



REACHOUT AUSTRALIA

DIGITAL YOUTH

MENTAL HEALTH

INNOVATION LAB



SUMMARY

ReachOut has been changing the way people access support since launching as the world's first online mental health service over 20 years ago. Since then we've launched cutting edge apps, pioneered peer support platforms and ensured parents and schools have the tools and resources they need to support their young people.

Now we're ready to take our innovation agenda to the next level by launching a Digital Youth Mental Health Innovation Lab so we can rapidly prototype, test and launch the new mental health products, services and features that young Australians want and need to help them feel better and stay well.

We've already identified and conceptualised the first exciting new initiatives that the Digital Youth Mental Health Innovation Lab will explore, prototype and, if validated, accelerate the build of - a 'tell your story once' profile, a personalised service experience with smart nudging to help young people keep on track and the next stage of our peer support offering, small group peer support - and we're ready to get started straight away.

MY STORY

A product that allows users to store and share key data around their "story" including mental health journey, preferences and key activities. It can be used to communicate more effectively to peers and mental health professionals when seeking help.

A PERSONALISED SERVICE EXPERIENCE

A series of new interlinked service features that gives young people reassurance that we understand them and tailor their experience on site according to their mental health journey. By drawing on their conversations, the content they've viewed and the specific communities they've interacted with, we will be able to present a personal experience that matches their mental health context.

SMALL GROUP PEER SUPPORT

A new service that allows young people to enter into safe and stigma free "micro communities" of peers with a similar lived experience that are centered on common issues like anxiety or isolation. It will also enable young people to access facilitated small group sessions run by peer workers, who can help guide them with contextual strategies for navigating mental health.

\$7.7m in federal government support over 4 years will allow us to stand up the Lab and deliver the first exciting new innovations it will create for young people.

With much of the mental health impact of the pandemic likely still to unfold, there's no time to lose in ensuring young Australians have the accessible and effective mental health support they need. With your support, ReachOut will be able to deliver cutting edge new services that will help young Australians be happy and well.

WHO WE HELPED IN 2020-21

- More than 2.8 million people in Australia visited ReachOut.com (youth)
- 59,530 users accessed our online youth community
- More than 491,000 parents and carers visited ReachOut.com/Parents
- More than 219,000 educators accessed ReachOut.com/Schools

ABOUT US

ReachOut has been a pioneer and leader in digital mental health service delivery since it burst onto the internet over 20 years ago.

454 young people in Australia died by suicide last year and, sadly, 70 per cent of young people who are currently experiencing a mental illness do not seek help. But ReachOut is changing this – and leading the way by developing modern, innovative mental health programs that deliver the support that young people (and their parents, carers and schools) need, in a way that is actually accessible to them. Importantly, the effectiveness of our service is clear: in 2018, an independent analysis found that ReachOut helped save 300 lives in a year.

3.6 million Australians turned to ReachOut for support in 2020. In a time of disruption and constant change, young people, parents and schools have been facing new and unprecedented challenges due to the health, social and economic impacts of COVID-19. ReachOut continues to step up, providing innovative, tailored and

relevant support as the issues and challenges young people are confronting continue to evolve.

We're working now to deliver the new digital mental health services young people need by investing in data, analytics and service design. And with Federal Government support we're building our new one-on-one peer support program that will match young people with trained peer workers who understand the issues they face because they've been there before themselves.

Still, there is so much more to do. Young people have complex and varied barriers to accessing support and a multitude of individual service preferences. In this environment, one-size-fits-all solutions are solutions that are designed to fail. Fortunately, technology is opening a whole new host of opportunities to tailor, enhance and personalise the care and support we can provide to young people.

Our impact data shows that ReachOut stops the mental health spiral of young people, many of whom are in distress. After using ReachOut young people are:

- **Calmer**
- **Less stressed**
- **Less worried**
- **More likely to seek help**

“

If I never found the ReachOut forums I genuinely don't know whether I would be here today. It was honestly the first time I felt really understood, that my feelings were valid and that I wasn't alone in this journey.

”

“

ReachOut was there for me when no one else was. It saved my life. I used the Next Step feature and it was the first time I was told that what I was feeling was okay, and it started to make sense.

”



A CULTURE OF INNOVATION

ReachOut has been changing the way people access support since launching as the world's first online mental health service over 20 years ago.

Innovation and co-design with young people is in our DNA. Our service is constantly evolving to meet the changing needs and expectations of our users. From online self-help information, tips and resources, to apps, referral tools and peer support - we're always looking for new ways to increase the impact we have and ensure we're doing everything possible to help young people be happy and well.

