



The GEO Group Australia Pty Ltd.

National Research & Evaluation Framework



Foreword

The National Research and Evaluation Framework provides the foundation and context for GEO's Research Agenda and reflects the organisation's commitment to evidence based policy and practice. The Framework identifies GEO's strategic research objectives, commitment to ongoing research and evaluation practices, and internal and external research capability.

The framework plays an integral role in GEO's longer-term goal of applying insight gained from research and evaluation, to delivering high quality evidence-based programs and services that enhance the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners and increase community safety.

A framework enables GEO to take a more holistic and systematic approach to the prioritisation and commission of research and evaluation within the organisation. It ensure that such projects support the achievement of GEO's key strategic priorities yielding findings that are applicable at both a policy and operational level, as well as providing a practical contribution to the broader correctional research community.

Dr Sarah Gray

*Director, Offender Development Services
The GEO Group Australia Pty. Ltd.*

Context

GEO provides offender rehabilitation and reintegration programs across three Australian jurisdictions and four correctional centres: Junee Correctional Centre, Parklea Correctional Centre, Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre and Fulham Correctional Centre. Ravenhall Prison is due to commence operations in November 2017.

Mission

GEO's mission is to deliver **better corrections** and **create safer communities**.

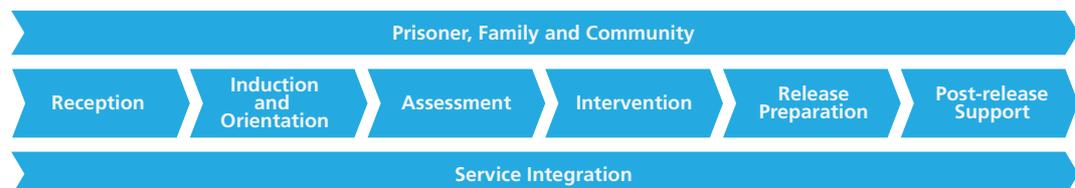


Values

GEO achieves its mission through adhering to five core values: **Partner, Lead, Deliver, Measure, and Respond**.

Continuum of Care

GEO achieves Better Corrections and Safer Communities through its emphasis on **Continuum of Care**. Under GEO's Continuum of Care Model, GEO and its partners provide a seamless continuum of integrated case-management, assessment, intervention and support, across the prisoner's sentence and beyond. Support is provided not only to prisoners, but their families and the broader community in addressing risk and effecting long term change.



Research Focus: Measure and Respond

GEO is committed to improving outcomes for prisoners in custody and understands that the efficacy of interventions is enhanced by both their adherence to the 'What Works' principles and continuous evaluation against the available evidence base. The development of a National Research and Evaluation Framework (the 'Research Framework') illustrates and reinforces GEO's commitment to the continuous improvement of its offender rehabilitation and reintegration programs across all locations, ensuring their compliance with evidence-based best-practice principles.

The Research Framework ensures:

- Research undertaken at GEO centres or commissioned by the organisation are of high quality and that processes are open, transparent, and accountable
- Resources dedicated to research and evaluation projects focus on identified areas of strategic priority to both GEO and the wider criminal justice system
- Collaborative research relationships between GEO and external research agencies and universities with research effort addressing areas of mutual interest.

GEO supports research and evaluation that informs and supports policy development, program design and delivery. To this end, the context for GEO's research and evaluation is *applied* rather than pure review of the literature. Such an approach enables the organisation to draw more readily upon research findings, integrating these into policy development and program design.

Priorities for research and evaluation activity will be identified through consultation with key stakeholders and then prioritised based on emerging issues, trends and challenges for the organisation, as well as the broader correctional context. These priorities are collated into more specific, time bound Research Agendas that will be made publicly available to inform and guide engagement with the research community.

Key Strategic Objectives

In order to remain a leader in the provision and innovation of correctional services, GEO maintains a number of key strategic research objectives.

Key Strategic Research Objectives	Outcomes
To constantly evolve and innovate in correctional design, infrastructure and service delivery	Establish GEO as an innovator in correctional service provision Identify and respond to emerging trends in the correctional literature
To respond to the needs of diverse prisoner populations	Offer programs, services and accommodation environments that are responsive to the needs of diverse populations (e.g. remand prisoners, female prisoners, indigenous prisoners) Develop correctional practices that cater to the specific needs of diverse prisoner populations (e.g. challenging prisoners)
To continually improve the efficacy of programs and services	Regularly evaluate new and existing programs against available best practice to determine efficacy in achieving outcomes Utilise emerging international evidence to continuously innovate our offending behaviour programs
To drive change through innovative research and collaboration	Embed a research framework and facilitate innovative research and evaluation opportunities for research partners Ensure that research outcomes are embedded into correctional practice and communicated to key stakeholders and the broader community

Research and Evaluation Process

GEO encourages research and evaluation that informs and supports its strategic direction. Research or evaluation may be large or small in scale, quantitative or qualitative, and may be undertaken by internal (GEO staff) or external parties (e.g. practitioners, students, academics, and research institutions).

Research methods may include *applied* research that seeks to address a particular question, issue or emerging trend or *social research* involving interviews, focus groups, surveys, case studies and observations. Evaluations and reviews that seek to assess the costs, benefits, and effectiveness of GEO's policies, programs, and services are also encouraged.

