



Infrastructure
Western Australia

Infrastructure WA

Major Infrastructure Proposal Assessment Subject Guide

Aboriginal participation

October 2024

Amendment and Review, Distribution, and Authorisation Record

Amendment and Review Record

Revision	Description / Details	Effective date	Date of next review
1	Version 1	Oct-2024	As required

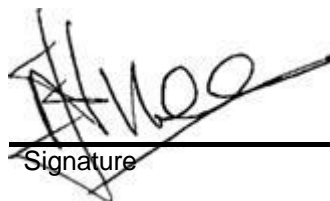
Distribution

This document is prepared for publication.

Authorisation Record

Approval by
Chief Executive
Officer

Phil Helberg
Name


Signature

4/3/2025
Date

Related documentation

Description / Details
Major Infrastructure Proposal Assessment Guidelines

Acknowledgement of Country

Infrastructure WA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures, and to Elders both past and present.

Language note

In this document, the term Aboriginal people is used in preference to 'Indigenous' or 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' people, in recognition that Aboriginal peoples are the original inhabitants of Western Australia.

Infrastructure WA (IWA) is grateful for the valuable input and expertise shared by Aboriginal people and organisations, state agencies and GTE's that helped shape this document. This is intended to be a "living" document that is continuously reviewed and improved to reflect emerging best practices, new insights, and evolving needs. We invite ongoing feedback and collaboration to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. To provide feedback and suggestions for refinement please contact IWA's proposals team on proposals@infrastructure.wa.gov.au.

This publication can be made available in alternative formats and languages on request, please contact us.

Table of Contents

1. Purpose of guidance.....	3
2. Scope of guidance.....	3
3. Applicability	3
4. Background.....	4
5. Summary of Proposal Guidance	6
6. Aboriginal Participation Guidance	8
6.1 Aboriginal participation principles	8
7. Business case integration.....	13
7.1 Project purpose	14
7.2 Investment proposal.....	15
7.3 Strategic options analysis	16
7.4 Shortlisted option evaluation.....	16
7.5 Implementation analysis	17
8. Case Study	19
8.1 Alkimos Saltwater Desalination Project – Water Corporation (WA)	19
9. Definitions	21
10. Further information.....	22

1. Purpose of guidance

The purpose of this subject guide (Aboriginal Participation Guide) is to support state agencies and government trading enterprises (GTEs), collectively called ‘proponents’, in the development of high-quality and compelling capital investment proposals to be considered by Infrastructure WA (IWA) as part of its Major Infrastructure Proposal Assessment (MIPA) function while ensuring clear alignment with relevant government strategies and policies. It acknowledges that built infrastructure in Western Australia (WA) inherently involves Aboriginal people as they maintain cultural custodianship of the areas they are connected to (Country), including land, waterways and seas.

This guide should be read in conjunction with IWA’s [MIPA Guidelines](#) and proponents are encouraged to engage with IWA during the early development stages of proposals. IWA’s Aboriginal Engagement lead can assist on a case-by-case basis in addition to relevant teams within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage.

In this Aboriginal Participation Guide, ‘Aboriginal participation’ means more than economic participation through employment and procurement. It also includes cultural participation through the recognition of culturally appropriate practices, protocols and design in the context of infrastructure. The type and extent of cultural participation in a project should be determined by Aboriginal people to ensure it is meaningful to those sharing their culture.

The advantages of embedding Aboriginal participation into proposals include:

- enhanced environmental, economic and social benefits through genuine, localised and culturally appropriate participation.
- measurable goals, guided by lessons learned, that can be set and monitored, enabling the proponent to apply these practices to other areas of operation and future infrastructure projects in a process of continuous improvement.
- identification and mitigation of associated risks to support decision-making.
- less risk of consultation fatigue in place-based Aboriginal stakeholders that can lead to project delay or inadequate engagement.

The objective of this guide is to support proponents to incorporate Aboriginal participation practices alongside existing regulatory requirements into early proposals, processes and decision-making. Embedding Aboriginal participation in the early planning stages of infrastructure can allow benefits to be realised throughout the infrastructure lifecycle by carrying over commitments to subsequent stages (for example, contract development).

This Aboriginal Participation Guide is not prescriptive. It allows proponents to adapt the guidance to suit their needs, grow Aboriginal participation practices based on lessons learned, and share knowledge for the benefit of the sector. It does not override any proponent’s current approach to Aboriginal participation but supports proponents who do not currently have an approach to develop consistent practices. It is not a static document – it will be updated as new information becomes available and feedback is received.

2. Scope of guidance

Proponents should consider the application of this Aboriginal Participation Guide across the entirety of the infrastructure project lifecycle, including planning, design, delivery, operations, maintenance, management and end-of-life (repurposing, dismantling or disposing of assets), where applicable. Section 6 details suggestions for business case integration.

3. Applicability

This Aboriginal Participation Guide is relevant to proposed major infrastructure proposals that will be assessed through the MIPA process. IWA’s MIPA process aligns with the [Strategic Asset Management Framework](#) (SAMF) including the [SAMF Business Case Guidelines](#). This Aboriginal

Participation Guide aims to provide a framework for proponents to consider where, when and how to best incorporate Aboriginal participation throughout the infrastructure lifecycle.

There are no mandatory requirements for applying Aboriginal participation to government infrastructure proposals in WA. However, there are policy and legislative requirements related to Aboriginal participation that can be applied to infrastructure proposals including:

- Under the [WA Aboriginal Procurement Policy](#), agencies are required to meet Aboriginal business/Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) subcontracting targets as a percentage of total contracts awarded by the agency each year. The policy is not mandatory for GTE's.
- Compliance with the [Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972](#) when developing infrastructure proposals.