It is clear that mental health organisations can and must do more to integrate their services to ensure we can quickly get young people to the right service that best meets their needs, at the right time. We're proud of the work we're doing with Lifeline and Beyond Blue that is already delivering better service connections and innovative mental health interventions. For instance, we've developed a tool that can identify when a ReachOut user may be in high distress and then, via a pop-up, offer them immediate crisis support delivered through Lifeline.

Last year, we began a significant service redesign project which mapped the experiences and laid the foundations for a future product and service vision and how we intend to get there.

Young people told us that formal services can be too confronting and that they value the lived experience of people like them who have been in their shoes before. So we've piloted and are currently building a new one-on-one peer support service - the first of its kind in Australia. We'll use data and technology to match young people to a relevant peer supporter, deliver peer support sessions digitally, and ensure it is overlaid by a robust duty of care process.

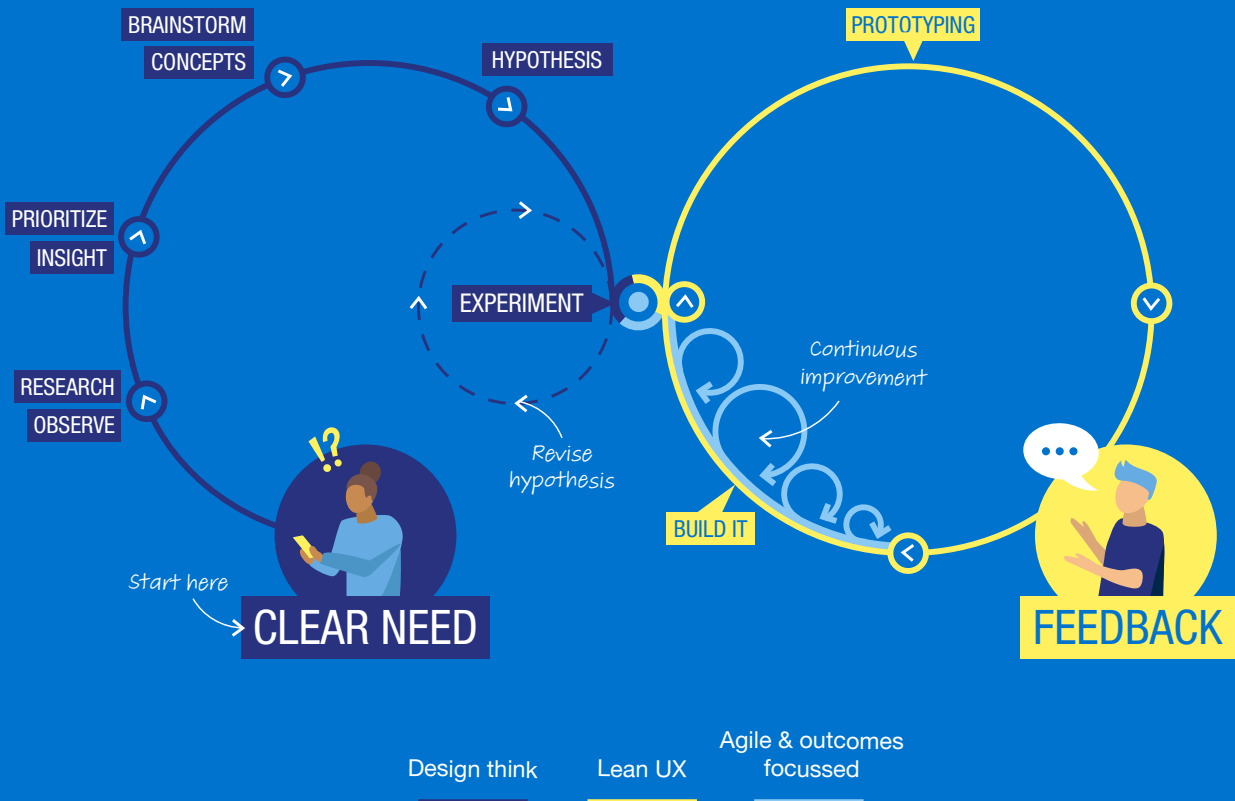
We've hit the ground running to deliver on our vision which harnesses our culture of innovation and deep digital youth mental health service delivery expertise to drive exciting new, better, smarter services for young Australians. And we know that with our vision, enabled by the rapid evolution of technology and the power of data, we can do so much more.

A REACHOUT DIGITAL YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH INNOVATION LAB

ReachOut is ready to take our innovation agenda to the next level by launching a Digital Youth Mental Health Innovation Lab. A Digital Youth Mental Health Innovation Lab will allow us to rapidly prototype, test and launch the new mental health products, services and features that young Australians want and need.

