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The role of evaluation in a broad service excellence framework for multi-service organisations.

Dr M Leech

Mission Australia, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Mission Australia is a large national provider of community services. These services encompass all age groups and cover a broad and complex range, from crisis to early intervention/prevention and through to sustained community capacity building. How can a 'Service Excellence Framework' be developed which is applicable to all services; and how can the crucial role of evaluation be clearly articulated for this diverse group of services, especially vis a vis other quality processes such as systems review, accreditation, outcomes measurement? And how can the various evaluation methods/approaches be articulated, given service complexity and the ever present resource implications (both in terms of available funds and available time)?

Mission Australia has worked with ARTD Consulting to develop a Service Excellence Framework which responds to these business requirements, and which highlights the role of evaluation in its various forms. One of the key outcomes of this process is the development and implementation of a program of service evaluations, via the inclusion of an evaluation strategy in Mission Australia's national and state Business Plans; and the development of a Quality Database, which maps, among other things, evaluation requirements of all services.

This presentation examines the development of the Service Excellence Framework, and works through the process of implementation of such a framework in a multi-service organisation, and the impact on organisational strategy. This will be illustrated with reference to the role of:

- An external evaluation of a long-term early intervention program and
- A service group evaluation of services for young people focused on drug and alcohol issues

and the roles of these respective evaluations in shaping future directions for service delivery, eg establishing and refining the ideal mix of services targeting risk and protective factors in early intervention programs; and shifting services models towards co-location and/or service integration. The efficacy of the framework will thus be examined, both in terms of influence on individual services but also in terms of the wider organisational strategic planning processes.