

Types of Research Impact and Examples

Research Impact

Research impact is an emerging national requirement of government funded projects. The Australian Research Council defines research impact as the 'contribution research makes to the economy, society, public policy or health that is beyond contributions to academia'.

At Lowitja Institute, we have adapted this definition and drawn on a variety of sources to develop a definition specific to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health context: research impact is the positive and sustainable long-term benefit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, beyond the realms of academia.

It is important to demonstrate and measure research impact as it helps us know if our research has been translated successfully into policy and practice for the benefit and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Types of research impact

Lowitja Institute has identified five types of research impact which consists of:

1. Health impact
2. Knowledge impact
3. Economic impact
4. Social impact
5. Environmental impact
1. Cultural impact

The table below (Table 1) provides a description of each type of impact and examples which may be relevant to your project. The examples provided are there to provide guidance for you to think about the impacts your own project might demonstrate.

Table 1: Lowitja Institute Research Impact Measures (Lowitja Institute, 2019)

Type of impact	Description of the impact	Examples of impact
Health impact	Improvements in health through new therapeutics, diagnostics, disease prevention or changes in behaviour; or improvements in disease prevention, diagnosis and treatment, management of health problems, health policy, health systems, and quality of life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved health and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations directly involved in research projects • Development and implementation of policies, guidelines and programs, and additions to existing policies relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples • Changes in healthcare practices and healthcare service delivery
Knowledge impact	New knowledge, demonstrating the benefits emerging from adoption, adaption or use of new knowledge to inform further research, and/or understanding of what is effective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generation of new research questions • Changes in awareness and attitudes from the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project team ○ Project participants ○ Key target audiences and stakeholders • Increase in uptake and use of research findings/recommendations in policy and practice to bring changes in individual, community and organisational levels
Economic impact	Improvements in the nation's economic performance through creation of new industries, jobs or valuable products, or reducing health care costs, improving efficiency in resource use, or improving the welfare/well-being of the population within current health system resources. An economic impact may also contribute to social or health impacts, including human capital gains and the value of life and health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase (and continued increase) in job creations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people • Increased funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research • New collaborations/ partnerships established with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
Social impact	Improvements in the health of society, including the well-being of the end user and the community. This may include improved ability to access health care services, to participate socially (including empowerment and participation in decision making) and to quantify improvements in the health of society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to conduct community-led research
Environmental impact	Beneficial effect made to the environment (including flora and fauna). This may include the preservation of vulnerable animals and plants species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation of threatened or near-threatened species of flora and fauna • Recognition and uptake of caring for country practices (responsible and sustainable land and sea management)

<p>Cultural impact</p>	<p>Improvements made to health and wellbeing through the preservation, sharing, embracing, nurturing, revitalisation, and growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to Country • Indigenous beliefs and knowledge • Indigenous language • Family, kinship and community • Cultural expression and continuity • Self-determination and leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of culturally safe workplaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples • Preservation, sharing, embracing, nurturing and/or revitalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and traditional knowledges, practices and beliefs • Incorporation of traditional foods into diets • Incorporation of traditional healing programs in health services alongside Western medicine • Increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's participation in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music groups
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