STREAM Workplan: PHASE I: April 1, 2010 – September 1, 2011

Background: With funding from the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation, during Phase I of the STREAM Project (2007-2009), a research strategy was developed to improve understanding of culturally appropriate addictions treatment and mental health services in Saskatchewan. The strategy addresses the inter-related goals of *capacity building and knowledge translation, blending traditional and mainstream approaches* to mental health and addiction services, creating and upholding *linkages with treatment services*, and developing relevant *research questions*.

During Phase II of the STREAM Project (2010-2013), also funded by the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation, this research strategy is being built upon in specific research areas:

1. Development of an interactive Program Evaluation Workbook; and
2. A community-based program evaluation of the Métis Addictions Council of Saskatchewan, Inc. (MASC) program.

STREAM’s aim is to contribute to current understanding and educate substance abuse treatment and mental health agencies, and in particular those working with Aboriginal clients, about undertaking program evaluations that are culturally competent and produce outcome results that measure client change in ways that are meaningful, feasible, and actionable. Outlined below is Phase I activities of the STREAM group (April 1, 2010 – September 1, 2011).

1. Workbook: (See Timeline 1) The Government of Saskatchewan acknowledged the need for evidence-based best practices to improve substance abuse programming in its 2005 report, *Healthy Choices in a Healthy Community*. In 2008, Canada’s National Treatment Strategy recommended the development of culturally appropriate guidelines for addictions treatment program evaluation, including for Aboriginal populations. It also recommended that staff working within the fields of mental health and addictions become familiar with the early stages of planning a program evaluation. STREAM is working in partnership with the Prince Albert Parkland Health Region (PAPHR) to develop a workbook that can be used by a wide variety of service providers, including administration, supervisors, and front-line workers, as well as clients to assist program evaluation planning.

There are two important contributions the Workbook will make: (1) There is currently a gap in the available resources for conducting program evaluations, specifically individuals trained in program evaluation. The workbook will help to fill this gap and promote community-based, inter-disciplinary, participatory research methods. STREAM recognizes the importance of having front-line providers involved in the program evaluation process; a recognition not well reflected in existing materials. STREAM will address this issue by designing the workbook in a way that it will allow for a wide range of stakeholders to participate in and influence the evaluation of a treatment program. (2) Current resources are further lacking on the importance of sensitivity when dealing with issues of sex, gender,
and cultural diversity. This aspect of the workbook aims at familiarizing mental health and addictions treatment programs with appropriate ways of approaching these issues, and assisting them in developing population-specific programming that can be directed towards the needs of a diverse target clientele.

Aside from the writing and development of the workbook itself, work will include organizing a ‘pre-pilot’ test retreat, meant to ensure that the Workbook is suitable and effective for a wide range of audiences while still reflecting the interests of STREAM’s research associate organizations. This retreat will be organized with the PAPHR, and will involve a draft of select chapters issued to a group of mental health and addictions workers, both front-line as well as behind-the-scenes professionals. The tentative date for the retreat is late October 2010, and STREAM will use the feedback received from the test participants to revise and improve the Workbook. Further, representatives of Saskatchewan’s thirteen Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) will be invited to comment on the content of the Evaluation Workbook for the similar purpose of testing the effectiveness of the materials prepared. STREAM also intends on providing concrete and relatable information in the form of 3-5 minute videos that will accompany various sections of the workbook. RHA representatives will be approached in the coming months to voluntarily assist with the videos in order to give some practicality to select aspects of the workbook’s content. Phase II (September, 2011 – April, 2013) will focus on testing the workbook’s effectiveness.

2. **MACSI Evaluation:** (See Timeline 2) An evaluation of the MACSI treatment facilities in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert is being undertaken by STREAM in a two stage process. In the first stage, a Process Evaluation is being carried out to identify the services being provided, to whom, and how; it is important that an in-depth understanding of a program is achieved before an outcome evaluation is designed. An outcome evaluation specifically considers the extent to which the short and long-term goals of the MACSI program have been adequately met. The aim of a process evaluation is to observe and document a program in its most current form, taking into consideration knowledge shared by key stakeholders, including those whom the program directly (i.e. clients or front-line workers) and indirectly (i.e. funders or administration) impacts. Focused on is precisely what MACSI does as a program, the specific services available, to whom the services are targeted, who accesses them, and how they are delivered.

