

DISCOVER-TT Principles of practice

The DISCOVER-TT principles of practice are informed by evidence about what works in achieving improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (hereafter respectfully referred to as Indigenous) health outcomes through research. We acknowledge the work of many leaders and reformers in Indigenous health research, embodied in documents such as the ethics guidelines of the National Health and Medical Research Council and the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, and the Indigenous Research Reform Agenda series of monographs and other publications of the Lowitja Institute and its predecessors.

1. Work in partnership

Conduct research within a mutually respectful partnership that recognises the value of what each partner brings.

For example, recognise the knowledge and experience of Indigenous partners; the research expertise of research partners; the personal experiences of consumers; and the understanding of service delivery and policy issues from health care providers and policy makers.

2. Ensure Indigenous leadership and direction of research

Indigenous leadership, direction of and participation in the whole research process is a critical part of making sure that health research is relevant and meaningful for Indigenous people.

3. Ethical conduct

Research will be conducted in an ethical, respectful and dignified way that is appropriate to the Indigenous contexts. The practice and decision making in the research, distribution of results and publishing will be founded on respecting the diverse beliefs and values of Indigenous communities, informed consent and confidentiality.

As a core principle, the DISCOVER-TT CRE strongly encourages the involvement of Indigenous people throughout the research process, including as authors on publications. In

some cases, this may require a conscious and active effort by the project leader to include relevant individuals early enough in the process to allow the level of contribution required to qualify as authors, particularly in relation to condition 1 of the DISCOVER-TT CRE Publication Policy which states authorship requires “*substantial contributions to conception and design, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data*”.

4. Get the research question right

Address priority health issues identified by Indigenous people and communities, and other key stakeholders.

5. Design research that will be feasible, produce outcomes and build capacity

Recognise that the world is messy and change occurs: people move on, policies change, communities change. Design research plans to recognise these realities.

Involve key stakeholders in identifying the types of information or research projects that will be most useful in making a difference to policy, programs and practice.

Where possible, use research designs that address systemic issues to bring about lasting change.

Use research to build capacity among individuals, organisations and communities.

6. Respect the past and present experiences of Indigenous people

Recognise the resilience and richness of Indigenous cultures and communities, as well as the ongoing challenges and traumas arising from colonisation, dispossession, marginalisation and racism.

Recognise the diversity of Indigenous Australians.

Recognise also a history that has left many Indigenous Australians mistrustful about research and sceptical of its benefits.

7. Establish systems and practices to support the application of evidence to improve health care, policy and programs, and health outcomes

Establish an environment in which researchers and research users from all levels of the health system (including consumers, practitioners, managers, policy-makers, health care providers and advocacy groups) can interact to:

- Identify problems where research methods or existing evidence might help to find solutions
- Identify priorities for research or for the application of existing evidence into practice
- Conduct collaborative, outcomes-focussed research
- Generate credible, robust and useable findings
- Access and share evidence, learning and local knowledge
- Translate evidence to suit local needs and context
- Plan, implement and monitor the impact of changes to policy, programs or practice

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