Research and Innovation Framework
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1. Purpose

The Research and Innovation Framework supports the mission of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to ensure a high-quality and coherent birth-to-adulthood learning and development system to build the capability of every young Victorian. With a coherent program of quality research work that informs policy and practice, the framework supports the Corporate Plan and the Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development, the Melbourne Declaration on National Goals for Young Australians, and COAG-agreed outcomes to be delivered through the National Partnerships.

The framework is designed to ensure that high-quality research addresses the Department's outcomes for children and young people. It therefore has close links with the Outcomes and Evaluation Framework.

The Research and Innovation Framework is specifically intended to:

• inform and influence policy development and practice in relation to Victorian and national priorities as outlined in the Blueprint
• provide Victorian, national and international research evidence to evaluate, inform and strengthen policy and practice
• inform researchers of the Department’s priorities for research and innovation
• contribute to the body of knowledge of education outcomes, young people's wellbeing and early childhood development in Victoria
• develop a culture of research and innovation and build capacity through collaboration within DEECD and with external partners.

The Research and Innovation Framework supports disciplined innovation by fostering, testing and implementing creative ideas to improve existing ways of doing things (continuous improvement); create new ways of doing things (incremental innovation); and move towards next practice (transformational innovation).

2. Types of research and evidence

The Department adopts a broad view of research that includes:

• desk research such as literature reviews and environment scans
• pure research such as experimental work and randomised controlled trials
• social research based on qualitative and quantitative methods, such as analysis of existing data held by the Department and other agencies, and benchmarking to compare with other organisations and countries
• ongoing monitoring of projects, evaluation studies and experiments that consider the costs, benefits and effectiveness of policies, and
• action research and field trials in schools and early childhood settings, to identify, support and evaluate innovation that has system value.

This work can be undertaken at large and small scales, and conducted by DEECD corporate staff, expert researchers, practitioners and student researchers.
3. Elements of research and innovation

The Research and Innovation Framework is designed to build capacity and knowledge in DEECD through systematic arrangements for the development, coordination, scrutiny and communication of research activity. This section describes the framework of business processes, governance and management structures and guidelines for conducting research in the Department.

3.1 Research and innovation business processes

The processes in figure 1 drive coherence in the research and innovation activity that underpins the Department’s strategic thinking and policy development, and build the capacity of departmental staff to undertake and engage with knowledge-building activities, in a cycle that involves:

- systematically reviewing existing policies, outcomes data and future scenarios to identify research questions
- setting priorities and planning research
- recording, monitoring and analysing the Department’s investment in education research and its outcomes, and
- sharing knowledge to inform policy development and innovative practice within DEECD and with a wider community.

![Fig 1: Business processes comprising the Research and Innovation Framework](image)

Analysis and review

Across the Department, data are used to monitor and evaluate performance, to inform resource allocation, and to identify causal relationships between Department programs and particular outcomes.
Analysis of our extensive data is undertaken to identify questions and areas for research, thus contributing to new research priorities.

Setting priorities
To ensure that research and innovation supports the Department’s current and future directions, research priority areas of interest are developed in light of current data analysis and national and international environmental scans. They provide direction to internal and external researchers on the areas in which the Department wishes to promote high-quality research and foster partnerships. Proposals seeking Department support should indicate their alignment with the Research Priority Areas of Interest 2008–11.


Making and monitoring research investment decisions
Research investment decisions are expected to reflect DEECD priorities. Processes for recording, monitoring and analysing the Department’s investment in research are in place to inform and guide future research. A Research Register records DEECD research activity, and regular reports are generated through the Research Committee.


Sharing knowledge
The audiences for DEECD research and innovation include practitioners across the state and beyond, policy makers, professional associations, researchers and the general public.


Publications and events
- Research eLert: a regular electronic newsletter that explores research topics related to education and early childhood development policy and practice.
- Research papers reporting on current research projects and topics of interest.
- Fuse: a dedicated online site for practitioners to share, discuss and collate innovative ideas and examples of ‘next’ practices, especially those from Victorian schools. Fuse also sponsors online conferencing and trials of emerging technologies and presents research exploring the educational value of innovation.
- Forums: local and international researchers and practitioners share their findings and encourage discussion.
- Innovation Showcase: an annual event to display the innovations of Victorian educators to state, national and international audiences. This attracts educators and policy makers and promotes collaboration to support learning and improved practice.

3.2 How research influences policy and practice
Policy development is influenced by top-down and bottom-up approaches. The policy process begins with a clear question or issues to address, and where evidence is available for each stage of the policy cycle, this informs the development of drafts for consultation and review. Therefore research needs to be both timely and relevant.
The Research and Innovation Framework attempts to foreshadow important areas for research in light of:

- **evidence**: The quality of the research, its usefulness or its topical relevance will contribute to its likely uptake
- **links**: Communities, networks and intermediaries play an important role in influencing policy
- **external influences**: National and international politics and processes, universities, academics, lobby groups, and international organisations (e.g. OECD) can impact on policies
- **political context**: The research-policy link affects political decisions and is also shaped by the political context. Both researchers and decision-makers must be aware of the political and the funding cycles.

Similarly, the Department's approach to innovation (figure 2) involves systematically managing and capturing the benefits of innovation to contribute to the policy development cycle and to accelerate best practice.

![Fig 2: The Innovation Cycle](image)

### 3.3 Building capacity: developing a culture of research and innovation to inform policy

Capacity building involves creating dynamic relationships, collaborative practices and learning between various members and groups. Capacity building is underpinned by participative and reflective practice, acknowledging the capacities of individuals, willingness to share knowledge and joint efforts to improve situations.