The Aboriginal Participation Guide aims to align with the [Department of Treasury's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy](#) including its Aboriginal Empowerment Analyst Guide which builds understanding and ensures Closing The Gap priority Reforms and the [Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy – Western Australia 2021–2029](#) are central to the department's work with agencies and advice provided to government.

4. Background

The [Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy – Western Australia 2021–2029](#) sets out how the WA Government will direct its efforts towards a future in which all Aboriginal people, families and communities are empowered to live good lives and choose their own futures from a secure foundation. This guide aims to align with key high-level elements of the strategy (Figure 1).

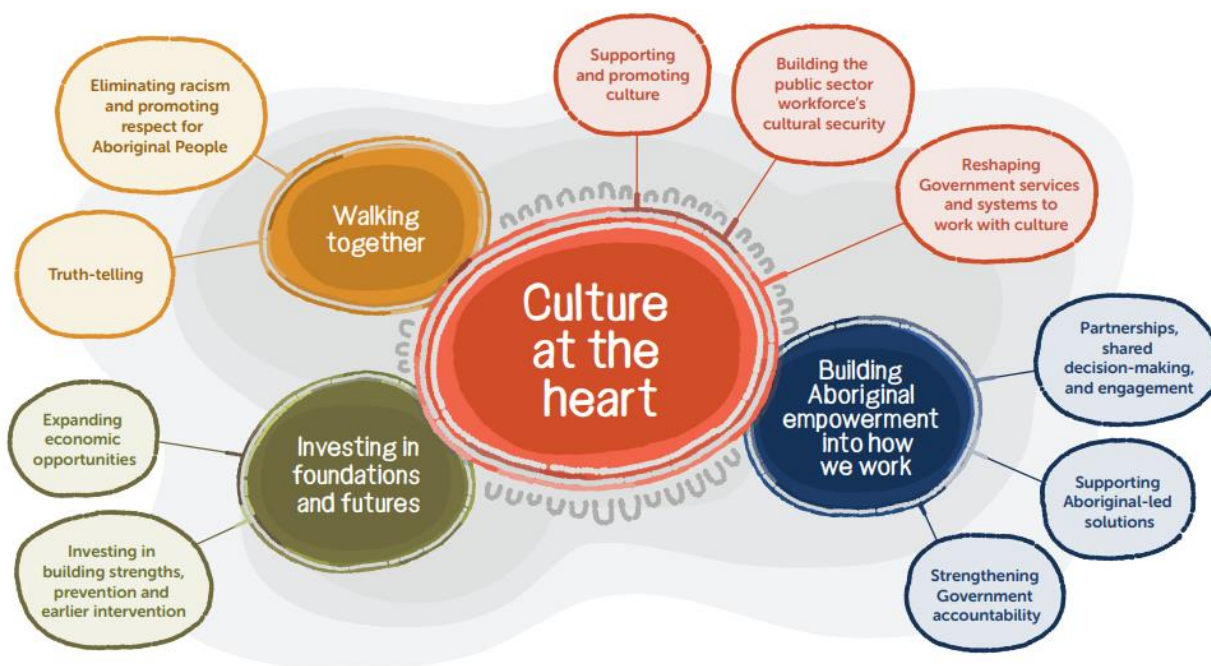


Figure 1: Key elements of the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy – Western Australia 2021–2029

Good examples of genuine and early Aboriginal participation are growing in public-sector major infrastructure projects in WA, but knowledge and capability of Aboriginal participation practices vary across the sector. In the proposals that IWA has reviewed through its MIPA function, Aboriginal participation has been addressed inconsistently. Section 6 of this guide provides an example of the application of Aboriginal participation to SAMF Business Case Guidelines, which are also highlighted in the section.

Recommendation 6 of the [State Infrastructure Strategy](#) 2022 was to embed and support early, inclusive and culturally appropriate Aboriginal participation (engagement) at all stages of the infrastructure life cycle. This includes:

- community-led processes and place-based infrastructure outcomes
- early awareness and understanding of cultural heritage implications
- alignment with the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy.

This guide supports proponents to apply Recommendation 6, which was fully supported in the [WA Government response](#).

5. Summary of Proposal Guidance

A summary of how proponents can consider and apply this Aboriginal Participation Guide to the development of SAMF-compliant business cases can be seen in Table 1. Table 1 also indicates opportunities for proponents to build capability towards best practice, which is continuously evolving. This list is not exhaustive, and proponents should consider application on a case-by-case basis.

Further detail on Aboriginal participation principles can be found in Section 6 and information on integration into business cases can be found in Section 7.

Table 1: Summary and examples of potential application of Aboriginal Participation Guide to projects

SAMF Business Case Guideline Section	Considerations for SAMF alignment	Good practice	Better practice*
Project Purpose	Identify any significant relationship between the problem/project purpose and potential Aboriginal participation in problem/project.	Where relevant, identify and outline the cultural heritage context, cultural significance, and consideration of key cultural interests of local Aboriginal stakeholders.	Include consideration of proponent's current Aboriginal participation initiatives as part of the base case definition. Consider linking proponent's Reconciliation Action Plan or Aboriginal engagement strategies to the project context.
Investment Proposal	Identify key Aboriginal stakeholders.	Consider and document the impact on project benefits of including Aboriginal participation initiatives. Identify and consider Aboriginal stakeholder's interests and collaboration opportunities and expectations.	Incorporate findings from engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders regarding project objectives and benefits. Where applicable, set strategic targets regarding beneficial outcomes to the Aboriginal community.
Strategic Options Analysis	Consider and document whether benefits and outcomes of Aboriginal participation initiatives will form part of potential strategic options. <i>e.g. identify the cultural context if site selection forms part of the shortlisting process (e.g. identify the Traditional Owners).</i>	Consider including Aboriginal stakeholders in the development of options and the option analysis. Utilise a cultural and/or Aboriginal participation criteria, in consultation with Traditional Owners, to differentiate project options. <i>e.g. utilise cultural filtering criteria and, in consultation with Traditional Owners, initially screen options against minimum thresholds.</i>	Incorporate a qualitative or quantitative assessment of Aboriginal stakeholder values, agreed with Traditional Owners, to develop and evaluate project options. <i>e.g. utilise a cultural criterion and, in consultation with Traditional Owners, weight and score options as part of an MCA.</i>