Taking a human centred design led, lean user experience and agile delivery approach to exploring concepts and prototyping potential solutions, ReachOut's Digital Youth Mental Health Innovation Lab will seek to rapidly explore the next generation of critical support services for young people.

LEAN AND AGILE FLOW

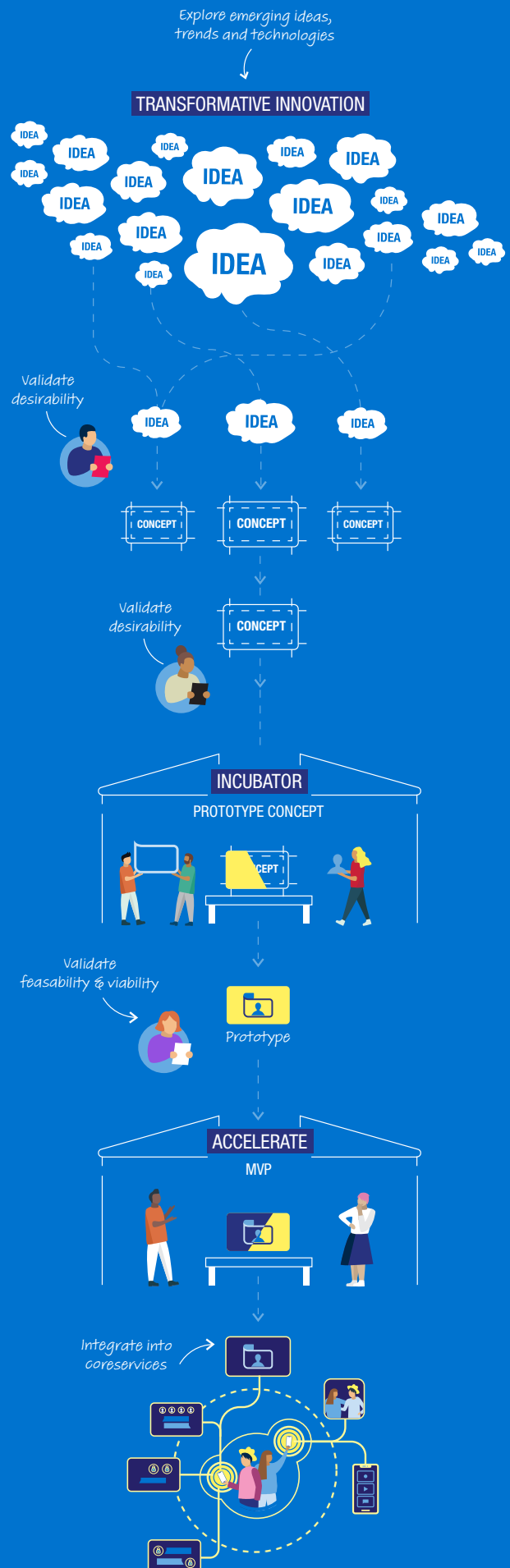


A REACHOUT INNOVATION LAB

ReachOut has developed a sustainable two pronged approach to creating a relevant, valued and viable service into the future:

1. Deliver iterative releases of updated and improved features in our existing service as continuous improvement throughout our product lifecycle management.
2. Establish a ReachOut Digital Youth Mental Health Innovation Lab that will enable us to explore and assess emerging ideas, trends and technologies. We will:
 - a. incubate and validate ideas that will improve mental health services and enhance outcomes for young people, keeping us ahead of the curve in terms of new technology and user expectations.
 - a. accelerate the build of validated ideas that are proven feasible and viable to market to swiftly deliver improved outcomes and experiences to young people.

Through this two pronged, iterative, lean and agile approach ReachOut can ensure not just innovation, but also young peoples' safety through robust duty of care protocols and embedding outcomes measurement and review alongside quality controls in the product and service design and delivery process.



PROJECT 1: MY STORY

A product that allows users to store and share key data around their “story” including mental health journey, preferences and key activities. It can be used to communicate more effectively to peers and mental health professionals when seeking help.

For many young people sharing their mental health story can feel overwhelming. It takes courage and strength to open up and share what’s going on - but it can also be distressing to voice those inner fears.

Our current fragmented mental health system often forces young people to tell their story again and again. It’s an unnecessary process that can force people to relive this distress again and again, and it can be a significant barrier to young people getting the support they need.

