

Beyond Blue's Response to the 4th Independent Evaluation 2015-18

Introduction

Beyond Blue welcomes the findings of the fourth Independent Evaluation of Beyond Blue by Siggins Miller, examining activities conducted from January 2015 to July 2018. An independent evaluation of Beyond Blue is a requirement of our core funding with the Commonwealth.

We recognise the importance of independent and rigorous evaluation and scrutiny to ensure accountability and transparency, and to driving a culture of continuous learning and improvement across Beyond Blue. Our overarching response below picks up some key areas for continuous improvement and sets out how we will respond. We also itemise all 31 opportunities for improvement identified in the evaluation, and our detailed responses on how we will use these findings and ideas to improve our impact for the community in the years ahead.

Beyond Blue would particularly like to thank Siggins Miller consultants, who were appointed in May 2018 following a tender process to conduct the evaluation. They have provided us with invaluable insights to guide our future work and how we go about it.

We would also like to thank the Independent Evaluation Advisory Committee, who provided overall guidance on the development and conduct of the evaluation. The Independent Evaluation Advisory Committee was chaired by Natasha Stott Despoja AM, with representatives from the Commonwealth Government, States, Blue Voices, academia and the mental health sector. The Committee included members with specialist expertise in evaluation and implementation science.

Beyond Blue would also like to thank more than 50 stakeholders from the mental health and suicide prevention sectors who engaged with Siggins Miller to provide their insights on how Beyond Blue has been performing and how we could improve.

The final report has been approved by the Commonwealth Department of Health.

Positive findings

Beyond Blue is encouraged that the findings from the evaluation are largely positive. The evaluation found Beyond Blue is meeting its objectives and the work that Beyond Blue does is appropriate, effective and contributes value. Some of the evaluation's specific findings are:

- There is evidence supporting the effectiveness and appropriateness of Beyond Blue's services, campaigns and initiatives, which are underpinned by evidence, logic and the shape of the mental health sector, i.e. Beyond Blue fills a gap.
 - There is growing inclusion of people with lived experience of mental health issues and suicidality in all aspects of Beyond Blue's decision making, design thinking, planning, implementation and evaluation.
 - There is evidence of strong support for Beyond Blue's increased emphasis on collaboration and working in partnership with the sector.
 - The governance and management of Beyond Blue in the period covered by this evaluation has developed strongly and kept pace with the organisation's growth as a whole, as well as the increased complexity and significant implementation challenges of large national programs such as the National Education Initiative (Be You).
 - Beyond Blue has continued its commitment to generating evidence about what works, and its design thinking, planning and implementation are based on evidence.
 - Beyond Blue's policy and advocacy efforts are recognised and valued by most stakeholders, and Beyond Blue has maintained and enhanced the effectiveness of its policy and advocacy efforts.
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Findings that point to the need for improvement

Siggins Miller identified 31 'Opportunities' for Beyond Blue as part of the evaluation. We welcome all of them: each one offers valuable insights and will be used to drive continuous improvement across the organisation. Beyond Blue has developed a response to all 31, detailing how we are or will respond and use the findings to lift our performance and impact in the years ahead. Progress will be monitored regularly by the Beyond Blue Executive team to ensure delivery and reported to the Board.

We have in particular noted and thought about how to address three particular themes that were highlighted in the evaluation.

1. Ensuring we strengthen internal reflection, critique and risk assessment across the organisation to avoid complacency and 'group think'

The evaluation notes the risk of 'the very high level of positivity and confidence expressed by most internal stakeholders interviewed. Unshakable confidence in the appropriateness and effectiveness of what an organisation does can lead to a lack of appropriate and constructive internal reflection, resulting in complacency.'

Beyond Blue welcomes this timely reminder; many once successful organisations have declined by failing to remain reflective and self-critical, and failing to adapt to remain relevant and effective as society continuously evolves and people's needs change. This risk for Beyond Blue has increased as our organisation has grown, and our work has moved into new areas and become more complex.

With this in mind, we have committed to a number of actions to bolster internal reflection, critique and risk assessment, and to ensure we adapt to the changing landscape and continue to seek community, funder, staff and stakeholder feedback. These include:

- Measuring improvement on this theme in the next independent evaluation of Beyond Blue.
 - More strongly focusing Board and senior leadership discussions on critical analysis of our performance, culture and behaviours. Setting the 'tone from the top' will challenge any unhealthy cultural norms and ensure we recognise the need for ongoing internal reflection, the value of external scrutiny, and the importance of learning from mistakes.
 - Our Portfolio Governance Group reviews and critiques all business cases and new proposals, bringing together different knowledge and perspectives. A third community adviser has been added to the membership to expand the external perspectives staff are regularly exposed to.
 - Developing a new strategic plan for the three years 2020-23 following engagement with Blue Voices and the broader community, our funders and a number of other stakeholders. 'Beyond 2020' will lay out our strategic priorities, including new directions which respond to the findings of the evaluation and our changing environment.
 - Continuing to involve Blue Voices members in every level of decision-making at Beyond Blue and inviting a diverse range of external stakeholders to join advisory groups.
 - Improving our capability in lived experience and community participation, drawing on the expertise and encouraging honest feedback from Blue Voices members, our partners and the wider community to guide the design, development and review of our strategies, services and programs.
 - Continuing to commission and publish independent reviews and evaluations of our major initiatives and reflect and act on the findings.
 - Continuing to hold an annual staff survey, reflect and act on the results, and continuing to provide a learning and development program for staff.
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- Investing in business improvement to ensure Beyond Blue has the processes, infrastructure and capabilities to execute on our vision and strategy. It is essential that we maintain the highest standards of governance, financial management, people management and culture to support the successful delivery of Beyond Blue's strategies, services, supports and programs for the community.

2. Continuing to build Beyond Blue's capability in evidence informed practice, organisational learning and evaluation

While the evaluation notes Beyond Blue's commitment to evidence informed practice, organisation learning and evaluation, there is always an opportunity to improve, especially as our work continues to evolve and grow in complexity.

This includes improving on: the commissioning of appropriate economic analysis; how we analyse and use the insights from available data and information; evaluating Beyond Blue's impact; collaborative design with those with lived experience; and communicating and disseminating evidence and learnings.

Beyond Blue agrees we must continue to invest in being a 'learning organisation', whereby all our activities are evidence-informed and rigorously evaluated. To this end, we:

- Have commenced development of a Performance Framework for Beyond Blue to assist us to measure and report on our progress in achieving the goals and objectives of our next Strategic Plan and drive continuous improvement. Implementation of the framework will be accompanied by efforts to strengthen our capability to monitor and evaluate service, operational and program outcomes.
- Will commence the next Independent Evaluation of Beyond Blue in the early phase of the new multi-year evaluation period, to ensure a robust evaluation framework and continuous engagement drives an even more robust evaluation of the organisation.
- Recently refreshed our Evaluation Service Panel to ensure we continue to have a pool of high-quality evaluation expertise on hand.
- Are developing with our Research Advisory Committee a Beyond 2020 research strategy to foster a culture of continuous learning and ensure our interventions are evidence-informed.
- Will develop in 2020 a Knowledge Translation Strategy to improve our capacity to translate research and evaluation findings, both internally to drive organisational learning, and externally, to contribute to the evidence base on how to support the mental health of the community and prevent suicide.

3. Consider the risks to equity that might result from a settings-based approach

The Independent Evaluation notes:

'While recognising that Beyond Blue's interventions in the big settings where people live, work and learn create scope for population-wide impacts, Beyond Blue should consider:

- *Whether additional efforts to ensure its large interventions are suitable for – and can be readily accessed by – populations in greatest need.*
- *Whether its focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and LGBTI people should be extended to other groups, such as people from low SES backgrounds, CALD communities, regional and rural Australia, and older Australians.'*

Beyond Blue is a national organisation that takes a population health approach to promotion, prevention, early intervention. We agree there is a risk our whole-population health approach, and our national initiatives and support services could be picked up most substantially by relatively advantaged Australians, unless we take additional steps to ensure individuals, groups and communities in greatest need know about and can access them. Across Australia, populations in greatest need often experience 2-3 times the incidence of mental health conditions and die by suicide at greater rates than their more advantaged counterparts, yet

often receive less access to support and treatment that could prevent mental ill health and suicide, and aid recovery.

In combination, the population groups identified in the Independent Evaluation comprise more than half the national population, so achieving transformative change in the nation's mental health trajectory is simply not possible unless all people in Australia can access advice, information and support.

This is a major challenge for Beyond Blue. We are not positioned to be a comprehensive, specialist provider of mental health services for particular population groups and often this is properly the primary preserve of sector-specific organisations (such as Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and specialised service providers).

However, we can do more, and we will:

- Roll out improvements to our engagement of people with lived experience through Blue Voices and a new Community Engagement Strategy.
- Implement our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy 2019-24, which includes action across five strategic pillars: cultural competency; access to support; partnerships; research; and advocacy and seek critical review and advice from our panel of independent Cultural Consultants.
- Continue to establish an annual agenda to adapt, market or distribute our major initiatives to ensure they are suitable for and available to population groups in greatest need.
- Bolster Beyond Blue's equity agenda as part of the development of its Beyond 2020 strategic plan, which will come into effect in July 2020.
- Continue to be an ally to others and a strong advocate for effective reform in the mental health and suicide prevention systems to ensure they deliver support for all people in Australia.