SAMF Business Case Guideline Section	Considerations for SAMF alignment	Good practice	Better practice*
Shortlisted Options Evaluation	<p>Where Aboriginal participation or cultural values are identified as a component to the shortlisted options, document how differences may impact the proposal objectives.</p> <p><i>e.g. risk of impacting a cultural heritage site is identified as making one option appear favourable over another.</i></p>	<p>Assess the extent and nature of any impacts specific to Aboriginal stakeholders, including opportunities to deliver benefits to Aboriginal people. This should be undertaken in collaboration with identified Aboriginal stakeholders.</p> <p><i>e.g. quantify impacts of cultural value differentiators between options.</i></p>	<p>Incorporation of quantitative assessment of costs and qualitative assessment of cultural values, in consultation with Aboriginal stakeholder representatives, to evaluate the shortlisted project options.</p>
Implementation Analysis	<p>Identify any mandatory requirements for Aboriginal procurement, or cultural heritage requirements for future phases of project delivery. This may include use of:</p> <p>Aboriginal Procurement Policy Agency Practice Guide</p> <p>Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 Guidelines</p> <p>Include key Aboriginal stakeholders in a stakeholder management plan.</p>	<p>Consider and document how Aboriginal participation will be integrated across the project life cycle including delivery phase.</p> <p>Include appropriate allowances for Aboriginal participation and cultural heritage approvals in the cost and schedule plans.</p> <p>Identify any broader Aboriginal participation opportunities including application of the WA Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy.</p> <p>Consider engaging an advisor with Aboriginal participation expertise to review and provide input into the implementation analysis.</p> <p><i>e.g. declare Aboriginal participation objectives for the construction phase of the project in a manner that can be incorporated directly into procurement documents.</i></p>	<p>Provide a detailed explanation of how Aboriginal participation is embedded in procurement, risk management, governance, stakeholder engagement, and change management in liaison with Aboriginal stakeholders.</p> <p>Utilise Aboriginal input in the procurement options analysis.</p> <p>Incorporate Aboriginal participation, employment and training objectives and targets into the benefits management plan.</p> <p><i>e.g. identify Aboriginal participation KPI's for the operational phase of the project and specify the forum for reporting.</i></p>

*It is acknowledged that 'best' practice for Aboriginal participation is continuously evolving and expanding. The summary aims to improve business case considerations of Aboriginal participation to support proponents build capability towards best practice.

6. Aboriginal Participation Guidance

The purpose of this Aboriginal Participation Guide is to support proponents in the development of high-quality and compelling proposals to be considered by IWA as part of its MIPA function while ensuring clear alignment with relevant government strategies and policies. However, IWA also promotes whole-of-lifecycle thinking and has collected some guidance that may be relevant for proponents in future stages of the infrastructure asset lifecycle.

6.1 Aboriginal participation principles

These principles aim to support proponents' readiness to achieve Aboriginal participation outcomes throughout the infrastructure project lifecycle and have been based on initial research and stakeholder consultation undertaken by IWA in the development of the Aboriginal Participation Guide for MIPA.

A principled way of working recognises that no single approach is suitable for all infrastructure proposals/projects, as they can vary widely, and Aboriginal cultures and communities are highly diverse. However, universal principles can be embedded early through infrastructure proposals to support outcomes to be achieved later and current practices are evolving across jurisdictions. These principles aim to align with current leading practices in WA.

Develop authentic relationships with local Aboriginal community over time

Building respectful relationships with relevant local Aboriginal communities is foundational for developing an understanding of shared goals for Aboriginal participation to be embedded into infrastructure proposals. Table 2 presents some potential applications and benefits of building Aboriginal community relationships. This list is not exhaustive, and proponents should consider application on a case-by-case basis.

Table 2: Example applications and benefits of building Aboriginal community relationships

Applications	Benefits
Cultural education and competency	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build cultural competency within the proposal/project team by offering regular opportunities to engage with Aboriginal people authentically, learning and listening to their diverse experiences, and encouraging senior leaders to participate. The Public Sector Commission currently has mandatory online cultural awareness training. To build on this, the proposal/project team could set an internal target for staff to complete cultural competency training with a local Aboriginal service provider. Consider embedding organisational Reconciliation Action Plan targets into the proposal/project context. Consider senior staff development tools that support leadership in Aboriginal participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports Aboriginal participation through better communication and understanding of differences. Supports a culturally safe workplace. Indirectly builds trust between the Aboriginal community and the broader organisation.
Create early opportunities for participation	

