



TOOLKIT SERIES

First Nations engagement strategy

Guide and template for proponents

Designed for entry-level
use and scalable to project
context, risk and maturity

October 2026

Acknowledgement of Country

ASL respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which this work was developed and delivered. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations peoples. We sincerely thank First Nations stakeholders for their invaluable guidance, insights, and support throughout the development of this document. Their contributions have enriched our understanding and strengthened our commitment to meaningful collaboration.

Artwork credit: The 'Journey of unity: AEMO's Reconciliation Path' was created by Wiradjuri artist Lani Balzan.



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The ASL Social Value Toolkit tools and guidance are structured across three levels to support the gradual development of social value capability and maturity.



INTRODUCTORY

Builds foundational understanding and capability in social value practice.



INTERMEDIATE

Builds on foundational capability to support more developed social value practice.



ADVANCED

Supports established capability and more mature social value practice.

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PART A

– Guide for proponents

1. Purpose of this guide

This guide supports proponents to develop a meaningful, credible and practical First Nations Engagement and Participation Strategy.

The strategy is intended to help proponents:

- respect First Nations peoples as Rights Holders
- support self-determination
- consider the application of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)
- engage early and appropriately
- identify realistic First Nations participation opportunities
- make commitments that are place-based, evidence-informed and deliverable
- review and improve their approach over time.

The intent is to help proponents move beyond compliance-driven engagement and towards engagement that builds trust, shared understanding and tangible outcomes for First Nations peoples and communities. It supports better engagement outcomes without creating unnecessary burden or complexity. It does not replace statutory cultural heritage processes or other legal obligations.

A strong First Nations Engagement and Participation Strategy

A strong strategy is grounded in early listening, a clear understanding of context and transparent commitments.

Commitments should be informed by engagement, proportionate to the project and supported by credible delivery pathways.

Effective strategies recognise that engagement and participation are ongoing processes that evolve as relationships, understanding and project circumstances develop.

2. Who this guide is for

This guide and the accompanying templates are intended for project proponents that are required, or choose, to develop a First Nations Engagement and Participation Strategy.

It is suitable for:

- organisations with limited prior experience engaging First Nations peoples
- experienced proponents seeking a consistent, good-practice framework
- use during tender, planning, construction, operations or other project stages
- projects of different sizes, sectors and levels of maturity.

The templates are scalable. Proponents should tailor the depth of information and level of detail to the project's scale, risk, location, timing, impacts and maturity.

3. How to use this document



This resource can be used as a standalone guide or alongside other Social Value Toolkit resources. Tender-specific call-outs are clearly marked and should be read with the relevant tender and contract documents.

4. Why getting First Nations engagement right matters

First Nations peoples are Rights Holders with enduring cultural, social and economic connections to Country. They may hold distinct rights, interests and responsibilities in relation to Country, culture and heritage. Engagement approaches should recognise these rights and interests alongside broader stakeholder considerations.

Engagement that is rushed, late or tokenistic can:

- damage relationships and trust
- increase project risk and delays
- result in commitments that are unrealistic or misaligned
- undermine social licence and long-term outcomes.

Good engagement can:

- improve project design and delivery
- support better risk identification and mitigation
- enable participation, employment, business and partnership outcomes informed by engagement
- strengthen long-term relationships
- support a positive legacy beyond the life of the project.

Effective engagement also depends on internal capability, governance and resourcing. Proponents need the right people, processes, decision-making authority and cultural capability to support respectful, consistent and accountable delivery.

5. Engagement and participation: how they work together

Engagement and participation are related, but they are not the same.

Engagement is about process and relationship. It describes how proponents listen, learn, share information and enable First Nations peoples to influence decisions over time.

Participation is about outcomes and delivery. It describes the tangible ways First Nations peoples, communities and businesses may participate in governance, employment, procurement, partnerships and other project activities.

In practice

Engagement answers: How will we engage, and what decisions will engagement inform?

Participation answers: What opportunities and commitments will flow from that engagement?

A strong strategy treats engagement as the foundation and participation as an outcome informed by engagement, rather than the starting point.

