

## **Response by Community Resource Network to the: NSW Department of Family & Community Services**

### **Performance, Monitoring & Evaluation Framework (Draft)** (July 2017)

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CRN welcomes the opportunity to comment on this Draft Paper and would be only too happy to be contacted if there are any enquiries on any comments made.

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*September 2017*

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## **Community Resource Network (CRN) Inc.**

Community Resource Network (CRN) is the sub-regional peak organisation working mainly in The Hills, Blacktown and surrounding local government areas in Western Sydney, NSW. CRN is funded through the NSW State Government, Family & Community Services Community Builders program. CRN represents 80 not-for-profit members as well as engaging a wide network of community services who support highly financially and socially disadvantaged communities. We support local community sector organisations in their work through various resources, supports and expertise. CRN works with these organisations and communities under four key areas: Capacity building; Representation; Information & Referral; and, Communications.

CRN is an Incorporated Association registered under NSW Legislation and is a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC).

CRN has been an active participant in the Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) Reform process. The CRN Manager is the Co-Chair of the Blacktown Hills TEI Local Working Group and, therefore, sits on the TEI Western Sydney (and Nepean Blue Mountains) District Reference Group at FACS.

CRN welcomes this Consultation and is interested in the outcomes from submissions and future directions and the final document and would like to thank the Service Providers who contributed their expertise and perspectives into this Paper.

*Throughout the document the Draft Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework document, will be referred to as “the Draft”.*

## Introduction

The value of a performance, monitoring and evaluation framework for the TEI cannot be understated. To measure the outcomes from the work that organisations do with communities is invaluable. To see that outcomes are achieved that will measure that communities are safe and well, are being strengthened, and are functional is necessary. Indeed, the data on persistent issues in the sector was one of the key triggers for the TEI reform process.

### 1. Comments on RBA™

To that end, CRN is questioning why the framework will be based on Results Based Accountability™ (RBA™)<sup>1</sup>? At a FACS organised TEI briefing meeting for service providers at the Rooty Hill RSL on Wednesday, 24th May 2017, a Central Office staff member advised service providers from the Western Sydney area that RBA™ was not going to be used as a tool by FACS. When questioned as to why, we were told that it was inadequate for the purposes of TEI. Organisation's planning and evaluations are heavily influenced by advice from senior FACS staff. Due to CRN being told that RBA™ was not going to be used, no future planning was based on this format and we advised our Board that we would not be using this framework. While, in other Districts, many organisations were informed that RBA™ would be used.

#### Key Issues to Note:

##### a. Licensing for RBA™, Trademarking and Costs:

RBA™ is a trademarked tool of the Fiscal Policy Studies Institute and was developed by Mark Friedman. RBA™ has previously been endorsed by FACS as a framework measurement tool in its document '*Community Builders Program Guidelines, Abridged Community Builders Program Guidelines*', August 2010<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Fiscal Policy Studies Institute <http://resultsaccountability.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lcsansw.org.au/documents/item/178> page 9

CRN's concerns here are that RBA™ is not referenced until well into the Draft document as a trademarked product and further, whether there are appropriate licencing conditions in place for FACS and organisations' usage for TEI purposes?

Another point is that the proprietary software for results leadership amounts to around A\$4,200.00 per annum.<sup>3</sup> There is little clarity in the draft around "who pays" when service providers are repeatedly told that there is no further money available for funding.

**b. Training:**

For organisations, and their workers who have been employed on a longer term basis in the community sector, RBA™ is not a new methodology. There would need to be training undertaken for those experiencing this methodology for the first time and updated training for those who have previously used it. CRN acknowledges that some service providers in the family funding areas have used the RBA™ Results Scorecard, or similar products, for many years. These organisations are pleased to be continuing this measurement, as they have made significant investment into this program.

CRN employees attended *RBA Training 101* and *RBA Training for Trainers and Coaches* sessions due to the proposed introduction of RBA™ back in 2010.