Applications	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a relationship-building phase with the local Aboriginal community during early planning of the proposal/project and strengthen relationships before site selection, timing, and cost decisions to embed the perspectives of Aboriginal people in these critical elements of project development. • Consider activities that could occur on Country involving Traditional Owners. • Present the proposal to the Aboriginal community for feedback and ask how they would like to be engaged throughout proposal/project development. • Maintain reciprocity of the relationships where mutual benefit can be shared. Treat Aboriginal cultural advice like other consulting services and remunerate it appropriately, in accordance with established legislation and policy. Non-financial reciprocity may be appropriate for small requests if it maintains a respectful relationship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides access to strong Aboriginal community relationships early in the proposal/project planning to manage uncertainty. • Provides early confirmation of cultural sensitivities of infrastructure proposals. • Provides opportunities for Traditional Owners and local Aboriginal businesses to provide services on Country. • Supports relevant compliance requirements for the project that are due later (e.g. Aboriginal cultural heritage approval). • Supports Aboriginal participation by considering relevant costs and benefits early. • Promotes fair and positive interactions. • Identifies clear expectations.
Build a network of contacts	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow local cultural protocols with advice from the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Planning Lands and Heritage. • Consider whether Aboriginal employees or partner organisations can be leveraged to establish contacts for the proposal/project. If there are no existing touchpoints, consider reaching out to other proponents, or IWA's Aboriginal engagement lead for initial contacts. • Appoint a regular contact person to liaise with the local Aboriginal community representatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures relationship building is culturally appropriate. • Facilitates better connections across departments and improves the organisational capability to engage. • Maximises the opportunity to meaningfully engage with Aboriginal people and develop relationships. • Creates a pathway to initiate or re-engage relationships with Aboriginal people.
Facilitate opportunities for Aboriginal people to be part of the proposal/project long term	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ Aboriginal people to work on the project e.g. To maintain relationships with the Aboriginal community and implement agreed commitments. • Embed Aboriginal representation as part of the leadership/steering committee for the proposal/project and in the project team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases internal capacity to engage and deliver on commitments. • Increases Aboriginal employment. • Supports Aboriginal cultural values being embedded into the proposal. • Strengthens the bonds between the Aboriginal community and the project.

Consider initiatives that support social license to operate

Infrastructure proposals/projects can have positive impacts on the local community. The acceptance of a proposal by the affected communities is becoming increasingly relevant to projects. An infrastructure proposal/project that struggles to maintain this can have added reputational risks and challenges.

Table 3: Suggested applications and benefits that support social license to operate

Applications	Benefits
Recognise past issues and set goals for the future	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in a constructive truth-telling process about the proposal, region, or infrastructure sector to build a deeper understanding of Aboriginal community perspectives on the proposal/project. Create opportunities to integrate understanding of Aboriginal community perspectives into the proposal /project through initiatives and program commitments that are meaningful to them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Builds trust between the Aboriginal community and proposal/project team. Fosters social cohesion, inclusivity and a sense of belonging amongst local communities and language groups who are impacted by the proposal/project. Considers the impacts of historic or existing issues as a barrier to building strong relationships between the Aboriginal community and proposal/project.
Consider a whole-of-lifecycle perspective of infrastructure alongside Aboriginal community goals	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise the local Aboriginal communities' goals for their future and how completed infrastructure will play a role in this. This supports strategic proposals/projects that could consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the sustainability of the infrastructure benefits for future generations. design of infrastructure and service delivery models that are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal people. Create opportunities for Aboriginal participation in the long-term operation and maintenance of infrastructure (e.g. Consult local Aboriginal ranger groups, in accordance with approved processes of the WA Government for environmental maintenance programs, such as cultural burning). Incorporates planning for climate-resilient infrastructure, particularly in the regions. Reference relevant Indigenous Land Use Agreement arrangements that provide insight into community governance and goals (subject to, and only after obtaining advice from the Department of Premier and Cabinet). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enables smarter solutions to reduce asset risks and costs. Potential to support traditional knowledge transfer and systems. Potential to establish a culturally appropriate service delivery model and improve the use of infrastructure. Potential to integrate asset management with traditional knowledge management. Supports climate resilience of communities. Potential to support outcomes previously negotiated by the WA Government and Aboriginal communities.

Embed Aboriginal participation requirements during the planning stage that can be transferred across subsequent stages.

There are a range of Aboriginal participation outcomes that are being achieved through infrastructure projects in WA and many tools/practices that support implementation of these that can be considered early in proposal/project planning.

Table 4: Suggested applications and benefits of embedding Aboriginal participation requirements

Applications	Benefits
Early planning to support implementation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess when, during a project's lifecycle, would be the most impactful time to embed Aboriginal participation tools/practices to enable successful outcomes. Consider what tools/practices are available and suitable to be incorporated e.g. Embed contractual wording, develop a management plan, engage staff to work on tasks. Where applicable, ensure the requirements of the WA Government's Aboriginal Procurement Policy – Aboriginal Participation Requirements Guide are reflected in contractual arrangements and that performance against those requirements is appropriately managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved proposal/project planning to support Aboriginal participation outcomes in subsequent stages. Supports the Aboriginal Procurement Policy by advancing Aboriginal employment and procurement outcomes

Consider relevant State Infrastructure Strategy recommendations and apply Aboriginal Community Controlled sector knowledge and guidance.

In the State Infrastructure Strategy, IWA made 12 recommendations that directly relate to Aboriginal community infrastructure needs across cross-cutting themes and sectors (Figure 2). The relevant sectors are:

- Arts, culture, sport and recreation
- Justice and public safety
- Water
- Waste
- Housing
- Health.

