

Allied Health Research Capability & Development Strategy 2017 – 2020

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Background

Building a strong and sustainable allied health workforce capable and committed to research, innovation, and evidence-based practice is more important than ever. Globally, the efficiency and effectiveness of health care models continue to be challenged due to economic and social pressures, inciting a driving need for research active health services¹. Alongside ongoing investment in medical and nursing research, building the capacity of allied health professionals to undertake research has been identified as a priority¹⁻⁶.

The allied health workforce has faced a number of challenges to embedding a sustainable research culture, including a paucity of large scale studies, lack of applied research methodologies, absence of generalisable evidence and shortage of time, skills, research leadership and resources to facilitate clinical research¹. Thus, strengthening the capacity of the allied health workforce to conduct research that is of high-quality, with high clinical impact, has become an area of strategic importance for the Metro South Hospital and Health Service (MSHHS).

The process of capacity building for research skill development, capability and culture across the allied health workforce requires a synergistic and multi-level approach⁵. Previous research cites a number of strategies that have shown to be effective in building allied health research capacity at an individual level, including: providing targeted research skills training, funding bursaries, providing mentoring, and embedding dedicated research positions within hospital and health services⁷⁻⁹. In addition to enhancing an individual's research capacity, having strong workforce leadership and a co-ordinated and strategic approach to building research engagement at both the department/team and wider organisational level is also integral to the success of allied health research capacity building^{5,10-14}.

To this end, the first edition of the *Metro South Allied Health Research and Innovation Strategic Directions* was developed for 2014-2016. The purpose of this document was to provide a vision and strategic framework to guide allied health departments across MSHHS in their pursuit of research excellence and innovation. The framework highlighted three overarching goals and six objectives to target areas for research capacity building and development across allied health departments and teams.

Based on consumer feedback on the 2014-2016 document, and in response to the evolving research skills and direction of the Metro South Allied Health workforce, a revised strategic framework has been developed for 2017 – 2020 (page 6). The revised strategy has retained the core vision and tenants of the 2014 – 2016 strategy. However, a larger focus has been placed on the development of practical tools and strategies which allied health departments can use to plan and build further research capability, in a method that is salient and most beneficial to their staff.

Purpose

The purpose of the *Metro South Allied Health Research Capability and Development Strategy* is to be visionary in its approach in driving feasible and practical staff capability development in research, innovation, and evidence-based practice. The strategy aligns with the current Metro South Strategic Plan 2015 – 2019 and the Metro South Health Allied Health Professional Plan, aiming to:

1. Influence and guide allied health directors, line managers, and staff in research, innovation and evidence-based practice approaches;
2. Coordinate and integrate current research structures and systems and performance and promote continued steps to research capacity building and governance; and,
3. Promote research excellence and innovation as drivers of better health and better health care.

Vision

For all Metro South Allied Health departments and work areas to demonstrate capability and confidence in pursuing research and embedding innovation in clinical practice, as well as having an established strategy

and an ongoing commitment to continued research capability development, by 2025. In doing so, we will lay the foundation for a future-ready and sustainable allied health workforce which can transform and improve health care and health outcomes across MSHHS through priority-driven research excellence and innovation.

Scope & Intended Use

The scope of the *Metro South Allied Health Research Capability and Development Strategy* is inclusive of all allied health and health practitioner (HP) departments, teams and professionals under the purview of the Executive Director of Allied Health for Metro South HHS.

The *Metro South Allied Health Research Capability and Development Strategy* consists of three (3) core components, which have been designed to be used together to maximise uptake, efficiency and collaborative planning.

1. Allied Health Research Capability Strategic Framework

The Allied Health Research Capability Strategic Framework highlights three (3) overarching goals: 1) *Research close to practice*; 2) *Research as core business*; and 3) *Research in partnership*, as well as six (6) specific objectives to achieve these goals (see page 6 for summary). The framework has been designed to reflect the multi-factorial strategic approach which is required to support successful research capacity building^{2,7}. This includes striving to engage allied health staff and build their skills to generate research output (objectives 1 and 2), embed the necessary infrastructure resources and cultivate local leaders to promote sustainability (objectives 3 and 4), and forge synergistic partnerships to promote excellence in research and innovation (objectives 5 and 6).

