Building research capacity and culture: Strategies and challenges within a large NGO

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Background

• Endeavour Foundation established in 1951 by a group of parents
• Now 4,000 placements and 230 service locations in QLD, NSW and VIC:
  o Supported accommodation: group homes, in home and drop in support
  o Respite: centre based and in home
  o Post-school support, including tertiary education programs
  o Supported employment
  o Day programs and community access
  o Systems advocacy
• Early substantial involvement with research and training
• Research reduced in 1980s and 1990s
• Much organisational knowledge about research translation lost
Growing Research Capacity

• NGOs have been increasing involvement in research during past two decades (Goodwin & Phillips, 2011; Phillips, 2010)

• Endeavour Foundation Research Objective:

  Engage with State, National and International Research Institutions and researchers to explore issues of fundamental importance to people with a disability, specifically to address areas where there is little or no research or definitive knowledge on issues that have a significant impact on the ability of people with a disability to lead an ordinary life.

• Two major strategies:
  o Research partnerships
  o Endeavour Foundation Endowment Challenge Fund
1. Research Partnerships

- Late 2011 – 2 research projects underway
- Currently:
  - Industry partner for three ARC Linkage projects
  - Industry partner for one ARC Discovery project
  - Two other externally funded projects
  - Supporting 6 higher degree students
  - Implemented an evaluation cycle for a housing program
  - Completed a handful of smaller projects and evaluations
- Internal process for reviewing / approving research
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUPPORT TASK</th>
<th>SMALL PROJECTS</th>
<th>LARGE PROJECTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>• Formal organisational approval sought and received</td>
<td>• Development of appropriate processes, including resolution of ethical issues</td>
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<td>• Staff consultation</td>
<td>• Formal Project Plans, close monitoring, reporting and ongoing planning</td>
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<td>• Manager approvals sought</td>
<td>• Review of legal contracts</td>
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<td>• Monthly updates in Project Register</td>
<td>• Support to develop ethics processes</td>
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<td>• Monitoring budgets</td>
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<td>Stakeholder consultation</td>
<td>• Informing stakeholders about what to expect and what they need to do</td>
<td>• Reference and Advisory group meetings</td>
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<td>and communication</td>
<td>• Reminders and troubleshooting</td>
<td>• High profile media activities</td>
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<td>• Social media</td>
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<td>Recruitment and consent</td>
<td>• Mail-outs to potential participants</td>
<td>• Client data downloads</td>
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<td>• Reminders and troubleshooting</td>
<td>• Large recruitment efforts may require a separate project plan</td>
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<td>• Promotion of research through internal media and external networks</td>
<td>• Promotion of research, internal media including HTML mail outs</td>
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<td>Data collection</td>
<td>• Scheduling data collection</td>
<td>• Assistance with tool design and piloting</td>
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<td>• Communication and monitoring</td>
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<td>• Reminders and troubleshooting</td>
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<td>Analysis</td>
<td>• Feedback on draft publications</td>
<td>• Active contribution to publications</td>
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<td>Dissemination</td>
<td>• Distributing reports</td>
<td>• Presenting at conferences</td>
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<td>• Developing media stories for internal and external audiences</td>
<td>• Briefs and reports for internal dissemination</td>
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<td>• Targeted summaries, including easy English</td>
<td>• Design of tools / resource packages</td>
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<td>• Sector forums / meetings</td>
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Challenges

- Understanding organisational priorities for research:
  - All issues are “significant” for people with a disability
  - National Disability Research & Development Agenda (DPRWG, 2011)
  - NDIS readiness is emerging as top of mind
  - Audit of disability research (CDRP, 2014)
- Staff buy in, time and geography
- Impact at the frontline? Change for people with a disability?
- Knowledge transfer / translation (Mitton et al., 2007)
Looking to the future

- Research methodologies that support implementation
- Building awareness of research – “knowledge exchange”
- Internal working groups to strategise implementation
- Data mining
2. EFECF

- Grants for researchers ($40,000), students ($5,000) and non-profit organisations (up to $20,000)
- Capital preserved fund raised by donations (and supported by ongoing fundraising)
- Separate Trust with independent Board
- Applications received in an annual competitive grants round, assessed by a Panel of experts
- 2015 grants round will open in March 2015
Observations

- Research attracting funding is highly topical, pragmatic, applied and/or targets under-researched areas
- Research and Student Awards:
  - Projects not always linked to current debates and concerns
  - Dissemination plans dominated by academic outputs
- Non-Profit Organisation Award:
  - Many projects still view people with a disability as “special”
- Bulk of applications are from NSW, VIC and QLD (98% in 2014)
Closing comments

• Research capacity and engagement can grow quickly, but:
  • How do we work more effectively with knowledge transfer and research implementation?
  • How do we combat “research fatigue”?
  • What is the future of NGO involvement in research under the NDIS?
References

• Centre for Disability Research & Policy (2014). *Report of audit of disability research in Australia*. CDRP, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney, May 2014.