How engagement informs participation and commitments

1. Understand Country and project context
2. Identify the appropriate people and organisations to engage
3. Engage early and appropriately
4. Listen, learn and understand priorities
5. Identify realistic participation opportunities together
6. Translate opportunities into clear and deliverable commitments
7. Deliver, monitor and report progress
8. Review, adapt and improve over time.

This approach helps ensure commitments are locally relevant, supported by engagement, achievable over time and aligned with project scope, timing and delivery capability.

It is acceptable, and often appropriate, to state that engagement has not yet commenced, engagement is still underway, or opportunities and commitments will be refined as engagement progresses. The strategy should explain how engagement will occur, which decisions it can inform and how feedback will be reflected in future commitments.

ASL tender-specific note

In some tender processes, commitments may need to be sufficiently developed at bid stage because selected commitments become contractually binding. Proponents should refer to the relevant tender documents and make commitments that are realistic, evidence-informed and deliverable.

6. Core principles that underpin this guide

Engagement, participation opportunities and commitments should be grounded in the following principles.

Self-determination

First Nations peoples determine their own priorities, aspirations and participation. Engagement should support choice and influence rather than pre-determined outcomes.

Free, Prior and Informed Consent

FPIC is an ongoing rights-based process. Where consent is relevant or required, it should be free, prior, informed and capable of being maintained or reconsidered over time.

Engagement should:

- be free of pressure or coercion
- occur prior to relevant decisions being locked in
- provide accessible information and sufficient time for consideration
- recognise that consent is an ongoing process, not a one-off event.

Proponents should consider the application of FPIC in relation to the rights and interests potentially affected, applicable legal and policy requirements, relevant agreements and the views of affected First Nations groups. Where the proposed approach does not seek consent, the strategy should clearly explain the intended level of influence and the basis for that approach.

Cultural safety and inclusion

Engagement and participation should be supported by environments in which First Nations peoples are respected and able to participate without discrimination or pressure to compromise their cultural identity.

Proponents should consider:

- appropriate cultural capability for employees and contractors
- clear expectations for respectful workplace behaviour
- culturally appropriate feedback, grievance and reporting pathways
- support for the recruitment, retention and development of First Nations employees
- how cultural obligations and responsibilities will be accommodated.

Early and ongoing engagement

Engagement should begin as early as possible and continue across the project lifecycle. It should align with key decision points so First Nations perspectives can genuinely inform outcomes.

Place-based and proportional

Engagement approaches and commitments should be tailored to Country, context and project scale. Relevant considerations include local context and capability, project scale and timing, workforce and supply chain realities, cultural protocols and obligations, and local priorities and aspirations.

Integrity and accountability

Commitments should be genuine, realistic and deliverable. They should be supported by clear responsibility, appropriate governance and escalation pathways, sufficient internal resourcing, transparent reporting, and regular review and improvement.

7. Using the template

The templates are designed to be simple, modular and scalable. Tables and prompts support short, clear responses and do not require specialist expertise to complete. Illustrative examples demonstrate the expected level of detail, tone and structure and should not be copied verbatim.

This strategy is:

- a planning tool
- a living document
- a bridge between engagement and commitments
- a way to support accountability and continuous improvement.

This strategy is not:

- a legal agreement
- a marketing document
- a substitute for cultural heritage processes
- a one-off consultation record.

Important note

This strategy does not replace statutory cultural heritage processes or obligations. It complements them by addressing broader engagement, participation, governance, social and economic opportunities informed by engagement.

Five core questions to guide you

- Where are we, and who should we be engaging?
- How will we engage respectfully and appropriately?
- What opportunities could exist?
- What commitments can we realistically make now?
- How will we stay accountable and improve over time?

8. What good practice can look like

The following maturity continuum is a simple guide, not a formal assessment tool.

Area	Emerging	Developing	Leading
 Engagement	Engagement occurs late or in response to issues.	Engagement is planned and aligned to project phases.	Engagement begins early and continues across the project lifecycle.
 Recognition	First Nations groups are treated only as stakeholders.	First Nations peoples are recognised as stakeholders and Rights Holders.	Engagement recognises relevant rights, cultural authority, responsibilities and local representation.
 Commitments	Commitments are generic or primarily target-based.	Commitments are linked to project opportunities and local context.	Commitments are informed by engagement and reviewed over time.
 Participation	Participation focuses on short-term opportunities.	Participation includes employment, procurement and governance opportunities.	Participation supports long-term relationships, capability-building and legacy outcomes.
 Reporting	Reporting is ad hoc.	Reporting is periodic and linked to commitments.	Reporting includes feedback loops, learning and continuous improvement.