2. Allied Health Research Capability Self-Assessment Tool

The Self-Assessment Tool provides a structured template for allied health departments to align themselves with the three (3) overarching goals, and six (6) objectives of the Research Capability and Development strategy, and to undertake a self-assessment of their departments' current capability and performance against these objectives (see page 7-8). Three (3) rating categories have been devised: "Emerging", "Consolidating", or "Proficient". Specific criteria for each category have not been devised, as it is recognised that allied health departments across MSHHS currently vary considerably in size, skill-mix and availability/access to dedicated research personnel, which significantly influence traditional research metrics or KPIs.

The self-assessment tool is designed to be completed on an annual basis by all allied health department heads and professional directors/leaders across Metro South HHS, with consultation with their research portfolio leaders and fellows as appropriate. Larger departments may also wish to use the self-assessment tool within their respective clinical sub-streams or work areas, if deemed appropriate by the head of department.

The self-assessment tool is NOT intended to be used as punitive measure, nor for benchmarking or comparison across departments and/or facilities. Rather, it is designed to encourage self-reflection by allied health departments, to identify areas of relative strength in their departments' research capability, and facilitate constructive and strategic planning in areas which may benefit from further development.

3. Practical Strategies for Targeting Research Capability

The final section of this document (page 9-11) provides a set of practical and actionable exemplars which allied health departments/team can employ to target and build research capability in specific areas, and further align themselves with the objectives of the Research Capability and Development strategy. These strategies are designed to be used in conjunction with the Self-Assessment Tool, and may be particularly valuable where departments have rated themselves as "Emerging" or "Consolidating" on the Self-Assessment Tool.

The listed strategies and example activities are not exhaustive. They provide possible options that departments and teams may consider using, or may already be implementing to build research capability across each objective. Departments and teams may request support and guidance in decision-making and/or implementing these strategies from the Research Workforce Development Officer (R-WDO) and/or the Centre for Functioning & Health Research (CFAHR) team.

Implementation Strategy

Consultation and feedback has been sought from the MSHHS Allied Health Research Leadership Committee and the Allied Health Advisory Committee to ensure the suitability of this document to the wider MSHHS allied health community and to troubleshoot any foreseeable barriers to successful implementation.

The Executive Director of Allied Health, MSHHS will be responsible for initiating the implementation of the Strategic Framework, and accompanying Self-Assessment and Practical Strategies through discussion with the Directors of Allied Health and relevant heads of department across MSHHS. The R-WDO will further assist with implementation at the department/team level and provide on-the-ground support to promote awareness and uptake of the tools, under the direction of the EDAH and department directors/portfolio leaders.

All allied health department directors and teams have a responsibility to work towards aligning their department/team with the goals and objectives underpinning the Research Capability and Development Strategy. This includes utilising the Self-Assessment Tool and the Practical Strategies sections of this document as appropriate.