Beyond Blue's detailed response to the 31 opportunities is below.

Beyond Blue's detailed response to the opportunities highlighted in the 4th Independent Evaluation 2015 - 2018

Objective 1: Supporting People in Need including the Beyond Blue Support Service, online forums, and resources and services for diverse population groups.

Opportunity	Response
<p>1 There will be a need to ensure that 'local need' data and information, that is generated by Primary Health Networks (PHNs), is prioritised and better used by Beyond Blue when addressing implementation challenges at the local level.</p>	<p>Beyond Blue will continue to work closely with PHNs to ensure our services are designed to effectively meet local needs. We do this through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing regular meetings and engagement with PHNs that commission Beyond Blue services to share learnings and understand local needs. • Dedicated Beyond Blue roles and resources in NewAccess and The Way Back so we can work closely with PHNs and service providers at the local level. • Beyond Blue are members of governance groups where our services are being implemented, for example, The Way Back Redcliff Project Governance Committee. Beyond Blue sits alongside PHNs, Service Providers, Local Health Networks, consumer advocates, and other critical community stakeholders to ensure sound understanding of the local needs.
<p>2 Consider strategies that will better integrate Beyond Blue's services and initiatives so that people can more readily be guided across the full suite of Beyond Blue's service offerings as well as strategies to achieve integration with the rest of the mental health sector (e.g. the Beyond Blue Support Service and Lifeline). The use of new technology to achieve integration should be a central element of the approach.</p>	<p>Beyond Blue agrees with the need for better service integration for people and families, for our services and supports and in linking and better integrating these with other organisation's services. We are endeavouring to do this. For example, people accessing the Support Service are being referred to NewAccess where it is available and appropriate. We will intensify these efforts over the coming years.</p> <p>Through a review of our Support Services and implementation of a Digital Product Strategy, we are considering options for service integration across Beyond Blue and with other service providers.</p>
<p>3 Address the system limitations required to keep pace with rapid community growth that were highlighted in the Beyond Blue Online Forum research, in order to improve engagement with the online community.</p>	<p>The system limitations of the Online Forums have been a key consideration for Beyond Blue for a number of years. To help address this we are currently implementing a four year (2018 -2022) Online Forums Strategy to better support the needs of our online community.</p> <p>Beyond Blue has also commissioned a community consultation to further understand the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and inform future adaptations of the Forums to ensure their cultural safety and appeal.</p>
<p>4 Beyond Blue's research program could include studies to address the limitations of the existing evidence base for peer-support interventions, and examine why they are helpful for depression, as well as the effectiveness of such interventions for individuals with low to moderate anxiety and those at risk of suicide.</p>	<p>Research and evaluation activities continue to be a critical part of Beyond Blue business. The Research Advisory Committee (RAC), which includes Blue Voices and Indigenous representatives, will continue to advise the Board on research strategy and priorities for investment. The RAC has discussed the importance of and relative under-funding of research into peer work. Beyond Blue will continue to explore the potential for more research on the effectiveness of peer support interventions as part of the discussions with the</p>

		<p>Research Advisory Committee in early 2020 to inform development of the next Beyond Blue Research Strategy.</p> <p>We will continue to invest in the evaluation of our services and programs and contribute to the broader evidence base for a range of approaches, including those delivered by relatively new and emerging workforces. Recent examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In late 2018, Beyond Blue commissioned an independent evaluation of Beyond Blue Connect, a pilot of a peer support program targeting Culturally and Linguistically Diverse populations. The evaluation provided qualitative evidence on the effectiveness and impact of the program. • Beyond Blue is also commencing a trial, and will evaluate, the use of peer workers in The Way Back Support Service. • Beyond Blue is supporting a research project (through its Targeted Call for Research into Depression, Anxiety and Suicide among Elderly Australians) on an online peer support intervention for reducing symptoms of depression among community-dwelling older adults living in rural Australia. This University of Newcastle study will provide currently lacking high-level causal evidence about the effectiveness of online peer support in promoting the mental health and wellbeing of older people. • We are currently undertaking an evaluation of the cultural appropriateness and acceptability of the Online Forums (and Blue Voices) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
5	<p>While recognising that Beyond Blue’s interventions in the big settings where people live, work and learn create scope for population-wide impacts, Beyond Blue should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whether additional efforts to ensure its large interventions are suitable for – and can be readily accessed by – populations in greatest need. - Whether its focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and LGBTI people should be extended to other groups, such as people from low SES backgrounds, CALD communities, regional and rural Australia, and older Australians. 	<p>We agree there is a risk our whole-population health approach, and our national initiatives and support services could be picked up most substantially by relatively advantaged Australians, unless we take additional steps to ensure individuals, groups and communities in greatest need know about and can access them. Across Australia, populations in greatest need often experience 2-3 times the incidence of mental health conditions and die by suicide at greater rates than their more advantaged counterparts, yet often receive less access to support and treatment that could prevent mental ill-health and suicide, and aid recovery.</p> <p>Beyond Blue will further consider how it can bolster its equity agenda as part of the development of the Beyond 2020 Strategic Plan, which will come into effect in July 2020.</p> <p>In the meantime, while we recognise the organisation is not a specialist mental health provider for specific population groups, we are taking action. Each year in the lead up to a budget process (Q4 and Q1), we look for opportunities to ensure our major interventions are adapted, marketed and distributed to meet the needs of diverse population groups. A recent example of this is the adaption of the Beyond Now suicide safety planning app to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and LGBTIQ+ communities.</p>