Research Branch (Education Policy and Research Division) and the Innovation and Next Practice Division manage capacity-building programs based on knowledge-sharing, access to resources, expert seminars and one-to-one coaching, and encourage partnerships between practitioners and researchers. The Innovation and Next Practice Division also builds capability for innovation through the field
trial process with purpose-built tools and resources. The Division manages the DEECD portfolio of innovation, which documents and provides stimulus for innovation projects across the system. 


3.4 Governance, management and support

Office for Policy, Research and Innovation

The Deputy Secretary, Office for Policy, Research and Innovation has overall responsibility for the Research and Innovation Framework, and is chair of the Research Committee.

DEECD Research and Evaluation Committee

The Research and Evaluation Committee directs the Department’s focus on strategic research to inform policy development and support improved practice. Its members are drawn from all Offices within the Department. Specifically, the Research Committee:

• conducts an annual analysis and review of the Department’s research and evaluation activity in light of its objectives and performance
• advises the Portfolio Strategy Board on the status of the research and evaluation activity, future directions and broad research and innovation priorities
• communicates findings to promote discussion and debate within the Department in order to inform policy development
• facilitates the capacity of departmental staff to undertake and engage in research and innovation activities
• facilitates partnerships with world-class researchers and innovators
• governs the establishment and implementation of research and evaluation partnerships to carry out agreed programs of evidence and capacity building.


Research Branch in the Education, Policy and Research Division, manages business processes including analysis, setting priorities, monitoring investment, sharing knowledge and building capacity.

Innovation and Next Practice Division has developed a framework based on field trials to ensure successful innovations assume scale and influence mainstream practice. This includes stimulating and incubating innovation through pilot projects; progressing the integration of information and communications technology (ICT) into teaching and learning and school improvement; and promoting successful school and system level innovations in Victoria and beyond.

Related frameworks and strategies

The Outcomes and Evaluation Framework supports a coherent planning, management and evaluation system oriented towards achieving the expected outcomes for Victorian children and young people. The framework supports:

• systematic generation of evidence about progress and achievements, which can be used to inform future action
• unity of purpose across the organisation by providing an agreed ‘line of sight’ which shows how the Departments work contributes to achieving intended outcomes
• a consistent reference point for the evaluation of the Department’s activities relative to an agreed set of intended outcomes, and
• organisational learning which arises from systematic monitoring and evaluation of work.

The framework is published in the Department’s Corporate Plan.


3.5 Evaluating research and innovation with DEECD

Success will be judged by the extent to which DEECD is positioned as a department where:
• research evidence informs and influences policy development and practice that improves outcomes for children and young people
• researchers are aware of, and respond to, the Department’s priorities for research and innovation
• research contributes to the body of knowledge of education, young people’s wellbeing and early childhood development nationally and internationally
• there is a strong culture of collaboration that supports research and innovation within DEECD and with external partners.

3.6 Useful links and guidelines

DEECD Research Register
The Department’s research register is a searchable database of information about research and evaluation activity in the Department.


Research and innovation partnerships
DEECD acknowledges the importance of collaborative networks between and among researchers and policy makers as a means of building strong evidence-based policy and setting future directions. It fosters partnerships with local and international institutions and companies, other government departments in Australia and internationally, the local government sector involved in early childhood development and education and other stakeholders, as a way of drawing from and contributing to high quality research and innovation.

Research and Evaluation Partnerships
These five-year partnerships will provide a significant opportunity to strengthen and align the Department’s research and evaluation effort with continuing major reform initiatives and their impact on outcomes. A priority for the partnerships will be to focus on how to maximise the use of location-based trials which can broaden the evidence-base to understand what interventions work best, in what circumstances and at what cost.

Access to DEECD data
The Data, Outcomes and Evaluation Division holds and analyses data from numerous data sets and works with researchers and DEECD corporate staff on analyses of data relating to:
• health, development, learning, safety and wellbeing outcomes of children and young people (aged 0–17 years)
• characteristics of children and young people (aged 0–17) and their families (demographic data)
• child and family participation in early childhood services
• student, staff and parental attitudes to school
• school enrolment and attendance
• student achievement and completions (VCE, VCAL, VET)
• post-school destinations and pathways
• DEECD workforce, including staff characteristics, leave, recruitment and attrition.

Research in Victorian government schools and early childhood settings

DEECD welcomes high-quality proposals for field research which are designed to add to the understanding of children and young people and to evaluate the effectiveness of health, wellbeing and educational programs. Those interested in undertaking research are encouraged to refer to the Research Priority Areas of Interest 2008–11 to identify mutual areas of interest.

The Department reviews applications to assess:
• benefit and value to the Department, schools and early childhood settings (kindergartens, childcare centres, and maternal child and health care centres) and participants
• burden and impact on schools and early childhood settings and participants
• appropriateness of methodology in the school or early childhood setting
• ethical design and conduct of the proposal, which includes issues such as consent, confidentiality, privacy and protection from harm.

The Department must ensure that any research proposal conforms to all relevant privacy legislation, including the Privacy Act 1988 (Cwth), the Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic) and the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic). Where applicable, applicants should have the approval of their institution’s formally constituted Human Research Ethics Committee.

The application form for use by external researchers proposing to conduct research in schools and/or early childhood settings is at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/researchinnovation/research/conductresearch.htm

The form can also be used by external researchers who wish to use data sets owned or managed by the Department. Such requests are managed by the Data, Outcomes and Evaluation Division.

Grants for practitioner-led research and innovation

Grants are made available to practitioners in schools and early childhood settings individually or in small groups, to investigate issues of interest or concern and explore innovative solutions. Invitations to apply for research grants are sent early in the year, with a closing date in June. Expressions of interest for inclusion in innovation field trials are sought at various times throughout the year.