

Learning Partnerships for Success

**Indigenous training and enterprise
development partnerships that work.**

PARTNERSHIPS

GOVERNANCE

PURPOSE

PLANNING

CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

CULTURAL PROTOCOLS

We recognise that the terms Aboriginal and Indigenous reflect regional preferences and they have been used as regionally appropriate.

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Overview

In 2008, a Reframing the Future project brought together a group of people with Indigenous enterprise development and training expertise. Representatives from Charles Darwin University, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Territory Education, the Institute of Aboriginal Development, Indigenous enterprise operators, members of key industry and Northern Territory and federal governments met to share, analyse and learn from good practice in Indigenous enterprise development and training. The team identified a series of projects which had achieved success in communities and with their other stakeholders.

The following themes were identified as key aspects of these successful partnerships:

- *Partnerships* are about people, what they bring and what they can make together. When people and organisations come together for a shared purpose the outcomes can be very powerful.
- Cultural and corporate *governance* models inform stakeholder engagement when they are shared and respected.
- *Planning* is an ongoing negotiated process that shares ownership and focuses on the community context. Planning connects the whole of community to outcomes and investment is an investment in success.
- People and institutions have different perceptions of *purpose* and success that develops through partnership and understanding. Explicit and implicit purposes influence engagement and motivation.
- *Cultural protocols*. Partners in learning need to consult the right way. Learning who to talk to, how to listen, work and negotiate in diverse contexts can have profound outcomes.
- Learning partnerships flourish in a cultural environment that promotes flexibility and links to contemporary and Indigenous knowledge systems.

These themes are expanded in the associated flyers and poster. In addition to these, three case studies have been recorded to expand into some detail. The case studies draw on the experiences of the consulting group. They discuss and describe how successful resolutions to some complex issues were achieved and provide examples of innovative practice within strong partnerships.



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PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are about people,
what they bring and what they can make together.
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a shared purpose the outcomes can be very powerful.

- Build on existing relationships ~ Brokerage through individuals or groups
- Retain community ownership ~ Invest in local people
- Ensure tangible benefits to community ~ Build resilience in organisation
- Engage specialists for specific tasks ~ Link to partners for sustainability
- Build successful learning networks ~ Customise resources with local people
- Value diverse outcomes and expectations ~ Work at partners' pace
- Understand social partnerships in learning ~ Grow a learning culture
- Clarify partners' roles ~ Industry partners can champion success
- Focus on small changes ~ Seed small projects

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GOVERNANCE

Cultural and corporate governance models inform stakeholder engagement when they are shared and respected.

Learn about each partners' governance models ~ Invest in time to learn
Attend to knowledge governance ~ Mutual respect for the partnership
Develop cross-cultural governance models ~ Side by side governance
Support strength based working models ~ Negotiate governance roles
Respect tangible and intangible Indigenous heritage
Articulate knowledge management protocols
Help industry to understand cross-cultural processes

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PURPOSE

People and institutions have different perceptions of purpose and success that develop through partnership and understanding. Explicit and implicit purposes influence engagement and motivation.

- Focus on good process ~ Participatory evaluation empowers people
- Plan short term outcomes ~ Define value outcomes over time
- Process must be 'fit-for-purpose' ~ Build reciprocity in learning exchange
- Facilitate enterprise development ~ Revisit purpose over time
- Embed complex purposes and outcomes ~ Invest in ongoing consultation
- Learning is context specific ~ Learning is purpose driven

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PLANNING

Planning is an ongoing negotiated process that shares ownership and focuses on the community context. Planning linked to whole of community outcomes and investment in success

- Do homework on community ~ Plan for local success and outcomes
- Avoid the blame game ~ Find constructive ways to negotiate systems
- Put people first ~ Support workplace experience and incubation
- Consider making changes in systems to match community activity
- Reflect on process and action ~ Use whole of community planning
- Match initiatives to community activities
- Match capacity with opportunity and space

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Learning Partnerships for Success

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CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Learning partnerships flourish in an environment that promotes flexibility, links to the contemporary world and Indigenous knowledge systems.

- Knowledge exchange includes learners' knowledge ~ Enable flexibility
- Care for the people involved ~ Timing and approach is important
- Informal processes support formal recognition ~ Value cultural knowledge
- Integrate intergenerational involvement ~ Connect to local realities
- Value patience and listening ~ Engage with local business and calendar
- Support management of cultural obligations
- Recognise existing strengths in knowledge
- Partner with Indigenous elders in teaching situations
- Enhance cross-cultural competence for remote delivery

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CULTURAL PROTOCOLS

Partners in learning need to consult the right way.
Learning who to talk to, how to listen, work and negotiate
in diverse contexts can have profound outcomes.