Objective 2: Driving behaviour change and empowering people with the tools to achieve their best possible mental health through traditional and social media, websites and online resources; campaigns to lift mental health literacy, reduce stigma and encourage people to seek help; and campaigns and programs to support vulnerable population groups.

	Opportunity	Response
6	Continue to invest in and develop the Beyond Blue website and improve digital products to enhance access and use across Australia.	<p>In December 2018 the Beyond Blue Board approved a new five-year Digital Product Strategy. Implementing the strategy will aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bring together all of Beyond Blue’s online assets into a single, integrated platform; - enable Beyond Blue to continuously adapt to a quickly evolving digital landscape and deliver an experience to meet users’ current and future needs; - enable Beyond Blue to be a highly accessible online entry point for many people in Australia when it comes to seeking information and support for their mental health; and - ensure security and effective risk management.
7	Consider priorities and directions for the design and implementation of future behaviour change programs by utilising the insights from research and evaluation activities and learning from the implementation of the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).	<p>Beyond Blue will continue to strengthen our processes and build capability across the organisation in using the best available evidence and practice to inform the design and implementation of its current and future services, initiatives and products.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We will continue to invest in a specialist Research and Evaluation team that works with our service and program areas to ensure evidence is used to inform the design and implementation of our services, initiatives and products. - The Strategic Planning & Design team supported by the Research and Evaluation team, will assist in ongoing review of external environments to continuously review the evidence base on areas including mental health literacy and help-seeking behaviour. - In the lead up to each budget, in Q4 and Q1, Beyond Blue will review our existing and new projects and initiatives to look for improvement opportunities to adapt, market and distribute to diverse population groups. Research, our work with Blue Voices and partners, and engagement of cultural consultants also continue to guide the identification of key program priorities for diverse population groups.

Objective 3: New service innovation including the development of new service models that meet people’s needs and fill service gaps. For example: NewAccess, The Way Back Support Service and Beyond Blue Connect.

	Opportunity	Response
8	Where ethical and practical, fund and commission further research to evaluate NewAccess, utilising an experimental or quasi-experimental design which incorporates a control or comparison group, to establish stronger evidence for its effectiveness and cost-effectiveness.	<p>Beyond Blue recognises the need for quality and appropriate evaluation that continues to build the evidence base for NewAccess as well as our other services and programs.</p> <p>NewAccess has been evaluated across three demonstration sites, over a two-year period and the learnings have informed continued implementation of the Service. Building on the evaluation, NewAccess now adopts a monitoring and evaluation approach collecting client data at the beginning and end of each session to consistently measure people’s clinical and wellbeing outcomes. This enables us to identify opportunities for continuous improvement.</p>
9	Work with PHNs to understand the real cost structure of the implementation of current and future ‘service models’ to them.	<p>Beyond Blue will continue to grow our relationships with PHNs and work closely with them in the delivery of our services. Beyond Blue’s contractual agreements with PHNs currently outline the estimated cost of implementing a Beyond Blue service. As Beyond Blue service models such as NewAccess and The Way Back are implemented across the PHNs and mature we will continue to learn and improve on our costing estimates in partnership with PHNs.</p> <p>In addition, Beyond Blue will continue to use the significant evidence and outcomes data from several years of NewAccess operating in sites across Australia to advocate for proper investment by government in low intensity services essential infrastructure (workforce development, training, accreditation, education etc) to increase uptake and generate cost efficiencies.</p>
10	Develop a communication strategy to ensure that the community, consumers and service providers have a better understanding of the benefits of low-intensity services and to support advocacy for investment and expansion of these services.	<p>Beyond Blue recognises the need for greater understanding of the benefits of low intensity services. We will continue to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - advocate for additional necessary investment in low intensity infrastructure such as through our recent submission to the Productivity Commission and in our broader government engagement, and - communicate on the benefits of evidence-based, proven low intensity services such as NewAccess.

