ANROWS Action Research Primer

Introduction

When we do action research, there are no right or wrong questions or answers. Instead, action research aims to assist our understanding of issues and what works and what can be improved or changed.

Action research is research you do in the course of your everyday work.

The aim of action research is to document and reflect on what you are doing. As a result, you may be able to improve the outcomes of your work.

Action Research is an integral part of this Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Projects with Action Research Support Initiative (CALD PARSI). The purpose is to use research to show clearly what works and what does not work in preventing violence against women and their children.

Designing your action research project well, and collecting and analysing good quality data, will help you see if what you are actually doing makes a difference and what can be improved.

Action research is usually thought of as involving a cycle of steps:
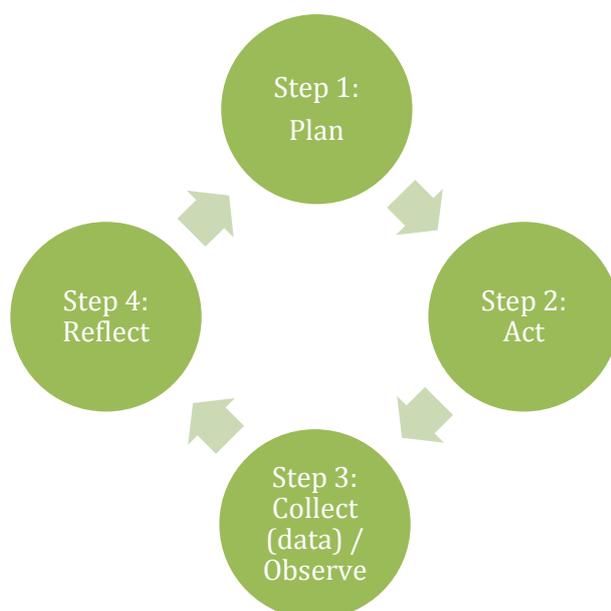
The main steps in the overall action research process are shown in Section 1 below. Use the template to plan your whole Action Research project. A fictional example is in Section 3 to demonstrate what the primer would look like after it has been filled out.

Section 2 is a Stakeholder Analysis template. This is for you to document the key organisations and individuals in your area (geographically or thematically) who might be able to assist you, offer valuable advice, ideas or connections, or who you might like to influence through your research findings.

More information about action research, including suggested readings and useful websites, will be provided in the coming weeks.

1. Overall Action Research Process Guide

Project Title: _____   **Your names:** _____

Your organisation's name: _____   **Other organisations involved:** _____

Some of the information to be included in this template may be in your project proposal or activity work plan. If so, summarise it in the relevant part of the table.

1. Plan		
Step	**Activity**	**Responses**
1. Address the ethical aspects of the research	• Who may be affected by the issues and the results of the research?	*People who will be affected:*
	• How does your project aim to include a diverse range of views and people? If your project has a specific target group or perspective, write down the reasons for this.	*Describe how your project will include a diverse range of views:* *If your project has a specific target group or perspective, write the reasons here:*
	• During your action research project, how will you respect the views of those being researched?	*How you will respect the views of those being researched:*
	• How will you obtain informed consent from the research participants?	*How will you obtain informed consent:*

Step	Activity	Responses

2. Identifying the focus of your action research	• Identify:
	  - The issue that you want to address;
	  - Some weakness you want to improve; and/or
	  - Some strength in your processes that you want to enhance.
		What issue do you want to address, what area do you want to improve, or what strength do you want to enhance?

	• Identifying an issue should involve consultation with your team members, management, other teams in your organisation, and other stakeholders. See the Stakeholder Analysis template (Section 2).	*Make a list of who you will consult with. Cross each one off after you have completed consultations.*
	• Think about the best way to consult: in writing, in a meeting, individually, using professional interpreters, etc.	*How will you consult?*
	• What information (data or evidence) do you already have about the focus area: case notes, evaluations, questionnaires, interviews, consultation notes, Domestic Violence (DV) action plan, service map, etc.	*Briefly describe the evidence you have:*
	• What does this data tell you about the issue or the current state of affairs? • Does this data provide a baseline that you can use to compare any changes that result from your project action? See Notes 1 and 2 below.	*Briefly describe what your evidence suggests:*
	• Do you need more evidence? If so, what kind?	*Describe the evidence you need, and how you will get it.*
	• When you have documented what you know about the issue, write a key action research question or questions. • Discuss the question or questions with relevant stakeholders.	*Key Action Research Question or Questions:* *Feedback from stakeholders:*

