

Things to Consider: Working with Indigenous Peoples and Communities



When working with Indigenous peoples and/or communities, it is critical that projects promote self-determination, are community-led and respect cultural protocols.

This fact sheet provides information to guide the design and delivery of your project to make sure it is ethical and has the best chance of success.

✓ DO

- **Consult early and continuously**

Engage Indigenous peoples and communities early during the design of your project, and continue consultation and engagement throughout the delivery.

- **Work in collaborative partnerships**

Explore opportunities for partnerships with local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and/or Cultural Business/Cultural Practitioners.

- **Demonstrate how projects meets the needs and priorities of communities**

Ensure your project has been identified as a priority through community consultation and engagement, and design the project to support community-led outcomes.

- **Maintain reciprocity**

When developing your project, ensure that it has strong outcomes for all Indigenous partners and community.

- **Communicate clearly and regularly**

Transparency during the project delivery is important. Create ways to clearly and continuously communicate with Indigenous partners/community.

- **Remunerate appropriately**

When developing the project's budget, include remuneration of services provided, including for Welcome to Country, Acknowledgement of Country, Cultural knowledge, expertise and travel.

- **Procure Indigenous services**

Familiarise yourself with all the relevant Traditional Lands/Tribal Groups/Language Groups and identify who is most appropriate to deliver services within the identified community

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X DON'T

- **Include Indigenous peoples or community if you haven't adequately engaged and received their full support**

Don't commit communities or individuals to something they are not aware of, or have not agreed to. Permissions must be sought to use peoples/communities' names and information. Interest and permission might be demonstrated via a collaboratively written agreement or Letter of Support.

- **Only engage with handpicked members of the community**

Indigenous groups can be diverse and have different needs so you should consult across the community. It is critical that Indigenous people are informed and involved throughout the whole project.

- **Proceed if the project is not a priority for the community**

Even when a project may have benefits within the community, the community may not have capacity to do it at that time, or may have other priorities. Projects that enter a community without their full support will have less chance of success, and can have negative consequences.

- **Assume that Indigenous people have, or necessarily want to share, cultural knowledge or practice**

Because of the impacts of colonisation, many Indigenous knowledge and land management systems continue to be in a state of repair. Indigenous groups should not be expected to know or produce on request, cultural and historical knowledge of their Country.

- **Expect Indigenous people to contribute their knowledge, time or services for free**

Acknowledge that Indigenous knowledge is an invaluable resource and should be treated as expert knowledge, and compensated as such.

- **Use cultural material, including art, design, language, knowledge and pictures without permission**

This includes understanding the long term uses of the material, whether it can only be used for a certain period, or who to contact for ongoing uses. Understand any cultural protocols associated with the material and ensure you have things in place to respect these.

The following resources provide more information about ethical research with Indigenous peoples and communities:

[Principles and protocols for cultural land management governance and research](#)

[AIATSIS Code of Ethics](#)

[NHMRC Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples](#)