Objective 4: Prevention and early intervention where people live, work and learn including programs that facilitate the adoption of workplace mental health strategies (such as Heads Up and other specific workplace activities), as well as school and family-based initiatives to support parents and carers and build children’s resilience (such as the BeYou: National Education Initiative and Healthy Families).

	Opportunity	Response
11	There is a need for Beyond Blue’s programs to continue to be evaluated for their effectiveness, cost-effectiveness and impact on behaviour change.	<p>Beyond Blue agrees, and to do this we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - have evaluated, or currently have evaluations in place, for our key interventions i.e. The Way Back, NewAccess, the Support Service, Heads Up and Be You, the National Education Initiative; - have invested in an internal specialist evaluation unit that works with our program areas to plan, implement and use quality evaluations; - are commencing the next Independent Evaluation of Beyond Blue early to align with our strategic planning and improve our ability to implement and deliver the best possible evaluation; and - have recently refreshed our Evaluation Service Panel to ensure we are working in partnership with experts to produce quality and relevant evaluation products for Beyond Blue and our community.
12	Building on the lessons learnt from the evaluation of the Healthy Families website (i.e. an inability to measure and attribute behaviour change to the website), future evaluations should build in a methodology that enables Beyond Blue to more rigorously assess website effectiveness.	<p>Beyond Blue knows that measuring behaviour change outcomes in digital environments can be challenging. We continue to learn from years of providing digital products and campaigns. Next steps include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The development and implementation of a Digital Product Strategy 2019 – 2023, through which we are working to drive strategic impact through better use of data and insights. - The development of an organisation wide Performance Framework (and associated standard measures) to assist us to report on our success in achieving the goals and objectives of our Strategic Plan and drive continuous improvement. - The recent refresh of our Evaluation Service Panel to ensure we are working in partnership with experts to produce quality and relevant evaluation products for Beyond Blue and our community.
13	Beyond Blue should consider ways in which it can monitor whether or not the risks to equity that might result from a settings-based approach become evident over time.	<p>Beyond Blue agrees we need to monitor risks to equity from our settings-based approach. We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roll out improvements to our engagement of people with lived experience through Blue Voices and a new Community Engagement Strategy. - Implement our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy 2019-24, which includes action across five strategic pillars: cultural competency; access to support; partnerships; research; and advocacy and seek critical review and advice from our panel of independent Cultural Consultants. - Continue to establish an annual agenda to adapt, market or distribute our major initiatives to ensure they are suitable for and available to population groups in greatest need. - Consider ways to bolster Beyond Blue’s equity agenda as part of the development of its Beyond 2020 strategic plan, which will come into effect in July 2020. - Continue to be an ally to others and a strong advocate for effective reform in the mental health and suicide prevention systems to ensure they deliver support for all people in Australia.

Objective 5: Providing an advisory role to government on policy directions including advocacy, research and evaluation to drive best practice in policy and practice, particularly in priority areas such as the reduction of discrimination and stigma, suicide prevention and mental health reform, e.g. insurance discrimination and support for lower intensity interventions.

Opportunity	Response
<p>14 Beyond Blue could improve and build upon their existing advocacy efforts. For example, in areas such as employment, where people with a mental health condition are experiencing discrimination. Therefore, there is an opportunity for Beyond Blue to partner with relevant organisations and advocate for changes in such areas.</p>	<p>Beyond Blue agrees and we are currently undertaking a Policy Reform Agenda project to identify, direct and improve our advocacy efforts. Beyond Blue’s policy priorities are being informed by consultation with around 700 Blue Voice members, five literature reviews, consultations with over 30 stakeholders and six collaborative design workshops with people with a lived experience, professionals and provocateurs. The policy reform agenda will include recommendations to increase support for populations in greatest need.</p> <p>Beyond Blue will continue to pursue advocacy individually and through partnerships with organisations inside and outside of the mental health sector. One example is Beyond Blue’s work as a founding and active member of the National Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance, which is supporting the development of a National Workplace Initiative (NWI), funded in the 2018-19 Budget. The NWI aims to spread the establishment and implementation of effective mental health strategies in workplaces across Australia, including targeting people living and working with mental health conditions.</p>
<p>15 There is an opportunity for Beyond Blue to consider whether it is within their remit to lend their weight to advocacy around severe and persistent mental illness – because of the high levels of unmet need – whilst not moving outside their own focus.</p>	<p>Beyond Blue will continue to be an ally to others and strong advocate for reform in the mental health and suicide prevention systems. We will remain conscious and respectful of other organisations whose mandate is to focus on severe and persistent mental illness.</p> <p>We will continue to make submissions to and engage with government inquiries, such as the Productivity Commission inquiry and the Royal Commission in Victoria. Beyond Blue’s current advocacy includes the needs of people with severe and persistent mental illnesses, such as our support for development of a national strategy to deliver coordinated care for people with severe and complex mental health issues as part of a recent submission to the Review of the Medicare Benefits Schedule; and our ongoing championing of the peer workforce and safe spaces in the community as alternatives to emergency departments.</p> <p>Beyond Blue is currently undertaking a Policy Reform Agenda project to identify, direct and improve our advocacy efforts. Both this work and the development of the Beyond 2020 Strategy provide opportunity for Beyond Blue to reflect on its role in policy advocacy.</p>