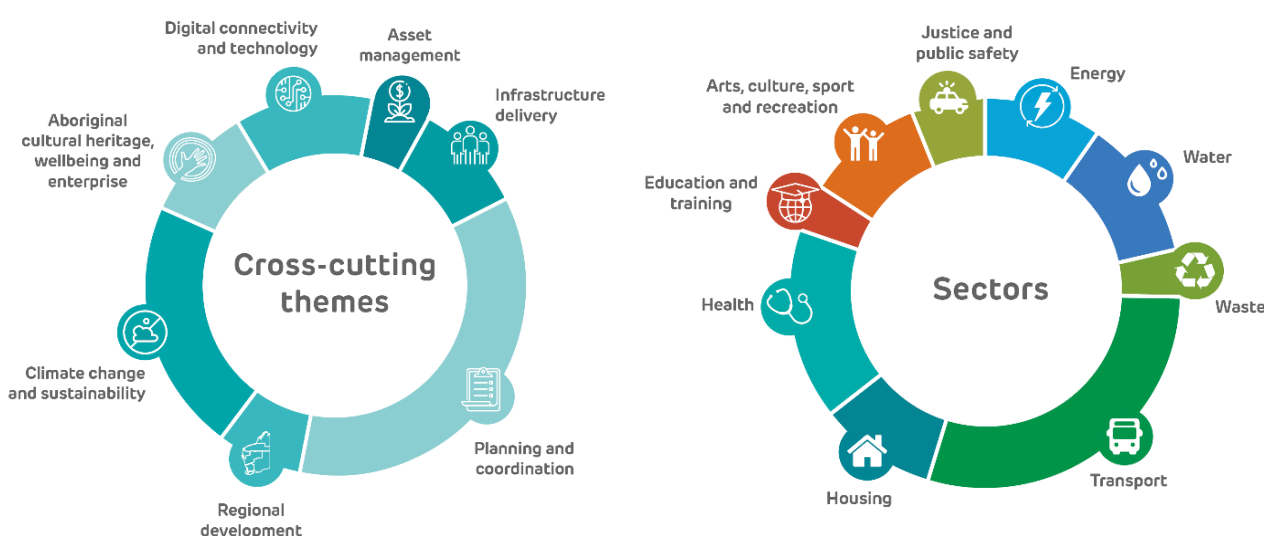


Figure 2: State Infrastructure Strategy cross-cutting themes and sectors

The Aboriginal Community Controlled sector may have existing guidance available that includes recommendations relevant to infrastructure proposals / projects including:

- Energy
- Housing
- Justice
- Water.

Please contact IWA's Aboriginal engagement lead for further information.

Table 5: Suggested applications and benefits of applying sector-specific knowledge and guidance

Applications	Benefits
WA State Infrastructure Strategy & Aboriginal Community Controlled Sector considerations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider relevant recommendations in the State Infrastructure Strategy during proposal development. • Consider initiating dialogue with a peak body or an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) (e.g. organise a presentation from an ACCO relevant to the proposal/project to provide education to staff). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverages the research, experience and knowledge of others working in the sector. • Contributes to outcomes or goals already identified by local communities.

Share Aboriginal participation knowledge across sectors and regions

IWA's MIPA process aims to support the consistency of proposals assessed. In the proposals IWA has reviewed through its MIPA function, Aboriginal participation has been addressed inconsistently. Many proponents have knowledge and experience about Aboriginal participation through the development of major infrastructure across sectors and regions that could benefit other proponents towards the goal of increasing outcomes for Aboriginal communities across WA.

IWA can support proponents to seek advice from each other across sectors or regions to build public sector capability to support Aboriginal participation through infrastructure proposals. This can include supporting the coordination of planned Aboriginal stakeholder engagement.

Table 6: Suggested applications and benefits of sharing Aboriginal participation knowledge

Application	Benefit
Promote continuous improvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how to appropriately capture and share Aboriginal participation lessons learned internally and externally to enable continuous improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the growth of Aboriginal participation practices on infrastructure for continuous improvement. • Supports better coordination across sectors and regions for increased scale of opportunity for Aboriginal participation. • Supports effectiveness of efforts to achieve outcomes.

7. Business case integration

Early engagement with IWA to support outcomes

IWA seeks to establish ongoing collaborative engagement with proponents during proposal development as early as possible to allow for a greater potential impact on the proposal outcome. Early engagement to support Aboriginal participation outcomes aims to provide benefits including:

- Improved stakeholder engagement planning by identifying key Traditional Owner groups and Aboriginal community bodies relevant to the proposal.
- Identification of key opportunities and risks for example cultural heritage identification and protection, cost and schedule considerations.
- Supporting consistency and quality of proposal content across the public sector as Aboriginal participation practices on major infrastructure develops.
- Sharing good practice examples and learnings from previous similar proposals with infrastructure expertise.
- Access to IWA's Aboriginal engagement lead to provide strategic advice.

Implementation of this guide should be consistent with broader business case expectations. The level of detail provided by proponents on Aboriginal participation is expected to be proportionate to the proposal's size and complexity, align with the structure set out in the SAMF Business Case Guidelines (Figure 3), and comply with all legislative and policy requirements.