Research proposals and applications will be assessed (and given priority) based on:

- Alignment to GEO's strategic objectives and priorities
- Understanding of current issues and challenges and ability to assist GEO in responding to such
- Anticipation of emerging trends and ability to assist GEO in developing proactive policy and procedures to respond where necessary
- Evaluation of program, policy or service delivery effectiveness against key performance and outcome measures
- Contribution to the broader criminal justice and correctional knowledge base.

In addition, proposals will be reviewed in light of:

- Potential operational implications that may arise from the research (e.g. commitment from staff that is onerous, interference with offenders' program commitments)
- Potential risks associated with the research (e.g. content that is emotionally upsetting for participants)
- Ethical considerations related to the conduct of the research
- The suitability of the research methodology
- The competence of the applicant(s) or principal investigator(s) to undertake the research.

External Applicants

GEO accepts applications for research and evaluation from sources external to the organisation including students, academics, and research organisations. Prior to submitting an application for research or evaluation, external applicants are urged to familiarise themselves with GEO's strategic priorities and centre-specific Research Agendas.

External applicants are required to submit a Request to Undertake Research and Evaluation to the Manager, Offender Development Research. In preparing this request, external applicants are required to consider their proposed research question and how it aligns with GEO's strategic priorities. The request allows for the preliminary approval of a research project and allows for communication and collaboration between GEO and the external applicant in the preparation of a more detailed project application.

Upon receiving preliminary approval, the external applicant is required to submit an External Research and Evaluation Form. This form will be prepared in consultation with relevant GEO staff, including the Manager, Offender Development Research and representatives from proposed research sites. The form will outline the detailed methodology of the project, the potential benefits to GEO and relevant stakeholders, the project's alignment with GEO's strategic direction and any potential ethical considerations including how these will be addressed.

Upon approval of the research project by GEO, external applicants are required to apply for ethics approval from the relevant jurisdiction's Human Research Ethics Committee.

Upon completion of their project, external applicants will be required to gain approval from the Research and Evaluation Committee prior to any public release or formal publication of their findings.

Research Governance

Research governance is important for safeguarding research participants, protecting the organisation and its researchers, managing ethical considerations and risk. Governance of research practices also ensures research is consistent with the strategic direction of the organisation and:

- Identifies opportunities for collaboration and investment
- Builds an evidence-informed culture
- Manages communication related to research and evaluation activity and outcomes
- Oversees research application, implementation, quality assurance and accountability reviews.

The Manager, Offender Development Research will be the first point of contact for all research proposals. This role is responsible for overseeing and leading the implementation of the Research and Evaluation Framework, as well as all centre-specific Research Agendas.

In addition, the key aspects of this role are to:

- Provide leadership and advice regarding GEO Australia's research priorities and directions
- Facilitate partnerships and collaborative activity with internal and external stakeholders, including universities, clinical and professional staff, research institutions, government agencies and other jurisdictions
- Provide advice and support for research communication and dissemination and facilitate the promotion of research
- Facilitate GEO's research and evaluation capacity building including development of guidelines, processes and resources to assist and inform researchers and evaluators undertaking research or evaluation
- Report regularly, seek direction, and provide recommendation to the GEO Australia Executive Team regarding the organisation's current and future research and evaluation activity
- Provide national training to clinical staff in line with contemporary research findings.

Research and Evaluation Committee

GEO Australia's Research and Evaluation Committee (REC) will take overall responsibility for leading the implementation of the 'Research Framework'. At a minimum, the REC will be comprised of:

- Director, Offender Development Services
- Director, Correctional Services
- Manager, Offender Development Research.

The committee will meet four times a year, chaired by the Manager, Offender Development Research and report regularly and provide recommendations to the GEO Australia Executive Team on research proposals and approved applications.

The committee will provide the first point of *approval* for all research proposals ensuring there is appropriate organisational engagement, identifying ethical considerations, as well as potential impacts for GEO resulting from the research.

The key roles of the REC are to:

- Review all research and evaluation applications and consider the merit of each on a case by case basis for the benefit of all parties involved against the organisation's strategic priorities
- Monitor and review activity against the Research Framework, as well as any relevant Research Agendas, and regularly review the research guidelines and processes
- Ensure a quality research and evaluation governance process is maintained for the effective implementation of research and evaluation activities.

The REC will seek input/subject matter expertise as required to guide and inform decision-making.

Publication and Intellectual Property

GEO supports the publication of approved research work undertaken independently of or in partnership with the organisation. However, this must comply with specified terms and conditions.

Researchers are obliged to recognise that the information that may be gathered as part of their project is confidential in nature. Researchers are not to reveal, either verbally or in written work, any personal details or information that may identify or could assist in identifying a person named in records.

Permission must be sought from GEO prior to publication or making publicly known, all or part of research that makes use of GEO data or information. The term 'publication' is defined to include reports, thesis, papers, journal articles or presentations.

The notification and provision of any proposed publications must be made to GEO at least 30 days prior to intended release. Proposed publications should be sent to the Manager, Offender Development Research for review and approval.

All publications arising from approved research will acknowledge the contributions of GEO.

GEO will not publicly release information contained in these publications without the consent of relevant external researchers. GEO will not claim ownership of any intellectual property created as a result of approved research unless it is otherwise agreed between involved parties or the researcher is an employee of the organisation and conducts approved research in the course of their duties as an employee.



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