

OCHRE Evaluation | Stage 1: Implementation and early outcomes

Tamworth Opportunity Hub

Evaluation Plan

October 2017

The Tamworth Opportunity Hub operates on Kamilaroi Country.

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

Research Team

Professor Ilan Katz, BJ Newton, Shona Bates, Michael Barnes

Social Policy Research Centre

UNSW Sydney NSW 2052 Australia

T +61 2 9385 7800

F +61 2 9385 7838

E sprc@unsw.edu.au

W www.sprc.unsw.edu.au

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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 Tamworth Opportunity Hub (the Opportunity Hub). *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 Opportunity Hub 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 Tamworth Opportunity Hub

The Tamworth Opportunity Hub is one of four state government funded initiative Opportunity Hubs operating in NSW. It opened its door in March 2014 and is run by the Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Based at 123 Marius Street, Tamworth, the Opportunity Hub coordinates and matches training and career opportunities with Aboriginal students, providing incentives to finish school and transition into tertiary study and sustainable jobs. The Opportunity Hub works closely with community, schools, industry and employers, tertiary institutions and other NGOs to deliver cultural programs; career aspiration, education and planning; resilience and confidence building; and life skills programs and activities.

As at August 2017 there are 35 schools participating in the Tamworth Opportunity Hub. More information on the Opportunity Hub 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 March 2016, the research team received approval from the community to continue the conversation with the Aboriginal Community in Tamworth about the Opportunity Hub.

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

4.1 Focusing the evaluation through co-design

This plan is built from co-design conversations that occurred with local Aboriginal community members in February 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 student engagement, community involvement, and connection to culture.

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 Opportunity Hub. The research team will approach the following groups:

- The local Aboriginal community, including Elders, former students and key Aboriginal community groups including the Local Aboriginal Land Council
- Participating school communities, including Principals, teachers, Aboriginal Education Officers, students and parents/carers, and Opportunity Hub Board
- Non-participating school communities, including Principals, students and parents/carers
- Local partners and service providers, including industry, out of school support networks and members of the Opportunity Hub Consortium
- Opportunity Hub coordinators and case workers
- NSW Government, including the Opportunity Hub program manager, and other government staff who have a role in the Opportunity Hub.

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 around 60 people for this Opportunity Hub.

Stakeholder group	Approach
Local Aboriginal community	Talk with local people at a community event and through the Opportunity Hub and the LALC. This may include parents, Elders, and other interested stakeholders from Aboriginal organisations.
Participant schools; non-participant schools	Invite five participating and non-participating schools to participate in the study. [The schools are chosen to achieve a mix of schools, schools with a larger enrolment of Aboriginal students, smaller and larger schools, schools participating and not participating in the Opportunity Hub, and town/country schools. The final sample will depend on the approval of individual Principals.]
Principals, teachers and Aboriginal Education Officers in participant schools; non-participant schools	As above.
Students participating/not participating	Talk to students participating and not participating in the Opportunity Hub (with Principal's approval).
Parents/carers with children participating/not participating	Talk to parents of students participating and not participating in the Opportunity Hub, either through the school or at the community event.
Hub Staff and Board	Group discussion
Local partners and service providers	Industry, out of school support networks, and Opportunity Hub consortium.
Government staff	Policy and program staff involved in the Opportunity Hub and also the Midnight Basketball (Bounce Back).

4.3 Collecting data

During the period 31 October to 5 November 2017, data will be collected by an Aboriginal researcher engaged by the SPRC and up to four 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 Opportunity Hub consortium, NSW Government, School staff, and the Opportunity Hub team. Interviews can be face-to-face or by phone and are being organised by Aboriginal Affairs NSW.

One-to-one or group yarns will be used to have conversations with the community.

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 5 December 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, Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council, the Opportunity Hub, and key Aboriginal community members.

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

The community will be alerted to the opportunity to participate through the networks of Aboriginal Affairs NSW, the Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council, other Aboriginal community stakeholders and community researchers.

Opportunity Hub staff, the Consortium, and NSW Government staff, will be approached by Aboriginal Affairs NSW or the Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council, 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.