

CLOSING THE GAP

ENGAGING WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AUSTRALIANS



Steps for engaging effectively to work together and build productive partnerships

The following steps can be used to guide and check the way you work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and how you can incorporate engagement into everyday processes.

These steps are designed to be used in conjunction with other departmental project management and planning protocols.

Identify the stakeholders

- Who are the stakeholders?
- Who has an interest in your work?
- Who is impacted by your work?
- Who should be consulted?
- Do specific population groups need to be targeted (e.g. women, the elderly, youth, people with a disability)?
- Does the population you are targeting fit into more than one group and, if so, how will this affect their ability to participate, benefit or contribute?
- Are there any other barriers to engagement to be addressed?

Maximise the ability of stakeholders to participate

- What are the possible constraints to participation and the means to overcome them?
- What are the most appropriate methods to initiate or invite participation?

- Have special interest groups been considered?
- Has support and advice been obtained from community leaders, the Regional Operations centre (ROC) or Indigenous Coordination Centre (ICC), community organisations and/or local service providers?
- Are there language barriers to address (e.g. if English is not the first language of community members you may need to engage an interpreter)?

Identify issues

- Where has the issue come from (e.g. government, Indigenous people, community leaders or organisations, evidence from research or other reliable sources)?
- What needs to be discussed and decided?
- Are there any anticipated contentious issues?
- What are the genuinely non-negotiable issues for government and stakeholders?

Define objectives

- What are the objectives of your work?
- Are the objectives of the government and stakeholders aligned?
- What information is available?
- What information needs to be gathered through an engagement process?

- What are the limits of the engagement?
- Is it necessary for a consensus to be reached for the objectives to be met and outcomes to be achieved?

Establish timeframes

- Engagement is an ongoing process; has this been factored into your timeframes and goals?
- Have timeframes been developed in consultation with stakeholders and do they suit them?
- What are the time constraints?
- Are timeframes realistic?

Choose methods

- What engagement methods should be used?
- Are the chosen methods most appropriate for the stakeholders and the objectives?
- Have alternative methods that best suit the stakeholders been considered (e.g. is there another method which is not usually employed that may be beneficial in this situation)?

Consider communications

- What background information, data and research do stakeholders need?
- Does this information need to be translated, clarified or simplified?
- What methods are appropriate for conveying information to stakeholders (e.g. pamphlets, letters, PowerPoint presentations, radio, face to face contact, social media, SMS, facebook, media stories or advertisements, etc)
- Have stakeholders been asked what their preferred format is?
- For any face to face engagement, have stakeholders been asked what their preferred location is?
- Is written information concise, consistent and in appropriate formats?
- Have jargon and technical terms been minimised and fully explained where necessary?

Quality control

- Do government representatives / staff have sufficient cultural competency, credibility and authority to engage effectively?
- Do staff have effective communication, negotiation and analytical skills?
- Would it be appropriate to use a facilitator?
- What process will be followed in the event of conflict?
- What action is required if a major issue arises?
- How will this engagement contribute to building the relationship with stakeholders?

Estimate the resources

- What resources and staff are required?
- Is there a need for staff training?
- Is there a need for external personnel (eg mentor, facilitator or mediator)?
- Is there a need to organise a venue, organise catering etc?
- Is there an opportunity to collaborate with other areas in your department or other government agencies?

Outcomes

- Are the outcomes clearly defined?
- Do the outcomes contribute to building an ongoing relationship?
- How will decisions reached through the engagement be implemented?
- What are the approval processes?

Feedback

- How will stakeholders provide feedback on engagement?
- How will the engagement outcomes be conveyed to stakeholders?
- How will the outcomes be conveyed to staff, other stakeholders (e.g. community organisations, service providers and the general community)?

Evaluation and review

- Has an evaluation process been developed?
- How will a successful engagement process be defined and measured?
- What mechanisms are in place to review stakeholders' perceptions of the engagement?

Note: The terms 'consultation' and 'participation' refer to particular activities and are not interchangeable with engagement, which is an ongoing process to build relationships. The term

'stakeholders' refers to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who can contribute to, will benefit from and will be impacted by your work.

Other information sheets in the series

- *Issues to keep in mind – Part 1 Cultural awareness*
- *Issues to keep in mind – Part 2 Visiting communities*
- *The engagement spectrum*
- *What are the principles underpinning effective engagement?*
- *What is good engagement?*