**c. Fidelity to the RBA™ Model**

FACS never really used RBA™ to its full effect across all funding streams. There was much investment placed in the model, and over time, services in many funding streams had little encouragement to continue to use it as time went on from its initial write up in documentation. Also, as a framework RBA™ did not really have a fit with the measurements that were developed and required under the FACS Community Builders Service Specifications, in its last iteration, which was notified to FACS at the time. As previously mentioned, set up and training

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<sup>3</sup> Clear Impact <https://clearimpact.com/scorecard/pricing/>

were too costly for many service providers to implement and maintain RBA™ systems.

**d. Learnings from Previous Sector Collaboration on RBA™:**

In 2009, 52 workers from 34 community service organisations (predominately in Western Sydney) took part in a co-ordinated learning and development process aimed at deepening understanding of RBA™ and the skills and tools associated with using RBA™ as a performance measurement framework. There was over 100 hours of training over a nine month period. CRN was a partner in this project, which also included: Western Sydney Community Forum; Family Worker Training & Development Programme Inc; University of Western Sydney; FACS, then known as Community Services; the Local Community Services Association (LCSA)<sup>4</sup>; and, NSW Family Services Inc. This Project was evaluated in a published Report.<sup>5</sup> There may be some learnings for FACS in this document. (A copy of this Report is available if required.)

**e. Co-ordination of Local & Population Level Data:**

RBA™ may seem appropriate for large population measurement outcomes in a reporting framework but at a local level, while organisations can provide actual data, the expectation to generate population level data would have to be a co-ordinated process so as to have relativities for comparative measurements across local areas.

As mentioned previously, CRN fully supports the development of an evaluation framework but it must be a framework that meets the needs of services and be client focussed. CRN is aware that the Australian Social Value Bank (ASVB), is an effective tool that establishes a standardising metric that puts a monetary value to social outcomes. There is currently a review project being undertaken by WESTIR Ltd<sup>6</sup> to test this methodology in a centre. CRN would encourage FACS to investigate the ASVB as a possibility for measurement.

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<sup>4</sup> N.B.: The CRN Manager is currently a Member of the LCSA Board.

<sup>5</sup> Results Based Accountability (RBA) Training for CSGP Funded NGO's – Priority Target Areas: Blacktown/Baulkham Hills, Parramatta/Holroyd & Auburn Project Report, 2010 by Project Partners.

<sup>6</sup> N.B.: The CRN Manager is currently a Member of the WESTIR Ltd Board.

## 2. Comments on FACSAR

There is an issue with this paper as it is said that the Draft “*paper should be read in conjunction with the FASCAR paper Early Intervention Outcomes Framework (TBA), which contains an evidence review, impact pathways, interventions and indicators*” [page 5 of the Draft]. CRN did searches on FACS websites and finally had our State Peak, LCSA, make an enquiry on our behalf as to where this document could be found. Unfortunately, the response from FACS was that this publication was not available. While CRN realises that the PMEAF is a draft document, to reference a document that is obviously of some relevance due to its content and not have it available, makes this review of the Draft incomplete, as all the information required has not been provided.

## 3. Aboriginal Outcomes

Mention has been made around a TEI Aboriginal Specific Early Intervention Outcomes Framework [page 5]. CRN welcomes this, as the current system has not always recognised ATSI specific measurements and systems appropriate for Aboriginal wellbeing. CRN has recently been having conversations with FACS funded and other Aboriginal services in the Blacktown area. These conversations raised a number of issues and some of these were around compliance and accountability and the relevance of current measurements for ATSI communities’ outcomes in a cultural context.

CRN read about a project run in a remote community, where Aboriginal communities, government and scientists collaborated to design and implement a holistic wellbeing framework. It is called the Interplay Project<sup>7</sup> and the Project developed a framework and assessment tools to monitor and evaluate the interplay between culture, community, empowerment, education, employment, health and wellbeing in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. CRN believes that these tools

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<sup>7</sup> [www.crc-rep.com/interplay](http://www.crc-rep.com/interplay)

may be relevant for the Aboriginal TEI Outcomes Framework and may have some wider usage.