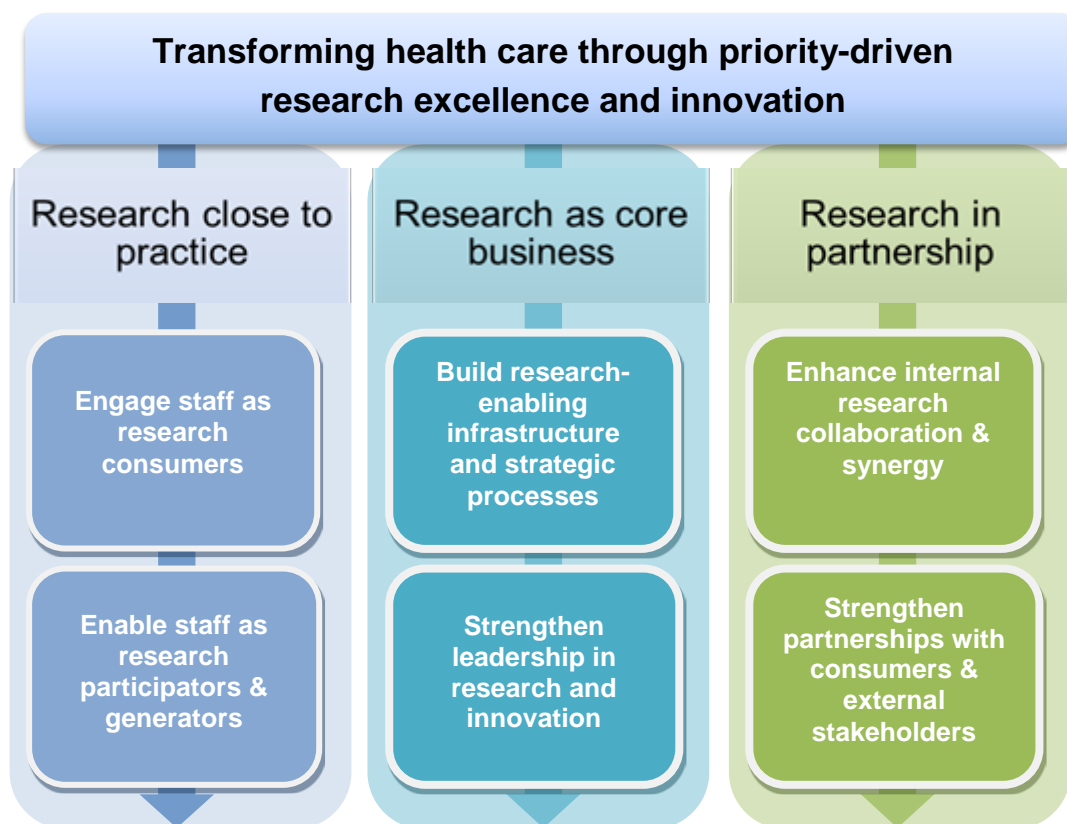
Reporting & Evaluation

All department heads and professional directors/leaders across Metro South HHS will complete the *Allied Health Research Capability Self-Assessment Tool* (see overleaf) on an annual basis. The R-WDO will coordinate the collation of this data in addition to qualitative feedback from departments regarding the uptake/use of the Practical Strategies, and will compile a report to summarise key findings which will be presented to the Allied Health Advisory Committee, and MSHHS Executive where appropriate.

A formal review and evaluation of this document and accompanying resources will be conducted between July – December 2020. Intended outcomes and measures of success will be reviewed by an evaluation team consisting of one representative from the Allied Health Research Leadership Committee, the Allied Health Directorate, the Centre for Functioning & Health Research, and the R-WDO. Findings and recommendations for future directions/revisions will be reported to the EDAH, MSHHS.

Part 1: Allied Health Research Capability Strategic Framework

Building Allied Health Research Capability across MSHHS 2017 – 2020



Research Close to Practice

Objective 1 – Engage staff as research consumers

We will foster an evidence-based practice-oriented allied health workforce that is equipped with the skills to consume, appraise and apply new research evidence for clinical practice.

Objective 2 – Enable staff as research generators

We will facilitate active staff involvement in high-quality allied health research and output, with key focus on facilitating rapid translation of research in clinical practice and policy.

Research as Core Business

Objective 3 – Build research-enabling infrastructure and strategic processes

We will support research capacity building and productivity of the allied health workforce through a multi-level (clinician, team, and organisation) and strategic approach.

Objective 4 – Strengthen leadership in research and innovation

We will strengthen leadership in allied health research and innovation to ensure that research activity is sustainable, coordinated, and priority-driven.

Research in Partnership

Objective 5 – Enhance internal research collaboration and synergy

We will foster a culture of synergy in allied health research and innovation by engaging collaboratively across Metro South HHS facilities.

Objective 6 – Strengthen partnerships with consumers and external stakeholders

We will strive to strengthen and cultivate research partnerships with stakeholders at local, national and international levels to maximise research impact, quality and sustainability.

Part 2: Allied Health Research Capability Self-Assessment Tool

GOAL 1: RESEARCH CLOSE TO PRACTICE

Objective 1: Engage staff as research consumers

Foster an evidence-based practice-oriented allied health workforce that is equipped with the skills to consume, appraise and apply new research evidence for clinical practice.

Self Assessment Rating	Emerging	Consolidating	Proficient

Objective 2: Enable staff as research participators and generators

Facilitate active staff involvement in high-quality allied health research and output, with key focus on facilitating rapid translation of research in clinical practice and policy.

Self Assessment Rating	Emerging	Consolidating	Proficient

GOAL 2: RESEARCH AS CORE BUSINESS

Objective 3: Build research-enabling infrastructure and strategic processes

Support research capacity building and productivity of the allied health workforce through a multi-level (clinician, team, and department/organisation) and strategic approach.