Objective 6: Research to improve knowledge of mental health and suicide prevention and translate findings into practice including investing in research projects on anxiety, depression and suicide, as well as evaluations of Beyond Blue’s own projects, programs and services; funding a broad range of strategic and priority driven research covering the spectrum from discovery to research translation.

	Opportunity	Response
16	<p>There are opportunities for Beyond Blue to build on their research efforts. Specifically, there is still a need to consider how to contribute to building capacity in the research community relevant to Beyond Blue’s objectives, with a focus on the development of early career researchers.</p>	<p>Beyond Blue is currently implementing the 2015 - 2020 Research Strategy and is guided by the advice of the Research Advisory Committee, which advises the Beyond Blue Board. As per this strategy we are currently contributing to building capacity in the research community through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Centre for Research Excellence (CRE), where Beyond Blue committed \$1.25 million (matched by NHMRC) to research in Childhood Adversity and Associated Depression and Anxiety. - A Targeted Call for Research (TCR), where Beyond Blue committed \$2.5 million (matched by NHMRC) for research into Depression, Anxiety and Suicide among Elderly Australians. - Partnership Grants, where Beyond Blue has so far contributed \$450,000 to three successful research partnerships. <p>Beyond Blue is currently developing a Beyond 2020 Research Strategy and will consider further support for research on mental health – including by early/mid-career researchers – in that context.</p>
17	<p>The dissemination of findings and research translation, including the results of commissioned evaluations, would benefit from further attention. Beyond Blue could consider how to communicate the results of evaluations effectively and in a timely manner and the evidence base used to inform decisions, and how to improve the dissemination of research to all stakeholders.</p>	<p>Beyond Blue recognises this critical opportunity and is developing a Knowledge Translation framework in 2020 to improve the organisation’s capabilities in this area. As part of this process we will consider how we can better translate research and evaluation findings, both internally and with external stakeholders, including the public. We will continue to work closely with organisations who are funded for research translation hubs, including Suicide Prevention Australia and Everymind.</p> <p>Beyond Blue is also keen to disseminate more research and evaluation findings in the peer reviewed literature. For example, there are currently three journal articles (concerning the Support Service, NewAccess and Be You) that are currently under review or about to be submitted.</p> <p>We will continue provide other researchers access to data from research commissioned by Beyond Blue, to ensure that the research community can help disseminate findings and undertake further research, for example the Doctor’s Mental Health Research study and <i>Answering the Call</i>, a national study into the mental health and wellbeing of Police and Emergency Services personnel.</p>

Objective 7: Promoting partnerships to improve the mental health of Australians and to prevent suicide including working within the mental health sector, with business and community, and with other parts of the health and human services sectors to form strong partnerships to improve mental health and prevent suicide.

