

PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES

1 Purpose

These Principles are designed to guide the development of a partnership-centred approach between Aboriginal organisations and non-Aboriginal organisations in service delivery and development initiatives in Aboriginal communities.

These principles have drawn heavily on the:

- Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APO NT), '*NT Partnership Principles for working with Aboriginal organisations and communities in the Northern Territory*';¹ and
- Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), '*Principles for a Partnership-centred approach*'.²

2 Objectives

To clearly communicate the expectations that Aboriginal organisations have of non-Aboriginal organisations seeking to work with Aboriginal people and communities in the East Kimberley.

The key aims of these Principles are:

- for non-Aboriginal organisations to provide capacity building assistance and support, through mutually agreed partnerships, to Aboriginal organisations;
- to encourage the participation of non-Aboriginal organisations in sector development of Aboriginal organisations; and
- to create a sustainable approach for non-Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal organisations working together to develop exit strategies, so increasingly it is Aboriginal organisations leading reform, development and service delivery in their own communities.

3 Principles

In supporting the below Partnership Principles (**Principles**), non-Aboriginal organisations agree to:

3.1 Consider their own capacity

Non-Aboriginal organisations must objectively assess whether they have the capacity to deliver effective and sustainable outcomes in the East Kimberley context.

¹ Available at <http://www.amsant.org.au/apont/our-work/non-government-organisations/apo-nt-ngo-principles/>

² Available at <https://www.acoss.org.au/principles-for-a-partnership-centred-approach/>

3.2 Recognise existing capacity

Non-Aboriginal organisations will recognise the existing capacity and strengths of Aboriginal organisations and identify how they can contribute to further developing this capacity.

3.3 Research existing options

Non-Aboriginal organisations must comprehensively research the scope of existing service providers and development agencies before applying for contracts or projects of a similar nature.

3.4 Seek partnerships

In circumstances where there is an Aboriginal organisation willing and able to provide a service or development activity, non-Aboriginal organisations must not directly compete with that Aboriginal organisation and should seek (where appropriate) to develop a partnership in accordance with these Principles.

3.5 Approach to partnership

In developing a partnership with Aboriginal organisations, non-Aboriginal organisations will:

- be guided by the priorities of the Aboriginal organisation;
- ensure the partnership is based on building and strengthening, rather than displacing, the capacity of Aboriginal organisations; and
- recognise the inherent power imbalance between large non-Aboriginal organisations and small Aboriginal organisations, allowing enough time for partnership development.
- non-Aboriginal organisations will contribute to strengthening the Aboriginal community-controlled sector.

3.6 Recognise, support and promote existing development practice

Non-Aboriginal organisations recognise that many Aboriginal organisations already have robust and effective practices embedded in a cultural framework (whether documented or not). Non-Aboriginal organisations agree to recognise existing development practices and support these through partnership arrangements.

3.7 Work together with Aboriginal people to create strong and viable Aboriginal organisations

Non-Aboriginal organisations recognise Aboriginal organisations and communities as lead agents in creating sustainable governance and leadership in Aboriginal communities in Western Australia. Non-Aboriginal organisations agree to work within the structures and processes that provide Aboriginal decision-making control, including formal delegation of power and dedication of self-generated resources to assist with this process.

3.8 Ensure Aboriginal Control, not just consultation

Non-Aboriginal organisations agree that Aboriginal organisations need to drive and have control of development initiatives, services and programs delivered to their communities. This should include having input to decisions regarding resource allocations and staffing.

3.9 Develop a clear exit strategy

If the desired outcome is for local Aboriginal organisations to deliver services or provide a development role, non-Aboriginal organisations are to develop a mutually agreed and transparent exit strategy in consultation with their Aboriginal organisation partners. The exit strategy should, for government contracts, incorporate a succession plan and long-term planning for local Aboriginal organisations to deliver services with appropriate resourcing.

3.10 Ensure robust evaluation and accountability

Non-Aboriginal organisations, together with partner Aboriginal organisations, will develop a robust accountability framework and evaluation process to measure:

- the performance of both the non-Aboriginal organisation and the Aboriginal organisation in delivering services, programs and/or development initiatives; and
- the effectiveness of the partnership between the organisations.

3.11 Cultural competency and appropriate development practice

Aboriginal organisations and non-Aboriginal organisations will seek to work together to share learnings and establish effective development practice and cultural competency standards for development projects and service delivery initiatives.

3.12 Data sovereignty and research projects

In relation to both research and operational data, non-Aboriginal organisations:

- recognise the inherent rights of Aboriginal peoples to maintain, control, protect and develop data in respect of their culture, tradition and lives;
- agree to work with Aboriginal organisations to maintain data sovereignty.

In conducting a research project, non-Aboriginal organisations are strongly encouraged to comply with relevant ethical research guidelines, for example:

- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), '*Guidelines for Ethical Research*';³
- National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), '*Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders*'.⁴

³ Available at <https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/guidelines-ethical-research-australian-indigenous-studies>

⁴ Available at <https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/ethical-conduct-research-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-and-communities>.

4 How to contact us

If you have any questions or comments about these Principles, please don't hesitate to contact us as follows:

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Last updated: 20 March 2019