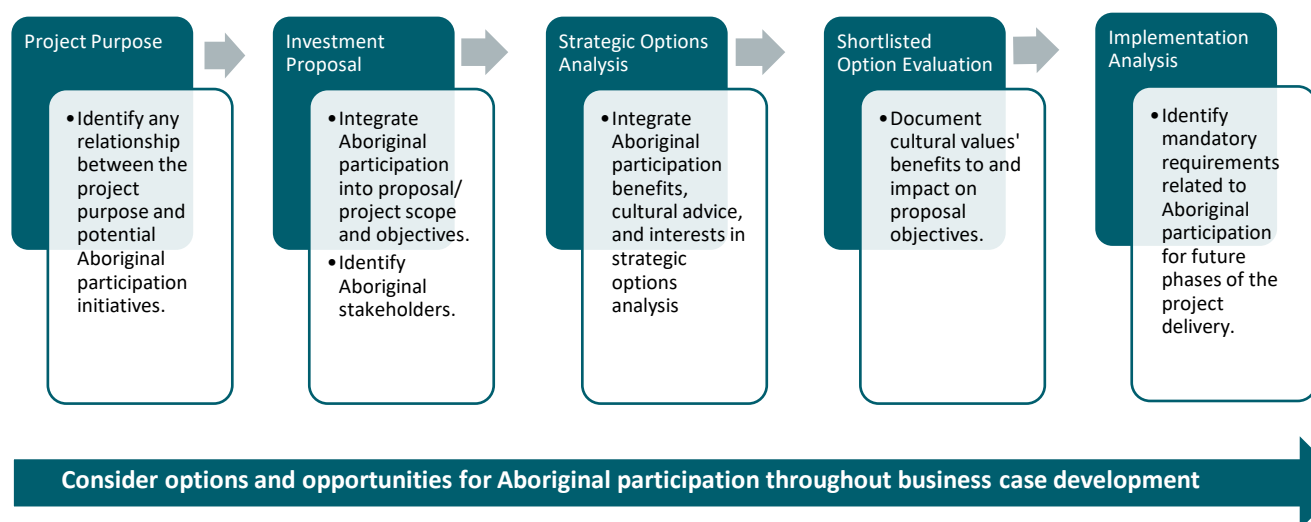


Figure 3: Aboriginal participation integration with the SAMF Business Case Guidelines

The following sections detail the opportunities for integration of Aboriginal participation integration within each of the business case sections shown in Figure 3. As far as possible, these align with and address the subsections of each business case section in the SAMF Business Case Guidelines (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Overview of requirements in the SAMF Business Case Guidelines

7.1 Project purpose

Considerations for SAMF alignment

Identify any relationship between the project purpose and potential Aboriginal participation initiatives.

Identify any relationship between the problem or project purpose and potential Aboriginal participation initiatives. Initiatives refer to those determined by the proponent for the proposal/project or any existing broader agency strategies or plans that could be embedded into the proposal/project context.

Consider proposals alignment and contribution to Government objectives relevant to Aboriginal participation.

This may include identifying existing local, state, and national government policies and commitments that have embedded Aboriginal community perspectives and highlighting their relationship to the proposal.

At the local and state level, these could include:

- [WA Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy](#)
- [State Planning Policy 7.0 Design of the built environment](#)
- [WA Aboriginal Procurement Policy](#)
- [Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972](#)
- [WA Climate Adaptation Strategy](#)
- [Western Australian Buy Local Policy 2022](#).

At the national level, these could include:

- [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#)
- [National Partnership Agreement on Land Transport Infrastructure Projects](#)
- [Indigenous Procurement Policy](#)
- [First Nations Clean Energy Strategy](#).

Good practice

Identify key cultural interests of local Aboriginal stakeholders relevant to the proposal.

Where relevant, identify and outline the cultural heritage context, cultural significance, and consideration of key cultural interests of local Aboriginal stakeholders. This should be undertaken in collaboration with identified Aboriginal stakeholders. To commence engagement with identified Aboriginal stakeholders, an overview of the proposal could be provided to gain feedback.

Include consideration of any existing Aboriginal participation initiatives as part of the base case definition. Outline how the proposal aligns with and contributes to WA Government priorities, corporate objectives, statutory requirements, and asset management objectives relevant to Aboriginal participation.

Better practice

Link the proponent's Aboriginal participation initiatives to the project purpose.

Assessment of the proponent's current Aboriginal participation initiatives as part of the base case definition. This could include whether the proponent has previously engaged with Aboriginal stakeholders and has existing relationships or has identified any barriers to successfully building relationships between the proponent/stakeholders.

Consider linking the proponent's Reconciliation Action Plan or Aboriginal engagement strategies to the project context including actions or initiatives that can be supported in the proposal.

7.2 Investment proposal

Considerations for SAMF alignment

Identify Aboriginal stakeholders.

Identify key Aboriginal stakeholders relevant to the proposal context which may include Traditional Owners, non-Traditional Owners, local Aboriginal people, prescribed body corporates, and Aboriginal businesses and organisations such as Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).

Good practice

Integrate Aboriginal participation into the benefits of the proposal/project.

Consider and document the impact on project benefits of including Aboriginal participation initiatives.

Incorporate Aboriginal stakeholder's interests and expectations.

Consider identified Aboriginal stakeholder's interests and collaboration expectations while ensuring relevant WA Government legislation and policy are followed.

Better practice

Incorporate Aboriginal stakeholder's perspectives into project objectives and benefits.

Incorporate findings from engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders regarding project objectives and benefits. Provide a detailed explanation of how Aboriginal participation initiatives can improve the quality of proposals.

Set and quantify (if applicable) strategic targets around beneficial outcomes to the Aboriginal community. These may include support for the below areas in the project lifecycle:

- **cultural advice and governance** – seek cultural advice and consider how to embed ongoing cultural input into the infrastructure development.
- **community support and cultural recognition** – consider how culturally significant interests shared by key Aboriginal stakeholders could be recognised.
- **cultural sense of place reflected in the design** – consider including local Aboriginal place names, language or cultural themes in project landscaping, art, facades, architecture, wayfinding/interpretive signage, etc (see [Geographic Names Committee](#) resources).

- **procurement and business development** – create opportunities for Aboriginal business procurement, considering a local-first principle. Identify pathway to build local Aboriginal business content into proposal/project and enable business development through procurement practices and programs.
- **employment and training** – consider employment pathways, programs, and stakeholders (e.g. TAFE, tertiary) and create opportunities for Aboriginal people to be employed and trained in the proposal/project.
- **cultural heritage protection and management** – consider how aspects of planning (e.g. site selection) interact with cultural heritage and what protection, avoidance, and mitigation strategies can be integrated as early as possible.

7.3 Strategic options analysis

Considerations for SAMF alignment

Consider Aboriginal participation benefits and stakeholder interests in strategic options analysis

Consider and document whether the benefits and outcomes of Aboriginal participation initiatives will form part of potential strategic options.

Identify the cultural context if site selection forms part of the shortlisting process (for example, identify the Traditional Owners).

