



The importance of context in logic model construction for a multi-site community-based Aboriginal driver licensing program



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ABSTRACT

Evidence indicates that Aboriginal people are underrepresented among driver licence holders in New South Wales, which has been attributed to licensing barriers for Aboriginal people. The Driving Change program was developed to provide culturally responsive licensing services that engage Aboriginal communities and build local capacity.

Aim: This paper outlines the formative evaluation of the program, including logic model construction and exploration of contextual factors.

Methods: Purposive sampling was used to identify key informants (n = 12) from a consultative committee of key stakeholders and program staff. Semi-structured interviews were transcribed and thematically analysed. Data from interviews informed development of the logic model.

Results: Participants demonstrated high level of support for the program and reported that it filled an important gap. The program context revealed systemic barriers to licensing that were correspondingly targeted by specific program outputs in the logic model. Addressing underlying assumptions of the program involved managing local capacity and support to strengthen implementation.

Discussion: This formative evaluation highlights the importance of exploring program context as a crucial first step in logic model construction. The consultation process assisted in clarifying program goals and ensuring that the program was responding to underlying systemic factors that contribute to inequitable licensing access for Aboriginal people.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

For many Australians, obtaining a driver licence is a relatively straightforward process, however many Aboriginal people face significant barriers accessing the licensing system. These include lack of formal identification documents (e.g. birth certificate, different names on documentation), fines and debt or sanctions, high cost of driving lessons, lack of suitable supervisory drivers for learners and feelings of intimidation (Clapham, Khavarpour, Ivers, & Stevenson, 2005; Elliot & Shanahan Research, 2008; Helps et al.,

2008; NSW Auditor General, 2013). These issues can be compounded in regional and remote areas where Aboriginal people may have limited access to licensing services (Helps et al., 2008). Consequently, many Aboriginal communities have few licenced drivers, which impedes access to education, employment and healthcare services and places undue burden on licenced drivers to provide transportation for other community members (Elliot & Shanahan Research, 2008; Rosier & McDonald, 2011).

A low rate of licence participation in Aboriginal communities is likely to contribute to transport disadvantage and higher rates of transport-related morbidity and mortality. Transport disadvantage stems from ongoing difficulties accessing appropriate transport and can encompass lack of access to safe and reliable public transport, inability to maintain private transport and difficulties meeting the costs associated with transport; these difficulties can be especially problematic in rural and remote areas (Rosier &

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McDonald, 2011). Transport disadvantage can result in social exclusion and is an impediment to full participation in services including health, education and employment (Currie & Senbergs, 2007). Reducing this licensing inequality requires action from within the authorising environment including through provision of culturally responsive licensing support programs; however, there are few targeted licensing or road safety programs aimed specifically at Aboriginal people (Clapham, Senserrick, Ivers, Lyford, & Stevenson, 2008; Ivers, Clapham, Senserrick, Lyford, & Stevenson, 2008). Accordingly, the Driving Change licensing support program has been developed and piloted in three communities in the Australian state of New South Wales (NSW) to assist Aboriginal people to obtain a driver's licence (Ivers, Byrne, Hunter, & Clapham, 2012).

1.2. The program

Establishment of the program pilot sites in February 2013 was initially informed by earlier research in two of the communities and subsequently by extensive community consultation at the third pilot site. In each of the sites, Aboriginal community representatives or stakeholders had identified driver licensing as an issue that needed addressing, and expressed interest in working together to implement the program. The community consultation involved contact with various local, state and community stakeholders to determine levels of need, interest and willingness to engage with the Driving Change program. This process was also informed by population data to ensure that each site had a reasonably high proportion of Aboriginal community members and a geographic spread, with one site located in the urban centre of Sydney, the second located in the suburban outskirts of a major coastal city and the third site rurally located in an outer regional town.

