate.

As the criteria to assess the success of the Nest identified in co-design focus on issues of community control, Aboriginal people of the Gumbaynggirr Nation will be the key informants.

4.2.1 Who will participate in the conversation?

The table below indicates the range of people we hope to have conversations with and how they may be approached. We aim to have conversations with 60-80 people.

Stakeholder group	Approach
People from the Gumbaynggirr Nation	Talk with local people at a community event in each of the three locations. This may include parents, Elders, and other interested stakeholders from Aboriginal organisations.
Participant schools/preschools; non-participant schools/preschools	Invite five participating and non-participating schools to participate in the study. [The schools and preschools are chosen to achieve a mix of Secondary and Primary schools and pre-schools, schools that had a language program prior to taking part in the Nest, schools with a larger enrolment of Aboriginal students, smaller and larger schools, schools participating and not participating in the Nest. Invited schools will provide coverage of the three communities. The final sample will depend on the approval of individual Principals.]
Principals in participant school/preschools; non-participant schools/preschools	As above.
Students participating/not participating	Talk to students in participating and non-participating schools (with Principal's approval).
Parents/carers with children participating/not participating	Talk to parents of students in participating and non-participating schools, either through the school or at the community event.
Nest Teacher	Talk with the Nest teacher.
Nest tutors	Talk with the Nest tutors.
Teachers who work with language tutors	Talk to teachers who work with language tutors in participating schools (with Principal's approval).
Nest Reference Group	Invite members of the group to have conversations about the nest.
Aboriginal language providers	Talk with Aboriginal language providers.
AECG; Department of Education	Talk with policy and program staff.

4.3 Collecting data

During the period 16–25 October 2017, data will be collected by an Aboriginal researcher engaged by the SPRC and up to six local Aboriginal community researchers. The period is inclusive of a weekend and allows for data collection outside of normal work hours. Where one-to-one conversations are sought, but not feasible within this time, these will be organised after the end of the fieldwork period and completed by phone or Skype.

Further information on data collection can be found in Section 5.4.2 of the *OCHRE Evaluation Plan: Overview and Stage 1*.

4.3.1 Local Aboriginal community researcher model

A community researcher model will be adopted as a way of encouraging the community to have control over the research, while also building research capacity in communities. Successful applications will be determined by SPRC and researchers will be trained, supported, debriefed, and paid by SPRC.

4.3.2 Data collection methods

The methods used were developed by the research team together with community members (co-design) and have been further developed to maximise opportunities for participation and engagement.

Interviews and group discussions will be the means for obtaining information from the Nest Reference Group, NSW Government, School Principals/Pre-school Directors, Teachers who supervise language tutors, the AECG, and Aboriginal language program providers. Interviews can be face-to-face or by phone.

One-to-one or group yarns will be employed to obtain information from people of the Gumbaynggirr Nation, parents/carers, the Nest teacher and Nest tutors, and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Community gatherings will be held in Coffs Harbour, Nambucca Heads and Grafton. It is intended that these gatherings will host yarning circles, one specifically for parents of school students (who may or may not be participating in a Nest school) and one for other interested community members. In the Grafton community an additional yarning circle will be made available for Elders. This is being organised by Aboriginal Affairs NSW. One-to-one conversations with a member of the research team will be available following these gatherings.

An online survey will be available for anyone who would like to provide information anonymously, for those who are unable to talk to the researchers while they are in community, or for those who would like to provide additional feedback. The survey will be open until 10 November 2017, or longer as needed.

Conversation guides have been developed to help answer the evaluation questions and assess the measures identified in co-design. iPads will be programmed to support the use of these guides and to record participant responses. The cultural appropriateness of the questions in the guides will be checked with local Aboriginal peoples.

4.3.3 Identifying and recruiting participants

Potential participants were identified using a range of methods to reduce the risk that some stakeholder groups would not be represented. These included consulting Aboriginal Affairs NSW,

the Nest Teacher, key Aboriginal community members actively involved in nurturing and growing language, and the Nest Reference Group.

The Principals and preschool Directors of a sample of schools will be approached to take part. Where Principals provide permission, SPRC will invite the Nest teacher and tutors, parents/carers and students from the school to take part.

People of the Gumbaynggirr Nation will be alerted to the opportunity to participate through the networks of the Greater Northern Region of Aboriginal Affairs NSW, Aboriginal community stakeholders and community researchers.

Nest staff, the Nest Reference Group, NSW Government staff, the local regional and State Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, and Aboriginal language program providers will be approached by Aboriginal Affairs on behalf of SPRC and offered an opportunity to participate.

The participant information statement and consent forms will be provided to all interested persons to inform their decision to take part. Each participant will be provided a voucher as reimbursement for their time. Community members participating as part of their paid or official positions will not be reimbursed.

4.4 Analysis of data collected and validation of findings

The overall analysis approach is detailed in Section 5.4.3 of the *OCHRE Evaluation Plan: Overview and Stage 1*. Data that will be analysed include data collected in the community (through conversations), *OCHRE* policy, procedures and guidelines, program monitoring data, and other administrative data. Analysis will be undertaken over the period November 2017 to February 2018.

Once findings are available, the SPRC researcher will meet with local community researchers and interested Aboriginal community members to validate findings and discuss any recommendations that the Aboriginal community consider appropriate. This is expected to occur in March/April 2018.

4.5 Reporting findings

The overall reporting approach is detailed in Section 5.5 of the *OCHRE Evaluation Plan: Overview and Stage 1*.

The research team will return to meet with the local Aboriginal communities to deliver the final report and seek their permission to share their report with government (to be complete by June 2018). Note that SPRC must provide an embargoed copy of the report to Aboriginal Affairs NSW to meet the terms of their contract.