Good practice

Integrate Aboriginal participation benefits, cultural advice, and interests in strategic options analysis

Consider including Aboriginal stakeholders in the strategic options analysis.

Utilise cultural and/or Aboriginal participation criteria, in consultation with Traditional Owners, to differentiate project options. For example, utilise cultural filtering criteria and, in consultation with Traditional Owners, initially screen options against minimum thresholds.

Better practice

Evaluate project options using values determined by Aboriginal stakeholders.

Incorporate a qualitative or quantitative assessment of Aboriginal stakeholder values, agreed with Traditional Owners, to evaluate project options. For example, utilise a cultural criterion and, in consultation with Traditional Owners, weight and score options as part of an MCA.

Criteria weighting should be appropriate. This should be undertaken in collaboration with identified Aboriginal stakeholders.

7.4 Shortlisted option evaluation

Considerations for SAMF alignment

Document cultural values' impact on proposal objectives

Where Aboriginal participation or cultural values are identified as a component of the shortlisted options, document how differences may impact the proposal objectives. For example, risk of impacting a cultural heritage site is identified as making one option more favourable over another (green vs brownfield site).

Good practice

Assess impacts of cultural values on proposal/project time, cost, benefits/ risks

Assess the extent and nature of any impacts specific to Aboriginal stakeholders, including opportunities to deliver benefits to Aboriginal people. This should be undertaken in collaboration with identified Aboriginal stakeholders. For example, quantify the time and cost benefit of avoiding the risk of impacting a cultural heritage site.

Better practice

Use cultural values in an economic analysis to evaluate shortlisted project options.

Economic analysis including quantitative assessment of costs and qualitative assessment of cultural values agreed with the Traditional Owners to evaluate the shortlisted project options.

7.5 Implementation analysis

Considerations for SAMF alignment

Identify mandatory requirements related to Aboriginal participation for future phases of the project delivery.

Identify any mandatory requirements for Aboriginal procurement, or cultural heritage requirements for future phases of project delivery. This may include the application of:

- [Aboriginal Procurement Policy Agency Practice Guide](#)
- [Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 Guidelines](#)

Apply these and liaise with the relevant regional director in the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, and social procurement team in the Department of Finance.

Identify Aboriginal stakeholders in a management plan

Include key Aboriginal stakeholders in a stakeholder management plan. Ensure that stakeholder mapping includes the engagement of key Aboriginal stakeholders as early as possible. This will add value as the planning matures.

Good practice

Integrate key considerations for Aboriginal participation throughout the project life cycle

Consider and document how Aboriginal participation will be integrated across the project life cycle including the delivery phase.

Include appropriate allowances for Aboriginal participation and cultural heritage approvals in the cost and schedule plans.

Consider engaging an advisor with Aboriginal participation expertise to review and provide input into the implementation analysis. For example, state Aboriginal participation requirements for the construction phase of the project in a manner that can be incorporated directly into procurement documents.

Identify WA Government Aboriginal procurement requirements and describe how they will be achieved, including an Aboriginal business/ACCO subcontracting target. (See the [Aboriginal Procurement Policy Agency Practice Guide](#) and contact the Department of Finance's social procurement team for more advice.)

Better practice

Incorporate Aboriginal participation through detailed implementation planning

Provide a detailed explanation of how Aboriginal participation is embedded in procurement, risk management, governance, stakeholder engagement, and change management in liaison with Aboriginal stakeholders. Incorporate a standalone Aboriginal participation section.

Utilise Aboriginal input in the procurement options analysis.

Incorporate Aboriginal participation metrics into the benefits management plan. For example, identify Aboriginal participation KPI's for the operational phase of the project and specify the forum for reporting.

Embed requirements for tools that support Aboriginal participation implementation like cultural awareness and competency training, contractual requirement wording, and establishment of stakeholder reference groups.

Liaise with Aboriginal stakeholders about whether delivery timeframe allowances are appropriate for Aboriginal participation.

Embed Aboriginal representation in the procurement options analysis workshop.

Incorporate metrics for measurement of outcomes from implementing Aboriginal participation throughout the project planning and delivery phases.

Embed Aboriginal representation in all key governance groups responsible for strategic decision-making.

If a proposal is likely to pursue a rating from a sustainability agency, embedding Aboriginal participation can support meeting requirements around heritage and stakeholder engagement

Apply the [Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 Guidelines](#) and liaise with the relevant regional director in the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage.

8. Case Study

8.1 Alkimos Saltwater Desalination Project – Water Corporation (WA)

Under its Major Infrastructure Proposals Assessment (MIPA), Infrastructure WA (IWA) began engaging with Water Corporation (WC) in December 2022 for the Alkimos Seawater Desalination Plant (ASDP) project.

As part of the overall assessment, IWA considers the incorporation of decarbonisation, Aboriginal participation, and digital good practice. In 2022, WC internally launched the co-designed and Aboriginal-led, Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow Aboriginal Engagement Strategy (YTT Strategy), to engage and elevate the voices and representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and WC partnerships with Aboriginal communities. The YTT Strategy provides a cross-organisational response to embracing culturally intelligent ways of working and is further reinforced by the WC Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2023-26, with a range of actions and commitments using the nationally recognised framework.

During IWA's engagement with WC, the ASDP project team outlined Aboriginal participation to date. As a signatory to the South West Indigenous Land Use Agreement and Noongar Government Standard Heritage Agreement (NGSHA), an activity notice was issued to the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC), which required an Aboriginal Heritage Survey that took place during January – February 2022 which indicated that there is cultural significance over the area of the ASDP site. The team also engaged with SWALSC and the Whadjuk Aboriginal Corporation (WAC) including presenting about the project and future consultation between May 2022 and July 2023. Over multiple sessions with these stakeholders, a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) was developed for the project. These activities were not included in the initial submission to IWA as the meetings with WAC were ongoing but were later expanded on.