The Draft needs to address the issue of self-identification as CRN is aware of, and hears from generalist service providers, that they have clients who attend their services that are known to be Aboriginal but will not disclose this for various reasons. These clients, will not complete other Aboriginal specific surveys, etc., even though they are de-identified data, therefore, making metrics around data capture of Aboriginal clients understated. (This can also relate in the area of culturally and linguistically diverse clients.) While Aboriginal communities see service providers as a safe place to work with, there is a distrust of data being collected on behalf of government.

#### **4. Methodology**

- i. Surveys:** A new approach to surveys needs to be undertaken. The present surveys have been met with disinterest by clients and consumers, not only from the outset but over the total period of their usage. Services were encouraging clients to complete the surveys but they would not. CRN, as a sector development organisation even had difficulty in having surveys completed by organisations! Also, they were not culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and CALD communities, which had been pointed out in early planning sessions for the existing funding programs. Also, cumulative reporting of the survey outcomes, to CRN's knowledge, have never been publicly released. The efficacy and values of future surveys content and collection will need careful consideration and should be developed around reporting that is client focussed.
  
- ii. Whole of Government Datasets:** This is very important but has created an issue in planning throughout the TEI reform due to organisations not having access to some of the key data indicators for the reform. Primarily, as it appears that these datasets were part of the policy decisions that initiated the

reform process. Will services have future access to datasets? Particularly, as service providers will need to have an idea of the overall population indicators for working out their localised and service orientated population indicators and, therefore, outcomes? In speaking to a service about CRN's response to this paper it was indicated that while they work with, and in, schools they can never access any data from the Department of Education to support them in their work. While the whole of government datasets has been mentioned here has any policy decision been made about intergovernmental and future releases of datasets? By not having access to the datasets, service providers may have a lack fidelity to the RBA™ model.

**iii. Governance Evaluation Findings:**

Again, what will the processes be around this? Will the existing TEI Local and District Reference groups be part of an ongoing process? Who will lead these groups? What type of research and evaluation methodology will be used, as this was not stated in the Draft [page 18] and when will these be released.

CRN has found real value in being part of the TEI Reform process but it is very time consuming and has meant really having to clarify what work is being undertaken and continuing to meet our present Program Level Agreement at the same time. CRN sees one of its primary roles as being a representative for organisations and will certainly continue to participate, where required, in this important reform.

**5. Outputs and Outcomes**

Much of FACS discussions at briefing sessions on the TEI reform have talked about 'outcomes'. This draft has mentioned 'outputs' in a number of areas and shows in the charts from pages 10 to 14. CRN suggests here that clear definitions of the two words and the context of their usage be very clear.

Many service providers, including CRN, often speak about the work that goes into the preparation of client activities, etc. and that the data measurement has never taken into account the work that is required to get to the stage of an outcome/output. CRN would like to see that somewhere in the metrics that this could be taken into account.

This is particularly relevant to community sector development organisations, such as CRN. The systems that have been set up do not often reflect the actual work that has been taken to reach an outcome/output. It is unclear in the Draft as to whether remedies to this type of data capture have been examined.

Service providers have also expressed ongoing issues around clients that attend their services with complex needs who often present with more than one issue. Existing data will not allow for entry of more than one issue but the actual work undertaken with this client has been much more than can be shown.

## **6. Co-Design and Communication**

Western Sydney District has run three test site co-design projects over the last 2.5 years. If co-design is promoted into Districts, it should be recognised that there is resourcing costs to this type of work. There is training needed and intensive relationship development work required, not just with clients but between services. CRN's Manager can speak with some authority on this matter, as a founding member of the Parramatta Homeless Men's Coalition, which worked with the, then, three funded men's homeless services and FACS. With no further funding available for the TEI this would require cost shifting by service providers away from direct work with clients to administrative costings and this needs to be considered.

*Once again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft.*

*End.*