Self Assessment Rating	Emerging	Consolidating	Proficient

Objective 4: Strengthen leadership in research and innovation

Build leadership in allied health research and innovation to ensure that research activity is sustainable, coordinated, and priority-driven.

Self Assessment Rating	Emerging	Consolidating	Proficient

GOAL 3: RESEARCH IN PARTNERSHIP

Objective 5: Enhance internal research collaboration and synergy

Foster a culture of synergy in allied health research and innovation by engaging collaboratively across Metro South HHS facilities.

Self Assessment Rating	Emerging	Consolidating	Proficient

Objective 6: Strengthen partnerships with consumers and external stakeholders

Strive to cultivate and reinforce research partnerships with stakeholders at local, national and international levels to maximise research impact, quality and sustainability.

Self Assessment Rating	Emerging	Consolidating	Proficient

Action Plan for Targeting Research Capability

For the objectives self-rated as “Emerging”, or “Consolidating”, use the following space to draft an action plan for enhancing skills/capability. Consider using the accompanying *Practical Strategies* as a guide to assist your planning, or you may wish to brainstorm your own.

Objective	Practical Strategies to target this Objective
<i>E.g., Objective 3 – Build research-enabling infrastructure and strategic processes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.1 – set up meeting with CFAHR mentor(s) to brainstorm ideas for feasible research projects within department’s clinical streams • 3.3 – set up register of current department research/QI activity • 3.4 – make research/QI standing item on department meeting agendas

For objectives rated as “Proficient”, please nominate a champion from your department/team who would be willing to act as a mentor to other departments/teams

Objective	Name & Contact

Part 3: Practical Strategies for Targeting Research Capability

Below is an outline of the possible strategies departments and teams may implement as part of achieving the allied health workforce research and innovation goals and objectives. In addition, example activities to action these strategies have been provided.

These strategies and example activities are designed to be used in conjunction with the **Allied Health Research Capability Self-Assessment Tool**.

GOAL 1: Research Close to Practice

Objective 1 – Engage staff as research consumers		
Strategies		Example activities
1.1	Engage in profession-specific and inter-professional development to enhance knowledge of evidence based practice in clinical areas, and opportunities for knowledge translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff attendance at relevant conferences, workshops, special interest groups Running and/or participating in journal clubs
1.2	Implement and/or participate in training and mentoring initiatives to improve AH staff skills as consumers of research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance and/or development of dedicated research-related professional development activities Departmental in-services dedicated to research-specific content and practice e.g., critical appraisal tools, ACE framework, knowledge translation and implementation science Mentoring program established Staff engaging in formal and/or informal mentoring by experienced researchers
Objective 2 – Enable staff as research participators and generators		
Strategies		Example activities
2.1	Encourage and enable active staff involvement in the conceptualisation, conduct and coordination of high-quality research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff engaged in ethically-approved research projects as participators and generators Staff undertaking research higher degrees (RHDs) Staff supervising honours and/or research higher degree students Applications for research grants
2.2	Promote the value of actively embedding research frameworks and principles into routine clinical care to challenge and evaluate current care practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff undertaking quality improvement projects Transition of quality improvement projects to ethically-approved research projects Set-up and maintenance of databases and registers to enable review of service metrics and outcomes
2.3	Engage and support dissemination of research findings and output at the local, national and international level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral and/or poster presentations at local forums (e.g., Metro South Allied Health Showcase), conferences, special interest groups and grand rounds Peer-reviewed publications (e.g., research articles, reviews, case reports) Contributions to evidence-based clinical practice guidelines and/or policy
2.4	Facilitate active translation of research into clinical practice, and promote explicit focus on implementation and evaluation of new clinical models and innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake changes to clinical practice based on new research findings and/or implementing evidence-based clinical guidelines Use of implementation models to guide quality improvement activities Implement and/or participate in research translation initiatives

