



## **The Development of an Outcomes Based Approach Practice Model**

### **Feasibility Study Rationale**

This is a proposal for a feasibility study into the development of a practice model, in particular – outcomes measurement, assessment and planning. Given the potential benefits of this development work a feasibility study is essential to ensure that whatever work may follow, will maximise these benefits in the most effective and efficient manner.

The study will help determine that such a development is useful to the organization and a worthwhile investment of resources. It will ensure that the development project, should it proceed, will fully utilize what is already in place and that the opportunity is used to provide benefits across the organization.

The following comment from a leading provider of services to children in Australia (The Lighthouse Foundation) captures the importance of this development work, and the global development of outcomes based approaches.

*I agree that there is a need for an outcomes focus, we can see the benefits of the approach in our young people, but how do we demonstrate it to government? This is one of the challenges we are facing. It would be great to get some feedback about how you measure the success of the therapeutic programs? We have survived without any government funding for 18 years, but we are now in discussions with government about funding. The need to demonstrate these outcomes is vital. (Rudy Gonzales, Director)*

## Potential Benefits and Value

An important outcome of the feasibility study will be to identify the potential benefits and value to the organization of developing its practice model. These are some of them, but there may be more that emerge as we explore things more closely.

**The primary benefit that underpins all further benefits will be improved outcomes for the service user.**

- The development of a coherent model, which will unify the organization's practice and further distinguish the model.
- Improvements in the organization's understanding of an outcomes based approach and alignment between the organization's activity and outcomes. A shared understanding of the organization's outcomes can greatly improve the team's sense of purpose and be highly motivating for employees to see clear evidence of the outcomes of their work.
- A coherent model will support long term sustainability of the organization as it will become embedded, providing continuity and consistency through any period of organization change.
- Improvements in relationships with referring agencies and funders by providing clearer information on outcomes. This should lead to improvements in funding retention and the development of new funders.
- A clear focus on outcomes can inform the organization's strategic decision making on how to use its resources, where to make investments and where to make cut backs. How does every aspect of the organization's activity best support positive outcomes?
- The model, with all supporting processes and materials, will also strengthen the organization brand – for example, each child's case review across the organization can be provided with a clearly recognizable and distinct report based on outcomes achieved by the child.
- A coherent model used across the organization will be more efficient in terms of administrative systems, also strengthening the brand by the use of consistent paperwork, etc.
- Existing systems such as quality assurance and case work records, etc can be used as a source for assessment and outcomes information - adding meaning to the already established systems.
- Larger organizations are in an excellent position to evidence the outcomes of their work. Large amounts of data will be available for analysis. The first thing that is necessary for practice development and continuous improvement is consistency of practice. A consistent approach with a good size group is ideal for academic research and publication.

- A well designed outcomes approach can provide opportunities for service users involvement in their own development and in the wider organization.
- The process of assessment and planning will strengthen the professional networks by everyone being involved in the same processes and speaking the same language.
- Once established, the process of assessment, outcome evaluation and planning will lead to clear identification of the best and most effective practice, and hence contribute to the culture of continuous improvement.

### **Process and cost of the project**

1. The study will aim to identify the most productive way to go about any developmental project. For example, who will be involved – managers, social workers, other professionals, service users, etc.
2. The process in itself should maximize the opportunity to create positive collaboration and team working, giving everyone a sense of ownership.
3. Identify a time scale for the project, should it be an intensive short term project or a longer one giving more opportunity for the involvement of different people? How much will be led internally and how much externally?
4. The study will aim to identify the cost and resource implications of the development project.
5. The study will evaluate how ready the organization is for this development – for example if the organization is stable and does not have other significant development needs it could be an ideal time to do this work. Developmental work is most likely to be effective where resources are not stretched in all directions. The level of interest, commitment and motivation within the organization will be important factors.
6. A report will be provided identifying the potential benefits and value of the project, the process of the project, costs and resource implications.

### **Structure of the Feasibility Study**

If the proposal is agreed in principal then we will need to agree

- The clear outcomes for the study
- Process in terms of who to meet with - the content of interviews and discussions. Information to be made available, existing systems and practices, etc
- The timescale and cost

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