The objective is not to over-engineer the strategy. It is to demonstrate respectful process, realistic commitments and consistent follow-through.

9. Common pitfalls and better practice approaches

Common pitfall	Better practice approach
Treating engagement as a compliance task	Engage early, explain what decisions engagement will inform, and show how feedback is considered.
Over-promising to show commitment	Make fewer, clearer commitments that are realistic, evidence-informed and deliverable.
Confusing consultation with consent	Be clear about the level of influence, what is open to change, and where FPIC may be relevant or required.
Using generic or copied language	Use place-based, project-specific language that reflects actual context and engagement.
Identifying the wrong people	Allow time to confirm appropriate representatives and acknowledge uncertainty where needed.
Assuming one organisation represents all interests	Identify the appropriate people and organisations for each engagement purpose.
Leaving engagement too late	Align engagement with key project decisions, not only approvals or construction milestones.
Treating the strategy as static	Review and update the strategy as engagement progresses and circumstances change.
Having no clear ownership	Assign responsibility, resourcing and escalation pathways.
Ignoring cultural obligations and timing	Build in flexibility and respect cultural obligations, decision-making processes and timing.
Creating unnecessary participation burden	Coordinate engagement where appropriate, respect competing demands, avoid repeatedly seeking the same input, allow sufficient decision-making time, and discuss appropriate support arrangements.
Setting targets without delivery pathways	Explain how targets or commitments will be achieved, resourced, monitored and supported.

10. Reviewing the strategy over time

The strategy is a living document. It should be reviewed and updated periodically to reflect:

- engagement outcomes and feedback
- lessons learned
- changing project circumstances
- new opportunities
- delivery progress
- updated commitments.

The review process should support ongoing learning and improvement, not only compliance reporting.

PART B

– First Nations Engagement Plan template

About this template

The First Nations Engagement Plan focuses on process, influence and governance. It documents who the proponent will engage and why, how engagement will occur, which decisions it will inform, how feedback will be recorded and responded to, and how engagement will inform participation opportunities and commitments.

It provides the foundation for the First Nations Participation Plan in Part C.

Using this template

Tables are designed to support short, clear responses. Dot points are acceptable.

Where an item is not applicable, state this briefly and explain why.

Where information is not yet known, explain what is unknown, why it is not yet known, what will be done to address the gap, and when the information is expected to be updated.

1. Acknowledgement of Country

Insert an Acknowledgement of Country for the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters on which the project is located. Confirm locally preferred terminology where possible.

Illustrative example:

[Proponent] acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which the [project name] is located and recognises their continuing connections to Country, culture and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations peoples.

Proponent response

[Insert project-specific information]



2. Project context

Provide a concise, place-based overview of the organisation, project and relevant First Nations context. Information should be based on credible sources and, where possible, validated through engagement. Clearly identify gaps or uncertainties that require further engagement or verification.

2.1 About the proponent

Include:

- what the organisation does and where it operates
- project governance and decision-making roles
- delivery partners and key contractors, where relevant
- relevant experience, including First Nations engagement and outcomes where applicable
- organisational commitments or frameworks, such as a Reconciliation Action Plan.

Illustrative example:

[Proponent] is an infrastructure delivery organisation operating in [region or state]. The [role] is accountable for project delivery and associated social outcomes, supported by the [role] responsible for implementing this strategy. Our relevant experience includes [brief examples]. We are committed to ongoing improvement through respectful, place-based engagement.

Proponent response

[Insert project-specific information]



2.2 About the project

Include:

- project location and a simple map where possible
- scope, timing and key project phases
- anticipated workforce and supply chain profile
- relevant approvals, land access, operations and community interfaces
- potential cultural, social or economic impacts and opportunities at a high level.

Illustrative example:

The project involves construction and operation of [brief description] in [location]. Key phases are [development], [construction] and [operations], with indicative timing of [dates or periods]. The anticipated workforce and supply chain profile is [brief description]. The project requires [relevant approvals or processes] before construction.