There are key areas where a process evaluation can benefit MACSI prior to an outcome evaluation:

- **Accountability** - A Process Evaluation is a valuable tool to document the work that a program does. With the rising attention to accountability in funding requirements, such documentation can benefit MACSI in future program financing.
- **Improvement** - With documentation and analysis of the services provided and collaboration between outside and inside perspectives, a process evaluation can increase MACSI’s capacity for improvement and encourage productive and beneficial change.
- **Leadership** - Conducting a process evaluation can assist MACSI with identifying any gaps in services presently being filled by MACSI or, conversely, absent in the programming. This would also allow for other service providers to accommodate individual needs by way of referrals and/or creation of programming to fill identified gaps.

*Phase II (September, 2011 – April, 2013) will focus on conducting an outcome evaluation with MACSI.*
Timeline 1: With room for flexibility, the following chart represents the general direction the Workbook is aimed at for the Phase I of the STREAM project:

**Research & Revisions**
May 1 - July 31, 2010

- Review and research
  - Read through the existing draft of the Workbook to see where improvements can be made
  - Look into methods of presenting information to ensure the workbook can reach a wide audience
- Revisions and videos
  - Prepare a test-section of the Workbook (3-4 chapters) to be ready for the PAPHR pre-pilot retreat in the fall
  - Brainstorm ideas for short videos that could accompany the chapters drafted
  - Connect with Regional Health Authority (RHA) representatives and mental health and addictions front-line providers for continued communication with STREAM
  - Prepare scripts and find RHA representatives and/or front-line providers willing to take part in video segments

**Validation**
August 1 - December 31, 2010

- Pre-Pilot Testing
  - Produce a final draft of the chapters for the pre-pilot testing
  - Produce a sample selection of Workbook Companion Videos to go along with the chapters prepared for the pre-pilot testing
  - Organize and conduct the PAPHR Evaluation Workbook pre-pilot test retreat, aimed at mid October, 2010
- Testing Results
  - Collect suggestions for changes and improvements from those who participated in the pre-pilot test
  - Modify existing chapters based on the results of the pre-pilot test
  - Incorporate ideas and suggestions of pre-pilot testers into remaining Workbook writing

**Moving Forward**
January 1 - September 2011

- Checking for validity of content
  - Assemble "expert" panels to make sure the Workbook is meeting the primary aims (engaging stakeholders, maintaining evaluation focus, practical usage).
- Checking for effectiveness of Workbook format
  - Conduct pilot tests with front-line workers who are planning program evaluations and encourage suggestions for improvement
  - Revise and modify workbook based on response of both the expert panel as well as front-line testers.
  - Final draft of Workbook to be in preparation for mass distribution across participating Saskatchewan Regional Health Authority centres.
Timeline 2: With room for flexibility, the following chart represents the general direction the MASCI program evaluation is aimed at in Phase I (April, 2010 to September, 2011):

- **Understanding the Program**
  - Review and compare treatment plans for each MACSI centre
  - Review the academic literature and conduct Key Expert interviews with other treatment providers to assess the extent to which MACSI fills unique gaps in available treatment programming
  - Determine a typical client profile for MACSI treatment programs, including cognitive challenges and/or learning disabilities

- **Data Collection**
  - Interview MACSI counsellors and clients to gain experiential insight into aspects of the program that are more positive, and those that are less helpful.
  - Develop a ‘checklist’ for observing delivery that will help to determine the extent to which clients are engaged in the program and apply it to workshop observation.

- **Looking into**
  - Instructional strategies for those with cognitive challenges and/or learning disabilities
  - Client Directed Outcome Informed (CDOI) Therapy, and its possible potential for the MACSI program
  - Ways to measure the cognitive level of clients in the early stage of treatment programs, preferably at intake

- **Analysis of data collected**
  - Compare results of counsellor perspectives to client perspectives regarding treatment program
  - Determine general themes in evaluation findings in order to determine the next steps.

- **Moving Forward**
  - Work with MACSI facilities and representatives to determine the best way to apply the findings to their program.
  - Using the findings and work done to date, determine next steps and move towards Phase II of the STREAM project - conducting an outcome evaluation.