GOAL 2: Research as Core Business

Objective 3 – Build research-enabling infrastructure and strategic processes

Strategies		Example activities
3.1	Improve access and pathways to necessary support and infrastructure for enabling research activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to statistical software licences • Awareness and use of statistical support within MSH (e.g., QFAB) • Awareness and use of research mentors (e.g. CFAHR, universities) • Implementing or participating in readership schemes for major grant funding rounds
3.2	Recognise the value of research-skilled personnel in the workforce, to enable generation of high-quality and high-impact research, and to foster a research culture in current and future staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel available to support research, such as existing staff with research qualifications (i.e., Masters or PhD) • Staff in dedicated research positions (i.e., Research Fellows) • Negotiating staff off-line time for analysis and write-up of research projects • Reward and recognition of research achievements at team, department and organisational level • Monitoring of staff research skills and succession planning
3.3	Embed research into departmental agendas and strategy, including ongoing workforce and operational planning, and accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and maintain research and quality improvement project registers • Embedding of research activity and/or training in Performance Appraisal and Development plans • Research as standing item on department/team meeting agendas
3.4	Consolidate and develop clear communication pathways to disseminate the latest research news and achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular communication of research-related news (e.g., training initiatives, grant schemes)
3.5	Improve the scale and impact of AH research through ongoing marketing and promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of local and facility-wide media and communications to disseminate research successes • Promote staff training in use of approved social media outlets

Objective 4 – Strengthen leadership in research and innovation

Strategies		Example activities
4.1	Ensure a strong research culture and high-quality research practices are modelled and mentored by senior staff and/or skilled clinical researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directors and senior staff have research qualifications and/or experience • Senior staff and/or research personnel (Research Fellows, CFAHR) providing mentoring to staff who are novice researchers • Training and mentoring for Directors, senior staff in supporting and leading research
4.2	Identify and promote opportunities for staff to be research leaders and champions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff holding positions on research leadership groups and/or committees • Promote and support research career pathways (e.g., undertaking RHDs) • Support opportunities for staff to supervise honours/RHD students
4.3	Develop and implement research priorities that are focused on real benefits for the community, and align with Metro South Health strategic directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research is embedded in departmental strategic plans including taking into account MSH Strategic Plan, Diamantina Health Partner's broad themes, and The Blueprint.
4.4	Provide sustainable and coordinated governance and policy for conducting high-quality AH research in Metro South Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and/or ensure AH representation on facility/departmental research committees, research portfolio leaders • Forge links with research governance bodies at the facility level (e.g., Centres for Health Research)

GOAL 3: Research in Partnership

Objective 5 – Enhance internal research collaboration and synergy

Strategies		Example activities
5.1	Align data systems and processes to promote and assist in coordinating collaborative research across Metro South Health sites and departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating and/or initiating joint research projects with other clinical units and/or departments • Participating and/or initiating multisite research projects across facilities within and beyond Metro South HHS • Collaborative meetings with other teams, departments and/or facilities to discuss research directions and priorities • Coordination of data collection methods across departments and/or sites to enable future evaluation of clinical processes and outcomes
5.2	Consolidate current existing internal partnerships (within Queensland Health) and foster new networks to promote synergistic and strategic AH research activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with local and statewide research groups (e.g., Health Round Table, formalised peer clinical/profession-specific networks) • Engagement with Allied Health Professions Office of Queensland

Objective 6 – Strengthen partnerships with consumers and external stakeholders

Strategies		Example activities
6.1	Enhance accessibility and processes for consumer engagement in all aspects of AH research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness and utilisation of consumer advisory groups during conceptualisation of research projects • Involvement of relevant consumers (including patients, families, other staff and other facilities) in knowledge translation and dissemination of research findings • Including consumer representative as research investigators where appropriate • Research projects incorporating specific focus on consumer perspectives and/or feedback • Development and implementation of mentoring and training for consumers engaged in research
6.2	Foster and maintain linkages with University partners to enable collaborative research, mentoring, and links to engage students in health service research and clinicians in academic/research pathways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness and collaboration with relevant Research Fellow positions (including conjoint and university affiliate) • Conduct research in partnership with relevant local universities (e.g., The University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology, Griffith University, Bond University) as well as other Australian and international universities where appropriate including supervision of post-graduate students • Collaboration with university affiliate research centres (e.g., CFAHR, Translational Research Institute, Hopkins Centre) • Collaboration and consultation with relevant NGOs and charitable organisations • MSH AH staff members of strategic research committees of external partners

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