The MIPA, completed in August 2023, found that the proposal demonstrated good consideration of the local Noongar community and culture to incorporate into its project processes for design, procurement, employment, heritage management, and governance. This included:

- detailed information about how the project would achieve outcomes, for example, minimum percentage targets for employment and business spending.
- changing the alignment in response to finding a Registered Heritage Site along the trunk main to Wanneroo reservoir to avoid the site.
- developed a CHMP with relevant stakeholders that captured commitments like protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage and how this would be achieved, for example, choosing an excess fill location in collaboration with DevelopmentWA to support cultural values being retained close to their origin.
- embedding appropriate governance, such as listing Aboriginal cultural risks in the proposals risk management plan and requiring Aboriginal Participation Plans from proponents during the alliance development phase.
- representation of WAC on the Community Reference Panel, coupled with a clear commitment to the development of an Aboriginal Engagement Strategy and ongoing consultation more broadly with the WAC as the project progresses.

Once completed, a MIPA summary report is published after 6 months according to the *Infrastructure Western Australia Act 2019*. See [Infrastructure proposal assessment reports | Infrastructure WA](#) for more information.

Table 7: Summary of the Alkimos Desalination Project

Applications	Enablers and drivers	Key benefits	Lessons learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural heritage management. • Alignment with WC's YTT strategy and Stretch reconciliation action plan. • Aboriginal participation in design and procurement. • Employment and training opportunities. • Community consultation and collaboration leading to meaningful objectives and outcomes. • Risk management and governance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WC's YTT strategy and RAP. • WC as a signatory to the South West Indigenous Land Use Agreement and Noongar Government Standard Heritage Agreement. • IWA and WC's early engagement on the proposal. • Proponent preparedness/willingness to engage early with Aboriginal stakeholders. • Openness to exceeding minimum expectations and requirements. 	<p>Reputation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated consideration of the local Noongar community and culture. • Established trust and effective working relationships with Noongar stakeholders and incorporated Aboriginal participation into design, procurement, employment, heritage management, and governance. <p>Strategic planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed a cultural heritage management plan with Noongar stakeholders. • Protected Aboriginal cultural heritage through collaborative decision-making. • Embedded governance and risk management practices. • Able to incorporate Aboriginal stakeholder perspectives into key project objectives e.g. alignment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders is crucial. • Co-design and Aboriginal-led strategies enhance a proponent's cultural competency. • Incorporating Aboriginal participation and cultural heritage management plans improves project outcomes. • Flexibility in project design and planning can accommodate cultural heritage considerations. • Available information about the project in the early stages was able to be relayed to the Aboriginal stakeholders for feedback in time to incorporate findings into planning and design development. • Clear understanding of the project design reduced the risk of costly rework or redesign.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Aboriginal business/ACCO subcontracting target	The WA Government's Aboriginal Procurement Policy requires suppliers to subcontract a certain percentage of the total contract value to the registered Aboriginal business(es) or ACCO(s).
Aboriginal participation	This goes beyond economic participation (e.g. employment and procurement) to include cultural participation through recognising culturally appropriate practices, protocols and design in an infrastructure context. The extent of Aboriginal participation should be self-determined throughout the project to ensure it remains meaningful to those sharing their culture.
ACCO	<p>An organisation that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incorporated under state or federal legislation and not for profit • controlled and operated by a majority of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people • involved or connected to the community, or communities, in which it delivers the services • governed by a majority Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander governing body.

Further information

IWA Major Infrastructure Proposals Assessment

- [MIPA Guidelines](#)
- MIPA Subject Guide – Decarbonisation of infrastructure [[Subject Guides](#)]
- MIPA Subject Guide – Digital [[Subject Guides](#)]

State Infrastructure Strategy

- [State Infrastructure Strategy](#)
- Cross cutting theme: [Aboriginal cultural heritage, wellbeing and enterprise](#)
- Recommendations:
 - [Recommendation 6](#) – Traditional Owners and Custodians
 - Recommendation 11 – Sustainability
 - Recommendation 21 – Regional Development
 - Recommendation 48 – Water
 - Recommendation 75 – Housing
 - Recommendation 82 – Health
 - Recommendation 88 – Arts, Sports, Culture and Recreation
 - Recommendation 91 – Justice
- [WA Government response to the State Infrastructure Strategy](#)
- [Implementation Progress Report December 2023](#)

WA Government policies and strategies

- [Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy Policy Guide](#)
- [Aboriginal Heritage Approvals](#)
- [Aboriginal Participation Requirements Guide](#)
- [Aboriginal Procurement Policy Agency Practice Guide](#)
- [Climate Adaptation Strategy](#)
- [General Procurement Direction 2021/08 - Aboriginal Procurement Policy](#)

Existing projects with Aboriginal engagement strategies

- [Kart Koort Waarnginy \(Head, Heart, Talking\) Aboriginal engagement framework](#)
- [Aboriginal Cultural Centre](#)
- [METRONET Aboriginal Engagement Strategy](#)
- [Future of Fremantle](#)
- [Westport's Noongar Advisory Group](#)
- West Kimberley Regional Prison
- Broome Prison
- Roebourne District Senior Highschool
- Bunbury Outer Ring Road
- Causeway Pedestrian Bridge
- Alkimos Seawater Desalination Plant
- Infrastructure Sustainability and Aboriginal Participation



Infrastructure
Western Australia

Contact information

Infrastructure WA
Level 41, 108 St Georges Terrace, Perth
Western Australia 6000

Phone: 08 6552 5229

Email: enquiries@infrastructure.wa.gov.au
infrastructure.wa.gov.au

© Government of Western Australia 2024