Proponent response

[Insert project-specific information]



2.3 Engagement context and intent

Explain why First Nations engagement matters for this project and identify the types of decisions it is intended to inform. Be clear about project constraints and matters that are not open to influence.

Illustrative example:

First Nations engagement is important because of the project's location on Country and its potential cultural, social and economic impacts. Engagement will inform [relevant decisions], including [examples]. The project will communicate clearly where decisions are constrained by legal, technical, safety, regulatory or commercial requirements.

Proponent response

[Insert project-specific information]



3. Purpose and objectives

State the purpose and practical objectives of the Engagement Plan.

Illustrative example:

The purpose of this First Nations Engagement Plan is to support culturally appropriate, transparent and ongoing engagement with relevant First Nations groups across the project lifecycle. Its objectives are to inform project design and delivery, understand and respond to cultural and social considerations, support informed participation in decision-making, and provide clear feedback on how input has been considered.

Proponent response

[Insert project-specific information]



4. Relevant First Nations groups

4.1 Identified Traditional Custodians, Traditional Owners and other relevant groups

Boundaries, representation and authority may be overlapping, contested, evolving or unresolved. Acknowledge uncertainty, avoid assumptions and allow sufficient time to confirm appropriate representatives through respectful engagement.

Important note

- The appropriate people and organisations will vary depending on the project, location and purpose of engagement.
- An RNTBC, Land Council or other representative body may have a formal role in relation to native title, land rights or cultural authority, but this does not necessarily mean that it represents every First Nations interest relevant to a project.
- Identify the appropriate groups and organisations for each engagement purpose and do not assume that engagement with one organisation constitutes engagement with all relevant First Nations peoples.

Group / organisation	Relationship to the project	Engagement to date	Key considerations
<i>Illustrative example:</i> Registered Native Title Body Corporation (RNTBC)	<i>Formal Native Title role in the project area</i>	<i>Initial meeting completed</i>	<i>Confirm engagement purposes, representatives, timing and resourcing</i>
<i>Illustrative example:</i> Local First Nations employment provider	<i>Potential workforce pathways</i>	<i>Introductory discussion held</i>	<i>Opportunity to formalise referral and support arrangements</i>

If engagement has not yet occurred, state this and outline intended next steps.

5. Engagement approach

5.1 Engagement principles

Describe the principles that will guide engagement. These may include:

- early and ongoing engagement
- culturally appropriate and accessible communication
- transparency about scope, risks, constraints and decision-making
- responsiveness and clear feedback loops
- supporting for self-determination.
- respect for cultural protocols.
- FPIC where relevant or required
- cultural safety and inclusion
- proportionate resourcing and avoidance of unnecessary participation burden.

Proponent response

[Insert project-specific information]



5.2 Engagement methods and timing

Outline the intended engagement methods for each project phase. Tailor methods to the purpose of engagement and the preferences, cultural protocols, accessibility needs and decision-making processes of participants.

Project phase	Purpose of engagement	Method	Who is involved	Timing
Illustrative example: Early planning	Understand Country, context and priorities	On-Country meeting, briefing or other agreed method	Relevant representatives and project team	Before key planning decisions
Illustrative example: Design and approvals	Seek input on relevant impacts, options and mitigations	Workshops, targeted meetings or written material	Relevant groups, advisers and decision-makers	Aligned with design and approval milestones
Illustrative example: Construction	Manage impacts and progress participation commitments	Regular meetings, site briefings and reporting	Relevant groups, contractors and project leads	At agreed intervals
Illustrative example: Operations	Maintain relationships and review outcomes	Periodic review meetings and reporting	Relevant groups and operator	At agreed intervals

5.3 Influence and feedback

Explain:

- which decisions engagement can inform
- the intended level of influence for different matters
- which matters are constrained or not open to change and why
- how engagement outcomes will be recorded and considered
- how participants will be informed about what changed, what did not change and the reasons.

Illustrative example:

Engagement outcomes will be documented and provided to relevant project decision-makers. Feedback will be communicated to participants, including how input influenced decisions. Where suggestions cannot be adopted, the reasons will be explained clearly and respectfully.

