



PRINCIPLES FOR A PARTNERSHIP-CENTRED APPROACH FOR NGOS WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ORGANISATIONS AND COMMUNITIES

Purpose

These Principles are designed to guide the development of a partnership-centred approach between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream NGOs in tendering for program funds and engaging in the delivery of services or development initiatives in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.

Objectives

The objectives of these Principles are to:

- Provide a platform for a collaborative approach between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream NGOs to address issues arising from processes such as the Federal Government's open tendering of all Indigenous funding under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy;
- Provide a funding and procurement environment in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations can be recognised for their unique role in building community capacity and participation in the provision of essential services;
- Prevent the decimation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations as a result of tendering and procurement processes and budget cuts; and
- Hold Government to account and ensure the selection criteria for funding under the IAS and other open tendering processes is fulfilled by each successful applicant, particularly in relation to the ability to:
 - Demonstrate a commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the design and delivery of the activity, by ensuring that relevant communities are consulted in the development of the project and support the delivery of the project; and through a commitment to employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Principles

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream NGOs commit to the following national Principles for a partnership-centred approach when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities in Australia, on the basis of practical community development and the relationship with and knowledge of local community and organisations.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream NGOs agree to specific commitments and actions that organisations can make in the context of procurement and tendering processes including the current Prime Minister and Cabinet funding process under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS):

Before considering a tender, mainstream NGOs shall thoroughly research existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers and development agencies before applying in order to recognise the capacity of such organisations to deliver further services/programs and to build upon existing relationships with partnership potential.

1. NGOs shall objectively assess their own capacity (either in service delivery or development practice) to deliver effective and sustainable outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and only tender for such services when it is determined that such capacity is of a level that warrants it making such an application.
2. Where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander NGO's are willing and able to provide a service or development activity, mainstream NGOs shall not directly compete for tender, but will seek, where appropriate, to develop a partnership in accord with these principles. National peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations will agree to provide advice if required regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations tendering under the IAS procurement process.
3. Where participating in a tender Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream NGOs shall include Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and outcomes that demonstrate implementation of these principles including:

- participating in and supporting development of community level capacity, governance and decision making;
 - developing a robust accountability framework and evaluation process together with partnering organisations and communities;
 - where the desired outcome is for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to deliver services or provide a development role, mainstream NGOs will develop a mutually agreed, transparent exit strategy in consultation with their partners. Contracts with government should incorporate a succession plan and long term planning for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to deliver services, with appropriate resourcing included.
4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and mainstream NGOs will seek to work together to share learnings and establish effective development practice and cultural competency standards for development projects and service delivery initiatives to enhance the cultural relevance and quality of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, recognising there may be a need to resource this work specifically.

*These principles have drawn heavily upon a set of ‘Principles for a Partnership-Centred Approach for NGOs Working with Aboriginal Organisations and Communities in the Northern Territory’. These were developed by a consortium of agencies in 2013 including Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APONT), National Congress, SAF.T, NTCOSS and ACOSS; and subsequently endorsed by a number of Aboriginal and mainstream human service providers and development agencies operating in the Northern Territory.