Act		
Step	**Activity**	**Responses**
	• What action do you plan to take? For example, consultations, training, resource development, creating a network, etc.	*Actions:*
	• Who will do the action, where, and when?	*Who:* *Where:* *When:*
	• What resources will you need for the action? For example, facilitators, interpreters, transport, food, stationary, rooms etc.	*Resources needed:*

Collect		
Step	**Activity**	**Responses**
	• How will you collect data, who will do it, where, and when? See Notes 1 and 2 below.	*Method 1:* *Method 2:* *Method 3:*
	• What will be your data sources: where will you get your data, when, and who will collect it?	*Source 1:* *Source 2:* *Source 3:*
	• What resources will you need for the data collection? For example, develop and print evaluation forms or questionnaires, data collectors, data entry personnel, interview transcribers, IT / technological needs, etc.	*Resources needed:*
	• How will you share information about the project, and what permission you will need or what obligations may arise from sharing the information?	*How information will be shared:* *Permissions or obligations:*

Reflect		
Step	**Activity**	**Responses**
	• How you will analyse the data?	*Analysis method 1:* *Analysis method 2:*
	• Who will analyse the data, and when?	*Who:* *When:*
	• How will you reflect on the data, and who will do this? See Note 3 below.	*How:* *Who:*
	• Will you have another action research cycle? If so, when will it start?	*Next action cycle starts (date):*

Notes

1. *If you are collecting statistical or survey data, it should be comparable with data you already collected before the action, or similar data you will collect as part of your plan. For example, if you did a questionnaire to find out the current state of affairs, then repeat the questionnaire at the end of the action to see if there was a difference in responses.*

2. *If you are using narratives, observations or other forms of qualitative data, you should try to use a similar framework to make sense of the data at different times during the research. For example, an interview schedule or consultation evaluation method asking similar questions at the beginning, during and after the action.*

3. *It is not necessary to leave the reflection until the end – you might consider keeping a project diary and collecting photos to aid your ongoing reflection.*

2. Stakeholder Analysis Template

Project Title: _____

Your organisation's name: _____

Stakeholder	How will the stakeholders benefit? Are they supportive or not?	What can they do to influence it (positively and negatively)	Action to get support and reduce opposition. How will you involve and/or inform them? What existing forums could you use?

Source: Adapted from Tasmania. 2012. *The Action Research and Learning Toolkit*. Department of Health and Human Services, p. 41.

3. Example (fictional) of a completed overall Action Research Process Guide

Project Title*: Improving access to family and domestic violence services for Hali-speaking women* **Your Names:** *Thu and Hussain*

Your organisation's name: *Lokal Town Women's Domestic Violence Service (LTWDVS)* **Other organisations involved:** *Hali Cultural Association (HCA)*

1. Plan		
Step	**Activity**	**Responses**
1. Address the ethical aspects of the research	• Who may be affected by the issues and the results of the research?	Clients of the LTWDVS
	• How does your project aim to include a diverse range of views and people?	Interview all relevant stakeholders.
	• If your project has a specific target group or perspective, write down the reasons for this.	The project focuses on female Hali speakers because they are known to be under-represented in LTWDVS service use.
	• During your action research project, how will you respect the views of those being researched?	Keep interview records confidential, and, when not in use for data analysis, in a locked filing cabinet in the LTWDVS office. Share research report with participants.
	• How will you obtain informed consent from the research participants?	*Through a consent from written in HALI and verbally with an interpreter prior to participation in the project.*
Step	**Activity**	**Responses**
2. Identifying the focus of your action research	• Identify: - The issue that you want to address; - Some weakness you want to improve; and/or - Some strength in your processes that you want to enhance.	56% of the population in the service catchment area are speakers of Hali but only 15% of clients using the service are Hali speakers. This suggests the service is not reaching members of this major demographic group.
	• Identifying an issue should involve consultation with your team members, management, other teams in your organisation, and other stakeholders (see the Stakeholder Analysis Template in Attachment 2) about the action research.	Hali ethnic community leaders Health Providers LTWDVS staff

		Think about the best way to consult: in writing, in a meeting, individually, using professional interpreters, etc.	Have a roundtable at the Hali community centre LTWDVS staff meetings
		What information (data or evidence) do you already have about the focus area: case notes, evaluations, questionnaires, interviews, consultation notes, DV action plan, service map, etc.	2011 Census data on Hali speakers in Lokal City LTWDVS client demographic data
		What does this data tell you about the issue or the current state of affairs? Does this data provide a baseline that you can use to compare any changes that result from your project action? See Notes 1 and 2.	The service is under-used by Hali speakers.
		Do you need more evidence? If so, what kind?	The census data is five years old, but it is the latest available. We need data on Hali women's awareness of the service. We will do a random survey.
		When you have documented what you know about the issue, write a key action research question or questions. Discuss the question or questions with relevant stakeholders.	Key Action Research Question or Questions: *How effective are various approaches to increasing the awareness and use of LTWDVS services by Hali-speaking women in Lokal City?* Feedback from stakeholders: Stakeholders suggested adding "in Lokal City" to make the question more specific.