Proponent response

[Insert project-specific information]



5.4 How engagement will inform participation opportunities

Explain how engagement has shaped, or will shape, potential governance, procurement, employment, capability and broader economic participation opportunities. Distinguish between ideas under construction and confirmed commitments.

Illustrative example:

Engagement has informed the identification of potential employment, procurement and advisory opportunities. These opportunities will be tested against local priorities, project demand, capability, timing and delivery constraints before commitments are finalised.

Proponent response

[Insert project-specific information]



5.5 Governance, record keeping and reporting

Describe:

- the role accountable for the Engagement Plan
- day-to-day responsibility for engagement
- access to cultural and specialist advice
- how records, privacy and culturally sensitive information will be managed
- internal decision-making and escalation pathways
- how engagement activity and outcomes will be reported
- how complaints, concerns and disputes will be received and addressed.

Proponent response

[Insert project-specific information]



6. Engagement action plan

Action	Purpose or decision informed	Participants	Owner	Timing	Status or evidence

PART C

– First Nations Participation Plan template



About this template

The First Nations Participation Plan focuses on opportunities, commitments, delivery and accountability.

Participation opportunities should be informed by engagement and proportionate to the project context, timing, demand and local capability.

1. Purpose

Explain the purpose of the Participation Plan and how it connects to the Engagement Plan.

Illustrative example:

This First Nations Participation Plan outlines how the project will identify and deliver meaningful opportunities for First Nations peoples, communities and businesses across project governance, procurement, employment, capability-building and other relevant areas. Opportunities and commitments will be informed by engagement and reviewed as the project develops.

Proponent response

[Insert project-specific information]



2. Context and approach

Summarise the project factors that shape participation opportunities, including scale, location, timing, workforce profile, supply chain demand, local capability and outcomes of engagement. Identify material constraints transparently.



Proponent response

[Insert project-specific information]

3. Opportunities for First Nations participation

Genuine participation respects self-determination and focuses on credible, proportionate approaches informed by engagement rather than symbolic actions or aspirational commitments alone. Where relevant, consider opportunities across both delivery and operations to support longer-term relationships and legacy outcomes.

3.1 Participation and governance opportunities

Focus on meaningful, culturally appropriate opportunities to influence relevant decisions, not attendance alone.

Consider:

- purpose and influence
- fit-for-purpose structures such as advisory, reference, working or partnership forums
- representation and legitimacy
- resourcing and support, including reimbursement where relevant
- timing and alignment with key decisions
- feedback and transparency
- governance, accountability and periodic review.

Opportunity	Description	Project phase	Delivery pathway
Illustrative example: Cultural advisory input	Periodic advice on relevant design, construction or operational matters	Planning, construction or operations	Agreed terms of references, participants and feedback arrangements
Illustrative example: Partnership forum	Structured forum to discuss agreed project impacts and opportunities	Multiple phases	Documented purpose, membership, decision interfaces and review points

3.2 Procurement opportunities

Focus on realistic, locally appropriate approaches that support genuine First Nations business participation.

Consider:

- targets or measures proportional to project scope and local capability
- consistent identification and verification of First Nations businesses
- early market engagement and accessible procurement information
- work-package design, including unbundling where appropriate
- barriers such as insurance, accreditation, scale, remoteness or timing
- supplier readiness, mentoring and feedback where feasible
- appropriate procurement methods, including non-price criteria or set-asides where permitted
- integrity risks, including non-genuine representation
- verification and reporting across contractors and subcontractors.

Good / service	Project phase	Potential suppliers or market	Accessibility considerations	Proposed action
Illustrative example: Site maintenance and cleaning	Construction	To be tested through market engagement	Smaller work packages and local delivery	Early supplier identification and clear work-package information
Illustrative example: Traffic management	Construction	To be tested	Accreditation, mobilisation and timing	Early engagement and capability support where feasible
Illustrative example: Landscaping and rehabilitation	Construction and operations	To be tested	Seasonality, location and package timing	Staged packaging and forward notice

Verification and supply chain reporting

Use a consistent definition and verification approach for First Nations businesses. This may include evidence of at least 51 per cent Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ownership, management or control and verification through a recognised mechanism.

Where contractors and subcontractors contribute to outcomes, explain how requirements will be communicated, monitored, verified and reported across the supply chain.

3.3 Employment and capability opportunities

Focus on practical, place-based actions that support sustainable employment and capability outcomes.