Having to retell their story to GPs, counselors and each mental health professional they see is a basic system design fault young people regularly raise with us. It’s not unique to Australia - however international best practice shows that capturing and sharing personal stories can play a role in the mental health journey of young people.

ReachOut’s My Story product will solve this problem

and make young people’s help-seeking journey easier - meaning more young people are likely to start or continue to receive the support they need.

My Story will allow young people to build their own profile, capture their story and choose how, and with whom, to share their lived experiences. For young people, a digitally accessible and shareable story will help others understand their circumstances, without having to relive any traumatic experiences.

My Story will be able to be built out over time as a young person’s experience evolves, their feelings change and they learn more about what supports work for them.

We know young people value their privacy and can be wary about what information is shared with whom. ReachOut ensures its services have strong data and security protections and My Story will ensure the young person is always in control of their data. They will be able to change what they share, what data we hold and how it is used as and when they see fit.

My Story meets a real need in the mental health ecosystem and ReachOut, as a trusted digital service innovator, can deliver it in a way that meets young peoples’ complex expectations for digital services that use their private and sensitive information.

Jessi can store their story once and share it without having to relive it.



Psychologist



Peer supporter



School counselor

PROJECT 2: A PERSONALISED SERVICE EXPERIENCE

A series of new interlinked service features that gives young people reassurance that we understand them and tailor their experience on site according to their mental health journey. By drawing on their conversations, the content they've viewed and the specific communities they've interacted with, we will be able to present a personal experience that matches their mental health context.

Every young person's mental health experiences and service use preferences are different. There are too many one-size-fits-all solutions in youth mental health which has meant too many young Australians have fallen through the cracks or had poor experiences within the mental health system.

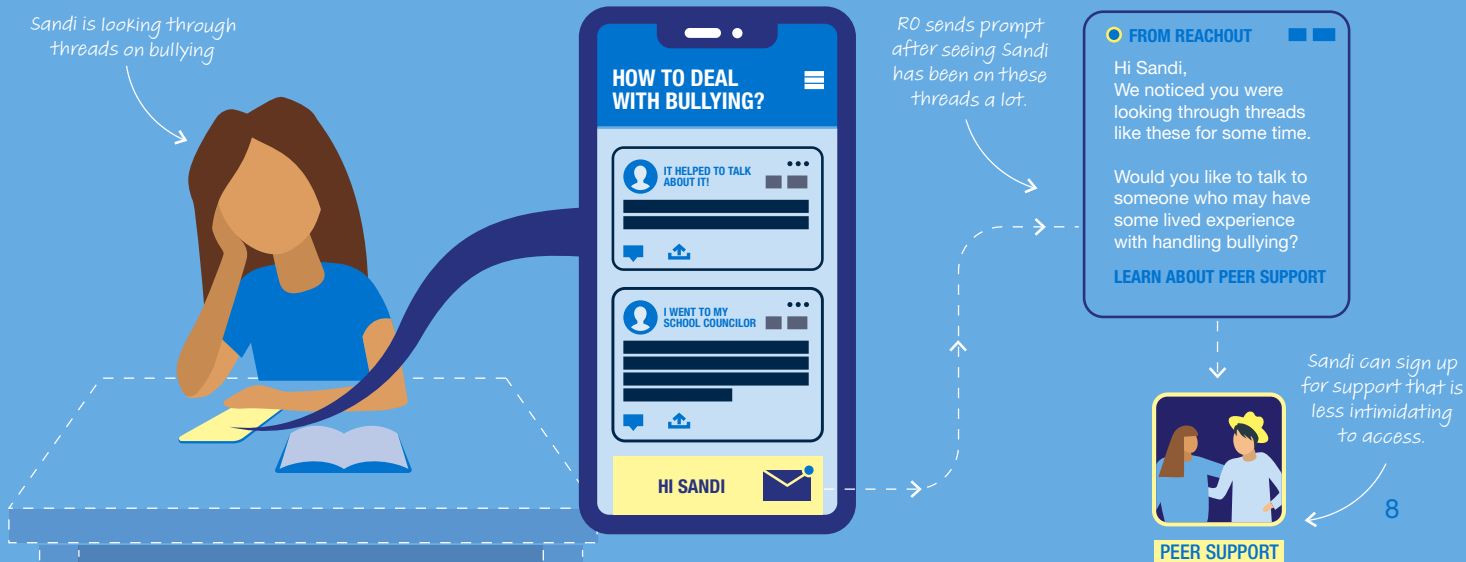
We know that data is being used to target content at young people, make them buy more, keep them engaged with social media platforms - but we can also use data for good. Significant, ongoing advances in data technology mean that we can increasingly identify individual needs and preferences and tailor our services to meet them.