Act		
Step	**Activity**	**Responses**
	• What action do you plan to take? For example, consultations, training, resource development, creating a network, etc.	**Actions:** *Produce Hali brochures, posters, web page.* *Distribute posters, brochures and web page info to doctor's surgeries, libraries, community centres.* *Employ a part-time Hali-speaking DV counsellor.* *Analyse client data.*

		Reason:	
		[After doing the survey above] The survey showed that only 10% of Hali language speaking women know about LTWDVS services. Brochures, posters and websites will enhance knowledge of the service.	
		Distribution points are places frequented by women in our community.	
		The survey also showed that language is a barrier to accessing our services (we have no Hali speaking counsellor) – Hali speaking women want to be able to use their home language.	
	• Who will do the action, where, and when?	**Who:**	
		Brochures & posters production; client data analysis - LTWDVS staff	
		Brochure and poster distribution – contracted distributor	
		Website – contracted website company	
		Where:	
		Brochures & posters production; client data analysis @ LTWDVS office	
		Brochure and poster distribution – all doctor's surgeries, libraries, community centres	
		Brochures – all households in Lokal City	
		Website – cyberspace	
		When:	
		Brochure and poster production – June – Aug 2016	
		Distribution Sept – Oct 2016	
		Website – June 2016 onwards	
	• What resources will you need for the action?	*Require (professional) interpreters for posters and brochures in English and Hali.*	

Collect		
Step	**Activity**	**Responses**
	• How will you collect data, who will do it, where, and when? See Notes 1 and 2.	Method 1: *Collect and collate client data on service use* Method 2: *Replicate survey re awareness of LTWDVS services* Method 3: *Website hit count* Method 4: *Count of brochures taken from distribution points*
	• What will be your data sources: where will you get your data, when, and who will collect it?	Source 1a: *LTWDVS client data files* Source 1b: *Client feedback on visit to service ('How did you hear about us etc.')* Source 2: *Random sample of Hali speakers in Lokal City* Source 3: *Website company* Source 4: *Re-stock brochures each month and record how many remain and deduce how many have been taken.*
	• What resources will you need for the data collection? For example, develop and print evaluation forms or questionnaires, data collectors, data entry personnel, interview transcribers, IT (technological) needs, etc.	*Survey - develop and print* *Client feedback form - develop and print*
	• How will you share information about the project? • What permission will you need or what obligations may arise from sharing the information?	*The information will be shared with the HCA through a feedback session/community roundtable.* Permissions or obligations: *All publicity materials will be checked with key officers in the HCA.*

Reflect		
Step	**Activity**	**Responses**
	• How you will analyse the data?	**Analysis method 1:** 1a: *Client data software allows numbers of speakers of various languages to be reported each month. These will be compared month by month to look for trends in service use.* 1b: *Collate data on how clients heard about the service and calculate numbers presenting per 1,000 brochures produced or per poster produced.* **Analysis method 2:** *The number of responses of each kind for each survey question will be collated and frequencies calculated for both the baseline and the replication. The changes in awareness etc. will be compared before and after the intervention.* **Analysis method 3:** *Frequency of website unique visitors will be collated each month and trends in numbers of unique visitors plotted.* **Analysis method 4:** *Count the number of brochures each month. Plot number taken against time (in months).*
	• Who will analyse the data? • When?	Who: *LTWDVS staff and HCA officials (the latter for non-confidential data only)* When: *Monthly*
	• How will you reflect on the data? • Who will do this? See Note 3.	How*: Review data within LTWDVS and with HCA. Hold a community roundtable to present the results and discuss next steps.* Who: *LTWDVS staff, HCA officials, Hali community members.*
	• Will you have another action research cycle? If so, when will it start?	Next action cycle starts (date): *Depends on the outcome of the community roundtable. Another cycle could occur from January - June 2018.*