Consider:

- local demographics, skills availability and labour market conditions
- whether outcomes will be measured by headcount, hours or Full-Time Equivalent, with a clear and consistent methodology
- barriers such as skills, licences, roster patterns, location, housing or transport
- partnerships with First Nations employment and training providers
- culturally safe recruitment and onboarding
- retention, mentoring, progression and accredited training
- traineeships, apprenticeships, internships and scholarships where relevant
- quality assurance, privacy and reporting across contractors and subcontractors.

Role or pathway	Project phase	Indicative demand	Support required	Proposed action
Illustrative example: Construction support roles	Construction	To be confirmed	Pre-employment preparation and mentoring	Engage employment providers and contractors early
Illustrative example: Environmental monitoring support	Construction	To be confirmed	Role specific and on-the-job training	Test opportunity through engagement and workforce planning
Illustrative example: Operations support roles	Operations	To be confirmed	Role-specific training and longer-term pathway`	Consider during operations workforce planning

3.4 Broader economic participation

Depending on project context, interests and aspirations identified through engagement, and applicable commercial and regulatory arrangements, proponents may consider broader economic participation models.

These could include partnerships, joint ventures, land-based enterprises, equity or revenue-sharing arrangements, or other long-term community wealth-building initiatives.

Any such model requires early engagement, appropriate specialist advice and clear governance. It should not be presented as a commitment unless there is a credible pathway to delivery and the necessary approvals and arrangements are in place.

Potential model	Interest identified through engagement	Feasibility and dependencies	Next step

4. Commitments informed by engagement

Commitments should be specific, realistic and deliverable. Over-commitment can undermine credibility, damage relationships and create delivery risk, particularly where commitments become contractually binding.

Avoid commitments that:

- are not informed by engagement or credible evidence
- rely on capability or demand that has not been tested
- depend on contractor or subcontractor behaviour without delivery mechanisms
- are framed only as percentages or targets without delivery pathways
- are outside the proponent's control or required approvals
- create expectations before commercial, regulatory or governance arrangements are in place.

4.1 Summary of commitments

Area	Commitment	Basis and delivery pathway	Timeframe	Measure and evidence	Owner
Engagement					
Governance or participation					
Procurement					
Employment and capability					
Other					

ASL tender-specific note

Where this strategy is submitted as part of an ASL tender, refer to the relevant returnable schedules, evaluation criteria and contract documents. Commitments included in specified schedules may become binding and enforceable if a contract is executed.

The tender and contract documents prevail in the event of inconsistency.

5. Delivery, accountability and review

Describe:

- the executive or project role accountable for delivery
- the roles responsible for each commitment
- governance, decision-making and escalation arrangements
- internal cultural capability and access to specialist advice
- resourcing and budget dependencies
- contractor and subcontractor obligations
- monitoring, verification and data quality controls
- internal and external reporting arrangements
- feedback, complaints and grievance pathways
- how and when the plan will be reviewed and updated.

Illustrative example:

The Project Director is accountable for delivery of this plan, supported by the Social Value and Engagement Lead and relevant procurement, workforce and contractor leads. Progress will be monitored against the commitment register, reported through project governance and reviewed as engagement progresses and project phases change.



Proponent response

[Insert project-specific information]

6. Monitoring and reporting framework

Commitment or outcome	Measure	Baseline or target	Data source	Frequency	Responsible role	Corrective action or escalation

A photograph of a man and a woman sitting at a table, looking at documents. The man has a beard and is wearing a black t-shirt. The woman is wearing a grey cardigan over an orange top. They are both looking down at the papers on the table. The background is slightly blurred, showing some greenery.

APPENDIX 1

– Supporting documents

Attach or reference relevant documents where available, with appropriate permission and privacy protections.

These may include:

- stakeholder map and engagement log, de-identified where needed
- evidence of engagement or letters of support, where permission has been provided
- memoranda of understanding or partnership frameworks
- procurement pipeline and supplier register
- employment pipeline and training partnerships
- Reconciliation Action Plan or equivalent organisational framework
- cultural heritage plans or protocols
- monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework
- complaints or grievance procedure.



