

Response: Issues paper – Establishing an Institute of Open Adoption

Issue 1:

How should the proposed institute become a leader in the development of best practice for open adoption?

The institute could become a leader in the development of best practice for open adoptions by establishing good networks with OOHC providers to provide professional development in the area of open adoption. This could also be achieved by the production of a set of standards outlining best practice that can be adopted by service providers.

Issue 2:

What are the core activities that should be undertaken by the institute? (i.e applied research, service provision or other functions)

Information and advocacy for all children and young people who are considering or under taking adoption process, including court support for relevant parties in adoption proceedings.

Networking and industry guidance for all services which offer this support already – so service provision is consistent and of a high standard

Development or review of current guidelines and potentially legislation in consultation with community.

Establishment good community networks so all who have been impacted by Adoption have a place to go to get support and assistance in relation to this impact

Audit other organisations that provide this service.

The institute providing research combined with education and training, resources, systemic reviews, evaluation or programs, evaluation of individual interventions and expert advice such as the examples list at the University of Bristol and the Texas Christian University would help to support agencies to ensure everyone is considering the best permanency plan each child or young person in their care.

Currently of the three adoptions going in Western we are relying on FACS and the preferred FACS assessor to progress further. It feels like we are just going along for the ride and guided by FACS. Having expertise that is independent to FACS will help to alleviate carer concerns about the process and empower agencies to lead the process.

Issue 3:

What is the most appropriate service delivery model for the proposed institute to achieve its objectives and why?

Lifestyle Solutions believe the most appropriate service delivery model is a collaborative model that ensures OOHC agencies can seek expertise and guidance to assist all parties. Currently

unless agencies are accredited adoption agencies there is no option but to be led by FACS which can be frustrating and cumbersome leading to delays in process and miscommunication.

Issue 4:

What needs to be included in the tender process so the institute is in a sound position to receive funds from a combination of philanthropy, grants and fee for service?

No feedback on this issue.

Issue 5:

Should the institute play a role in the evaluation of individual interventions and the provision of expert evidence in individual matters? Why or why not?

Yes, so individuals have a place to seek guidance, advice and support in this legal matter, but also then receive the emotional support by an agency that understand the potential trauma that has occurred and can have a positive impact on the process moving forward.

Given that the uptake of adoption in OOHC is minimal initially there could be merit in the institution playing a role particularly if agencies have sort assistance and guidance on individual matters. As there are now a number of agencies in the OOHC space ensuring a state wide consistent approach will help to alleviate concerns for all parties

Issue 6:

What priority areas of applied research should be addressed by the tender? What needs to be done in the formation of the institute to ensure these specific functions of applied research are to be undertaken?

Identifying systemic barriers to adoption would be good to understand.

Understanding the variance in process for different agencies in order to influence good practice.

To ensure that applied research is undertaken initially a prescriptive set of goals could be provided through the tendering process with room in the longer term for the institute to identify their own research objective

Issue 7:

How broadly should this term 'open adoption' be interpreted?

Ongoing monitoring of those who have been adopted should be a role of the institute to ensure that adoption overall continues to be permanency planning for the children and young people identified as suitable. This includes follow up to track outcomes of the young people.

Issue 8:

What specific powers to access information and data should the proposed institute have?

The research objectives and goals should define what specific powers to access information and data the institute is able to access. With this in mind to undertake the work required all information should be made available with appropriate controls and/or processes should be in place to protect individual's rights.

Issue 9:

What structural elements should be included in the tender specifications and why?

No feedback on this issue.

Issue 10:

What structural elements should be excluded from any proposed structure and why?

No feedback on this issue.

Issue 11:

What specific matters need to be dealt with to allow the proposed institute access to, and maintenance of security of, all requisite information and data for the undertaking of the applied research?

No feedback on this issue.

Issue 12:

What issues need to be considered to ensure a healthy partnership between the researcher and non government service provider responsible for the institute?

Linking a research body with a service provider will have a bigger impact on good practice and allow the sharing of information for the purposes of research to analyse the effectiveness adoption process would be an advantage and help to support innovation in policy design.

Issue 13:

While the institute will be independent of government, should there be connections between the institute and the NSW Government that need to be contained in the documentation establishing the institute and, if so, what needs to be achieved. Are there any other governance issues that should be considered?

No feedback on this issue.