	Opportunity	Response
18	There are opportunities for Beyond Blue to lend the weight of their reputation and standing to the other parts of the mental health sector that focus on the persistently and severely mentally ill. However, it is noted that Beyond Blue should not move outside of their core business.	Beyond Blue will continue to be a voice and strong advocate for reform in the mental health system, such as through submissions and engagements to Federal and State inquiries, such as the Productivity Commission inquiry and the Royal Commission in Victoria. Beyond Blue's advocacy work includes a focus on people with severe and persistent mental illnesses, such as our support for development of a national strategy to deliver coordinated care for people with severe and complex mental health issues as part of a recent submission to the Review of the Medical Benefits Schedule; and our ongoing championing of the peer workforce and safe spaces in the community as alternatives to emergency departments.
19	The development of a more integrated strategy that covers the nature and purpose of engagement between Beyond Blue and its range of partners, including Blue Voices, the mental health sector community and corporate partners would be prudent.	Beyond Blue is developing a Community Engagement Strategy which will be finalised in late 2019. The strategy will provide an overarching framework for how Beyond Blue engages the community for the purposes of community participation (collaborative design) and community reach (reaching the community through events and activities). The Strategy will direct and integrate the activities associated with Beyond Blue's 'engaged communities' - Blue Voices, volunteers, speakers and ambassadors, community fundraisers and community partners.
20	The creation of ongoing lines of communication between Beyond Blue and relevant clinical services is advisable to ensure that the demand for clinical services generated by Beyond Blue's campaigns and other efforts can be appropriately planned for and managed across the sector.	Beyond Blue agrees it is important the whole sector works in a coordinated way for the benefit of the community. We will continue our efforts in sector-wide collaboration, building on recent efforts such as the #YouCanTalk campaign and initiatives such as Be You and Heads Up.
21	The existing evidence for the Speakers and Ambassadors program could be enhanced by evaluating its impact.	While Beyond Blue notes it is difficult to capture all the benefits of the Ambassadors and Speakers program, we agree the evidence-base for the program could be enhanced. The new Community Engagement Strategy has an overarching evaluation framework for all of Beyond Blue's community engagement activities, which includes assessment of the impact of the Speakers and Ambassadors program.
22	Beyond Blue could work with its partners to reduce the perception that fewer resources to bring to the table would mean less influence in joint projects and broader partnerships with Beyond Blue.	We are extremely conscious of this perception and have proactively raised it in the groups we are a member of to seek further feedback about how we can continue to improve our approach to partnerships. Responding to feedback in the last evaluation, Beyond Blue has increasingly and consciously focused on collaborations and working in equal partnerships with other organisations to reduce duplication, maximise funding and resources, work together to support the needs of the community and amplify our collective voices . For instance, Beyond Blue has been an active partner in several broad-based collaborations and alliances. These include partnerships to develop and implement The Way Back Support Service and Be You. In addition, Beyond Blue is a member of and contributes financially to the Mentally Healthy Workplace

		Alliance; the #YouCanTalk suicide prevention communications collaboration; and the Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee.
23	When large initiatives such as The Way Back are rolled out, Beyond Blue needs to recognise that broad and deep engagement with State Governments will be critical to their success.	<p>Beyond Blue agrees that engagement with State and Territory Governments is vital to the success of our work.</p> <p>We routinely engage with all governments at Board and operational levels and especially on initiatives such as The Way Back. As an example, for The Way Back this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - collaboration on how the service fits with state / territory strategic plans, site identification and funding allocation; - representation on the National Advisory Group; and - development of bilateral agreements with each State and Territory involved in expansion of the Service. <p>Beyond Blue will continue to work and communicate with all State and Territory Governments through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - their Constitutional Membership of the company and active engagement with the Beyond Blue Board; including attendance at Board meetings and access to all Board papers; - an annual Members day to discuss strategic priorities; and - six monthly reports and discussions on progress against funding commitments.

Objective 8: To understand how Beyond Blue operates

Opportunity		Response
24	Beyond Blue should continue to engage in collaborative design, including with those with lived experience.	<p>Beyond Blue agrees in the importance of continuing community participation and collaboration in the design of our major initiatives.</p> <p>We place a high priority on seeking out, listening and responding to people with experiences of poor mental health and this work will be a key part of the Beyond 2020 strategy. A dedicated Blue Voices team is working to drive ongoing improvement in our engagement of people with lived experience, and expand their opportunities to inform the design of Beyond Blue’s policy, programs and services. We have created a new leadership role – the Blue Voices Community Advocate – to focus on delivering a step-change improvement in Beyond Blue’s engagement and involvement of people with lived experience. The role will influence, champion and drive further cultural change in Beyond Blue, creating deeper organisation-wide understanding of effective lived experience and community participation.</p>
25	Beyond Blue could consider building appropriate economic analysis into commissioned evaluations (in the future as this has not been systematically addressed in previous evaluations)	Beyond Blue acknowledges that attributing impact across a diverse range of activities at scale is a challenge. Development of an organisation wide Performance Framework will help us improve our ability to measure and report our impact in many areas, including economic impact.

