What can ALITE do for you?

ALITE—a resource for the LCA and its institutions

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The Australian Lutheran Institute for Theology and Ethics (ALITE) was designed to serve not just the needs of ALC, but to provide resources to serve the wider Australian Lutheran community and its ministries and institutions. Toward that end we are seeking to make other departments and ministries within the LCA aware of what ALITE may be able to offer them, and to enter into creative partnerships that will advance the life and ministry of the LCA.

Types of research ALITE is able to do

When most people think of research they either visualise a laboratory, or they think of pollsters taking surveys. These things are important types of research, but the research field is much broader than these.

1. Surveys

ALITE is able to do quantitative surveys of staff, clientele, key stakeholders or other designated groups. Such surveys need to be well designed in conjunction with the group requesting the information in order to provide the best data possible.

Surveys can help evaluate such things as the effectiveness of existing programmes, the needs of clients, the perceptions of key stakeholders, future areas of need and other data required by an organisation’s key decision-makers.

2. Qualitative studies

In many cases in-depth interviews with a select number of individuals and/or discussions with targeted focus groups can provide vital information that goes beyond mere statistics. A quantitative survey may tell you that a high percentage of your staff are unhappy, or that many clients are not satisfied with the service provided, but may not indicate the reasons for this. Qualitative studies are designed to provide this understanding.

3. Background research for key decisions and draft documents

In many cases a great deal of relevant literature exists concerning an area in which a group or organisation needs information. ALITE is able to identify, categorise and summarise the existing data. Key decision-makers then have access to the relevant existing literature before making major policy decisions, or deciding whether another study is needed.

Many organisations find themselves needing to produce important documentation. The initial work is often done by researchers who ascertain what the objectives of the document or statement are, research similar documents from other groups as well as any related internal background documents, then produce a working draft which the organisation can take further and refine as needed.
4. **Assistance in research design**

Many times a relationship with another research organisation already exists, or you may wish to pursue research options with another research group. If you do not understand the language of researchers it can be difficult to ensure the right questions are asked in the right way, and that the final data are appropriately understood. ALITE is able to work with such research groups on your behalf to ensure the best possible results of any research projects in which your group or organisation is a participant.

5. **Postgraduate supervision**

Many organisations have increasing, ongoing research needs and may have staff members who are looking to take their level of qualifications further. In some cases, ALITE may be able to provide supervision of PhD students within your organisation within targeted fields.

6. **Grant and other funding applications**

Researchers work regularly with funding applications. This is a large part of the task of most researchers. ALITE has experience in this area and can help your organisation identify and apply for funding for selected projects. We cannot guarantee the success of a funding application, but we can ensure that the application is not rejected because it was not professionally written or well thought through.

7. **Action research projects**

Much research today involves the tracking and evaluation of new programmes or initiatives. ALITE is able to track a new programme, venture or policy and develop a means of assessing to what extent the new programme is meeting the needs for which it was intended, and document this progress in an appropriate reporting format.

8. **Performance evaluations**

Increasingly most organisations carry out performance evaluations of key staff, groups, boards, or even the organisation as a whole. These need to be done sensitively and in confidence. ALITE has experience is such evaluations and sees this area as another significant area of research for the LCA and its ministries.

9. **Ethics audits**

The senior researcher at ALITE has training and experience in conducting organisational ethics audits. Organisations undergo ethics audits to ensure their culture, procedures, policies and practices are in keeping with their stated values as well as legal and community expectations. Ethics audits help ensure that your group does not end up in the media saying “We have no idea how this could have happened,” or “No one thought to investigate these complaints further.”

**Ways of Funding Research**

**Funding Models**

1. **Budgeting research within existing and future programmes**

If significant funding for key programmes exists already, consider designating a portion of this funding to the areas of research identified previously. It will likely prove money well spent.
2. **Sharing research resources**

   If there is enough funding and work to fund a specialised full-time researcher, such as LEA has recently done, great. Most of us will not be in this position. But we may find other related organisations with similar research needs. Consider funding together a full-, half- or even part-time research position through ALITE.

   ALITE can provide the structure, expertise, ethics approvals, office space, access to computer-based analytical programmes, etc. for a person who would be available to work on your specific research needs.

3. **Job by job funding**

   Perhaps your need for research is very occasional. Instead of going to another research group, consider coming to ALITE with your need, however small or large, and let us work with you to produce a clear proposal and quote for the project.

4. **External funding**

   You have a great idea or vision but no available funds. ALITE can help you search and apply for funding. If we can help you find the funding, then we can work with you on the ensuing project. If we are not successful, you have not committed any resources apart from the time involved in preparing the application.

   Generally, we recommend only pursuing applications for which we believe:
   
   (1) funding is a genuine possibility,
   
   (2) the project serves the wider work of the LCA or the Christian community generally, and
   
   (3) the research can be undertaken by us at a high level.