Previous research in Aboriginal communities identified that a lack of confidence was preventing community members from accessing the licensing system (Elliot & Shanahan Research, 2008; Rumble & Fox, 2006; Williamson, Thompson, & Tedmanson, 2011). This was frequently described as feelings of intimidation or shame, low self-esteem and a fear of failure, particularly in relation to computer based licence testing. Lack of confidence was attributed to low literacy, lack of culturally responsive licensing service provision and experiences of racism (Anthony & Blagg, 2012; Edmonston et al., 2003; Elliot & Shanahan Research, 2008; Helps et al., 2008; NSW Auditor General, 2013; Somssich, 2009; Williamson et al., 2011). This was an issue in urban locations where licensing services were delivered by state funded authorising agencies, and also in regional and remote communities where services are frequently delivered by the police, which can be a strong deterrent for those who have had previous negative experiences with police (Edmonston et al., 2003). Experiences of racism, both systemic and interpersonal operate within the historical context of colonisation, and has been implicated in reduced health outcomes in Aboriginal communities (Paradies & Cunningham, 2009; Paradies, Harris, & Anderson, 2008). Thereby, the Driving Change program intended to facilitate equitable access to licensing and build community capacity by strengthening connections between existing services.

To tailor the program to the cultural context of each community, the program is community based and the setting at each site is within a local community organisation that is readily accessible to community members. Additionally, the program is overseen by a central co-ordinating centre and is delivered at each site by an Aboriginal youth worker with strong connections to the local community. The program works with existing services and involves intensive client case-management through the licensing system and mentoring for novice drivers. Additionally, Driving Change assists clients to manage licensing fines and sanctions by

supporting clients to liaise with organisations (Roads and Maritime Services, State Debt Recovery Office) to make arrangements to manage unpaid fines and have licence restrictions lifted.

A central project steering committee was established at the commencement of the project to help guide program activities and to provide feedback on various aspects of the program and the evaluation. This project steering committee includes representatives from the communities, and key stakeholders, including Aboriginal policy officers from a range of Government agencies including Transport for NSW, Roads and Maritime Services, the Attorney General's Department, and the Office of State Revenue, as well as representatives from program sites. Additionally, each of the participating communities has established local steering committees (or feeds into established local committees) to facilitate input of community members and local stakeholders into the implementation of the program at each site. At least one representative from each local committee is invited to participate on the project steering committee; thus local committees have direct input into the implementation and evaluation of the program. Community consultation is an integral aspect of program development. Responding to community input through local committees and the project steering committee ensures that the program is not imposed on communities but instead is actively participated in from the outset. The program has secured funding to deliver Driving Change to a further nine communities in NSW, which began implementation in February 2014. This extension of the pilot program will incorporate an extensive evaluation to review process, impact and outcome.

1.3. The role of formative evaluation

Formative evaluation is inherently valuable to program implementation as it allows for monitoring program uptake, engagement of key stakeholders and articulation of the relationship between the intervention and its anticipated outcomes (Patton, 1990; Stetler et al., 2006; Wallace & Legro, 2008). Within formative evaluation, logic models are used by evaluators to develop an evaluation framework that strategically identifies program resources and activities and links these with anticipated program outcomes (Funnell & Rogers, 2011; Gugiu & Rodríguez-Campos, 2007; McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999; Stetler et al., 2006). The logic model explicates the relationship between these elements of the program and visually depicts the program theory of change.

The use of logic models in community-based programs presents some unique challenges, particularly for multi-site projects such as Driving Change (Kaplan & Garrett, 2005). One such challenge is the exploration of program context, which several authors have highlighted as critical to understanding the current problem and how the program will effect change for the target population (McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999). For community-based programs, this involves untangling a frequently complex interplay of contextual factors, which can include policy, environmental, cultural or economic factors. Hill and Thies (2010) cited the inclusion of contextual factors as a strength of the McLaughlin and Jordan (1999) logic model approach as: i) it is inherently suited to complex community-based programs that operate within a wider socio-political climate, and ii) this crucial first step establishes the context within which the program operates.

The context encompasses factors that are external and operate outside of the program's control but may influence the implementation of the program in communities (Gugiu & Rodríguez-Campos, 2007; Hill & Thies, 2010; McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999). Establishing the program context is particularly vital for programs that are based within Aboriginal communities. There is a history of programs being imposed upon Aboriginal communities without sufficient consultation, inadequate resources and lacking cultural

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