		A dedicated Research and Evaluation team also work to continually improve our strategies and processes for developing evaluations , utilising the expertise of the Evaluation Service Panel, and including economic analysis where appropriate and possible.
26	Beyond Blue could further consider how to communicate effectively and in a timely manner the results of evaluations and the evidence base used to inform decisions, and how to improve dissemination of research to all stakeholders.	<p>Beyond Blue recognises this critical opportunity and will develop a Knowledge Translation framework in 2020 to improve the organisation's capabilities in this area. As part of this process it will consider how it can better translate research and evaluation findings, both internally and with external stakeholders, including the public. We will continue to work closely with organisations who are funded for research translation hubs, including Suicide Prevention Australia and Everymind.</p> <p>Beyond Blue is also keen to disseminate more research and evaluation findings in the peer reviewed literature. For example, there are currently three journal articles (concerning the Support Service, NewAccess and Be You) that are currently under review or about to be submitted to academic journals.</p>
27	Consideration could also be given by Beyond Blue to ways of better engaging corporate funders in the life of the organisation so they can understand what they are contributing to. This includes considering the opportunity to meet and talk with the Board and/or producing a six-monthly or quarterly bulletin to keep partners informed about all the activities that could be of interest to them.	<p>Beyond Blue is committed to engaging corporate partners in the life and work of the organisation. By introducing a new role – Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement – and bringing in additional staff skilled in corporate engagement, we are enhancing our engagement, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inviting partners to supporter events; - inviting partners to other functions and events such as the AFL, NRL and A-League Beyond Blue Cups; - inviting the staff of corporate partners to volunteer at events where Beyond Blue has a presence (such as the Australian Open, and the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show); - continuing to support our corporate partners to assist them to create mentally healthy workplaces; and - encouraging corporate partners to have Beyond Blue Speakers share their stories with their staff. <p>We also recognise that there is always a need for continued improvement. Some of our plans include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - having a targeted approach for Board engagement with key corporate partners, including meetings with senior stakeholders (Executive and Board level); - ensuring that we have relationships at multiple levels with our corporate partners, where possible from Board level through to the Executive, and direct partnership staff; - the introduction of a quarterly newsletter for corporate partners; and - continuing to look for new opportunities to engage our partners in Beyond Blue events and activities.
28	Beyond Blue should continue to strengthen internal reflection, critique and risk assessment as a protection against unexpected shocks from the external environment and to reduce the risks associated with the potential development of groupthink.	<p>We agree with these insights and reflections. Beyond Blue recognises the value of a culture that is increasingly reflective and self-critical and notes the benefit it can bring to continuous improvement within the organisation. While Beyond Blue will continue to increase our capability by strengthening our business processes recent initiatives to strengthen our efforts in this area include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measuring improvement on this theme in the next independent evaluation of Beyond Blue. • More strongly focusing Board and senior leadership discussions on critical analysis of our performance, culture and behaviours. Setting the 'tone from the top' will challenge any unhealthy cultural norms and

		<p>ensure we recognise the need for internal reflection, the value of external scrutiny, and the importance of learning from mistakes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Portfolio Governance Group reviews and critiques all business cases and new proposals, bringing together different knowledge and perspectives. A third community adviser has been added to the membership to expand the external perspectives staff are regularly exposed to. • Developing a new strategic plan for the three years 2020-23 following engagement with Blue Voices and the broader community, our funders and a number of other stakeholders. 'Beyond 2020' will lay out our strategic priorities, including new directions which respond to the evaluation's findings and our changing environment. • Continuing to involve Blue Voices members in every level of decision-making at Beyond Blue, and inviting a diverse range of external stakeholders to join advisory groups. • Improving our capability in lived experience and community participation, drawing on the expertise and encouraging honest feedback from Blue Voices members, our partners and the wider community to guide the design, development and review of our strategies, services and programs. • Continuing to commission and publish independent reviews and evaluations of our major initiatives and reflect and act on the findings. • Continuing to hold an annual staff survey, reflect and act on the results, and continuing to provide a learning and development program for staff. • Investing in business improvement to ensure Beyond Blue has the processes, infrastructure and capabilities to execute on our vision and strategy. It is essential that we continue to have the highest standards of governance, financial management, people management and culture to support the successful delivery of Beyond Blue's strategies, services, supports and programs for the community.
29	Beyond Blue could further develop understanding and capacity to reduce staff turnover.	Beyond Blue is currently implementing the People and Capability Strategy 2018 – 2020 . One of the key priorities that directs our approach to people and capability development is <i>Attract, engage and retain a diverse, high performing workforce</i> . The Beyond Blue Executive have discussed turnover trends and an action plan is being developed to improve the retention of staff.
30	Beyond Blue should continue to strengthen efforts to improve the diversity of their workforce, in particular increasing representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employees in their workforce.	Beyond Blue agrees we can strengthen efforts to improve the diversity of our workforce. An important focus of the Beyond Blue Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is development and implementation of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy to support recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at Beyond Blue.
31	To ensure Beyond Blue can continue to evolve its strategy and interventions to achieve maximum impact, it should:	The Strategic Planning & Design and Research and Evaluation teams will scan the external environment to continuously review the evidence base on areas including mental health literacy and help-seeking behaviour.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to maintain mechanisms to scan the external environment, both nationally and internationally, for new and emerging research and practice.• Seek to better use the data and insights from their website online forums and programs to identify future projects and opportunities.	<p>The templates of the Portfolio Management Framework (which guide the development of our new initiatives) are revised annually. Additional prompts on incorporating global evidence will be investigated.</p> <p>The development of a Performance Framework will guide the collection of data and insights from all our program areas and initiatives and improve the measurement and reporting of our impact.</p>
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