PART D

– Resources

The following resources provide further information on First Nations rights, engagement, FPIC, renewable energy, infrastructure and stakeholder engagement. Proponents should confirm that they are using the current version and seek specialist advice where appropriate.

First Nations rights, engagement & FPIC

- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\) – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#)
- [Free, Prior and Informed Consent guidance – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#)
- [Free, Prior and Informed Consent practical guidance – Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations](#)
- [IFC Performance Standard 7 – Indigenous Peoples](#)

Australian guidance on First Nations engagement

- [AIATSIS Ethical research and engagement principles](#)
- [AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research](#)
- [NSW First Nations Guidelines](#)
- [Reconciliation Action Plans \(RAP\) framework and resources](#)

Renewable energy and infrastructure practice

- [Leading Practice Principles: First Nations and Renewable Energy Projects – Clean Energy Council](#)
- [First Nations Clean Energy Network Leading Principles](#)
- [First Nations Community Engagement: Industry Guide – Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility](#)

Community and stakeholder engagement practice

- [IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation](#)

Identifying Country, Native Title and Indigenous corporations

- [Whose Country am I on? – AIATSIS](#)
- [National Native Title Tribunal and National Native Title Register](#)
- [Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations \(ORIC\)](#)

Using resources responsibly

Desktop research is a starting point only. It does not replace direct engagement or confirmation of locally appropriate terminology, representation, cultural authority and protocols.

Final note for proponents

You are not expected to have all the answers at the outset.

What matters is that you approach engagement respectfully, take reasonable steps to identify and engage the right people, respond transparently to what you hear and follow through on the commitments you make.

Engage early. Listen carefully. Be clear about what can be influenced.

Make commitments you can deliver. Review and adapt your approach as relationships and understanding develop.

A credible strategy is clear, place-based and supported by consistent action. Its value will ultimately be demonstrated through the quality of engagement and delivery over time.

Glossary

Country: The lands, waters, seas and skies to which First Nations peoples have enduring cultural, spiritual, social and economic connections and responsibilities.

Engagement: A two-way process of listening, learning, sharing information and responding that supports participation, influence and relationship-building over time. Engagement is not a one-off activity.

First Nations peoples: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, recognised as the First Peoples of Australia.

First Nations business: A business that meets the definition and verification requirements applicable to the relevant project, program or reporting framework. A commonly used approach is at least 51 per cent Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ownership, management or control, supported by recognised verification.

First Nations Engagement and Participation Strategy: A document that explains how a proponent will engage First Nations peoples, identify participation opportunities and make and deliver commitments informed by engagement across the project lifecycle.

Free, Prior and Informed Consent: A rights-based standard and ongoing process for enabling First Nations peoples to participate in decisions that may affect their rights, Country, culture or interests, including the ability to give, withhold or reconsider consent in circumstances where consent is required.

Full-Time Equivalent: A standardised employment measure based on total hours worked rather than headcount. Where FTE is used, proponents should state the calculation method and apply it consistently.

Proponent: An organisation proposing, delivering or operating a project or program.

Registered Native Title Body Corporate (RNTBC): A prescribed body corporate that holds or manages native title rights and interests on behalf of common law holders following a native title determination.

Rights Holders: People or groups that hold inherent or legally recognised rights. First Nations peoples may hold enduring rights, interests and responsibilities in relation to Country, culture and participation in decision-making, distinct from stakeholder interests more broadly.

Traditional Custodians: First Nations peoples who have cultural responsibility and custodial obligations for Country, based on traditional law, custom and ongoing connection. The term recognises cultural authority and responsibility, regardless of whether legal rights have been formally recognised.

Traditional Owners: First Nations peoples who have enduring cultural connections, rights, interests and responsibilities in relation to particular Country under traditional laws and customs. The way Traditional Owners identify and organise themselves, and the extent to which their rights have been formally recognised under Australian law, vary between places and groups.

Using the terms “Traditional Owners” and “Traditional Custodians”

Terminology varies between communities and locations.

Seek guidance from relevant First Nations peoples and organisations about the terms they use to describe themselves and their relationship with Country.

Legal recognition, cultural authority and community representation are related considerations, but they are not necessarily the same.

Where representation, boundaries or terminology are uncertain, acknowledge this and take appropriate steps to confirm preferred terminology and engagement arrangements.