Service personalisation at ReachOut means young people will receive a feed of content and discussion threads relevant to their individual needs - so instead of having to go looking for the support they need, it's delivered straight to them.

We know that young people will often favour short-term immediate solutions, not what is necessarily going to be most effective for their mental health recovery in the long term. We will improve our ability to understand underlying issues and guide young people to effective long-term solutions through features like nudges, notifications of appointments, relevant articles and messages of encouragement to help keep them on track with their mental health journey.

ReachOut serves a diverse audience from different backgrounds, at different stages of life and dealing with a wide spectrum of issues. Young people regularly tell us that it's important that they see themselves reflected in the services they are accessing. This is especially true for minority groups. So we'll tailor the imagery, language and recommendations used on site to ensure that ReachOut reflects its individual users to ensure they feel understood and to increase their comfort and engagement with the service.

By harnessing data and technology we can create a smarter mental health service that takes what we know about a young person and eases them into the right tools and services that best meet their needs. It's a mental health tool that they will never see, but nonetheless will help them make sense of what they are going through and make recommendations on what they could do now and what they could do later to be happy and well.



PROJECT 3: SMALL GROUP

PEER SUPPORT

A new service that allows young people to enter into safe and stigma free “micro communities” of peers with a similar lived experience that are centered on common issues like anxiety or isolation. It will also enable young people to access facilitated small group sessions run by peer workers, who can help guide them with contextual strategies for navigating mental health.

We all benefit from feeling understood by someone who has ‘walked in our shoes’, and there is a growing evidence-base that peer support can play an integral role in addressing current and future mental health challenges. Research has found that online peer support forums can offer numerous benefits, including the ability to share their experiences with other people with similar experiences and feelings, helping young people feel less isolated and alone, contributing to social connection and a sense of belonging, and helping to normalise their experiences.

Young people are often reluctant to seek help from traditional counselling services and many fall below the threshold for these services but still suffer the disruptive effects on their wellbeing which impacts academic performance, peer and family relationships, and self-esteem.

We know from our research that young people are looking for options to connect safely with other young people when they aren’t ready, able or willing to talk to mental health professionals or crisis services.

ReachOut has a decade of experience in providing digital peer support via our ReachOut Forums and has prototyped, tested and is now building an Australian-first digital one-on-one peer support model.

Small group peer support is the obvious next step as it will enable young people to connect with peers to share their experiences on specific topics in meaningful new ways.

Stream 1 will allow young people to enter into “micro communities” of peers with a similar lived experience that are centered on common issues like anxiety or isolation. It is a model that allows young people to create their own moderated “instant messenger” style groups to provide connection, mutual support and lessons from each others’ lived experience.

Stream 2 involves young people joining a small group that is facilitated by a peer worker where they can ask questions and discuss strategies, in a safe and stigma free way. It is a model that builds on the sharing of lived experience and helps young people take the first steps towards more formal help-seeking pathways.





BUDGET

At a time when young people’s expectations for mental health services are quickly evolving, investing in ReachOut is a cost effective way to ensure that young Australians have access to information, advice and support that meets their needs when and where they need it. Investing in innovation and ReachOut will also take pressure off other less scalable, more cost intensive services.

An investment of \$7.7 million over 4 years will enable us to establish the ReachOut Digital Youth Mental Health Innovation Lab and explore, prototype and, if validated, accelerate the build of the first of our exciting new service concepts: a ‘tell your story once’ profile,

a personalised service experience with smart nudging to help young people keep on track and the next stage of our peer support offering - small group peer support.

We’ll also begin work on identifying the next ideas and moving them through the Lab process - because at ReachOut we know there is no such thing as set and forget in digital mental health. Young peoples’ needs and expectations will continue to evolve and they deserve a mental health system that keeps up with them.

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	
BUDGET LINE ITEM	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
INNOVATION LAB					
Research	\$375,000	\$386,250	\$397,838	\$409,773	\$1,568,860
Co-design and Youth Engagement	\$100,000	\$103,000	\$106,090	\$109,273	\$418,363
Service Concept Design & Validation	\$960,000	\$988,800	\$1,018,464	\$1,049,018	\$4,016,282
Technology	\$165,000	\$169,950	\$175,049	\$180,300	\$690,298
Overheads @ 15%	\$240,000	\$247,200	\$254,616	\$262,254	\$1,004,070
TOTAL INNOVATION LAB FUNDING	\$1,840,000	\$1,895,200	\$1,952,056	\$2,010,618	\$7,697,874