- Listen ~ Assume you might not know everything
- Clarify roles and relationships ~ Consultation continues in regular conversation
- Act on local Indigenous advice ~ Involve local Indigenous mentors
- Respect gender specific knowledge ~ Ask who to communicate with
- Discuss economic developments ~ Identify who benefits
- Share clear examples ~ Use commonly understood language

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Negotiating a community-based cultural festival

The impetus for these two festival projects was initiated by the Indigenous community representatives from two distinct communities who identified that skills development within the communities was required to ensure local, cultural festivals were sustainable, as well as the associated tourism, language maintenance and economic benefits. Additionally, the festivals and associated training represent real potential for Indigenous people to gain employment as consultants on a continuing basis.

A partnership was initiated through an industry organisation and a training advisory body who collaborated with the interested community members. The training advisory council acted as a broker to identify the community members' interests and needs. A training approach was developed for each community that embedded literacy and numeracy into key areas of development including multimedia, screen printing, hospitality – cookery & tourism, sound and music and event management training. The broker negotiated an integrated training plan with registered training organisations and non-accredited industry based training organisations and sought funding through an appropriate government program.

The training plan, resources, implementation and assessment focused on

1. Preparing for and running the festival, meeting students needs; and,
2. Mapping to nationally accredited competencies.

The plan was negotiated in the team and customised to accord with the group's suggestions. The identified skills sets and competencies were organised into a series of Vocational Training Programs (VTP's) that drew units from different training packages and provided a method for customised accreditation as an outcome. Additional funding sources provided non-capital financial support and the community provided infrastructure and festival equipment.

The members of the partnership had to think creatively about using their resources to support the program and their shared commitment to supporting Indigenous people to develop and run their own festival for local benefit. The talk between the partners explored possibilities and encouraged creative thinking about implementation and commitment. Their suggested approach was discussed by key industry partners and brokers with the community council and in a public meeting that made connections to potential participants. In these meetings the focus was on clear accessible language, what would happen, benefits for the community and local economic development. As a result some important decisions were made;



trainers with industry and remote delivery expertise were identified by industry and agreed to be engaged by the training organisation. The community negotiated the best approach and discussed issues like timing, location, roles and responsibilities and managing ongoing issues.

Training was conducted in blocks and supported by hired portable accommodation. These regular visits were further supported by an Indigenous liaison project officer with local family based connections.

Event management was not taken up by participants in one community, so training focused on other relevant areas of interest. Negotiated teaching spaces, and trainers who were available all day encouraged high rates of community participation and provided safe, appropriate access to people and spaces.

Ongoing assessment occurred though and after the festival and assessment included digital and visual evidence collection. As a result of the program, some women sold their artwork and now have chosen to develop sewing skills, an unexpected outcome with ongoing enterprise potential.

Finalising these projects involved debriefing with the communities, industry partners and trainers. Foundational knowledge now forms the basis for the next enterprise training project and associated partnerships. Key aspects for continued improvement are:

1. Tying the activities to other community activities like the schools programs;
2. Increasing community presence and connection to managing festival matters;
3. Including government appointed employment brokers; and,
4. Multiple sites of employment.

There were difficulties around resources and contracts along the way that were not insignificant; they were managed through the partnership's commitment to make the project work. When so many sources of support need to be merged together, the complexity of managing the various systems should not to be underestimated or under resourced.



Connecting to enterprise development and cultural knowledge

A group of Aboriginal artists wanted to negotiate a better deal for enterprise development and related arts centre management employment and training. They identified potential brokers to work beside their art centre community towards realising the bigger dreams and enhancing the potential of their community's artists. This partnership, developed over considerable time, through periods of complex and challenging socio-political change.

The brokers offer some reflections about connecting training to enterprise development and respected cultural knowledge. Any engagement process is underpinned by listening to what Aboriginal people are saying about the way things must be done. Teaching and learning are a two-way process based on an exchange. In learning contexts, everyone is a learner. For the exchange to occur, trainers demonstrated that they value Indigenous cultural knowledge systems in a number of ways. For example:

1. Including Aboriginal elders as teachers in peer settings who were able to direct learning in their specialist areas of knowledge and stand side-by-side with specialists with other knowledge; and,
2. Always networking across knowledge systems and contexts to provide a complex and rich view of ideas, skills and their relationship to cultural and social lives.

Connection to a culturally based enterprise is a conscious decision to retain control of and to value Aboriginal knowledge and experience. This reflects in successful ways of teaching and learning. The core works as both a cultural and cross cultural learning centre. Balancing the related knowledge systems is complex and is built through experience and partnership, often in small steps. As this is time, energy and resource intensive, partners can only build from one project at a time.

Protocols and space for appropriate interaction and adherence with governance systems needs to be achieved along side with appropriate, supported training and ongoing opportunity for engagement. By developing an enterprise's role as a learning hub, it was vital to have a space for Aboriginal people to share their own conversations to keep their knowledge alive and growing. When the enterprise develops a strong base for working with other organisations in professional partnerships it provides potential for expansion of core business, and therefore increased enterprise outcomes.



Effective connections show strong shared respect and understanding. A connected approach to learning recognises the existence of tangible and intangible knowledge and its relevance in people's lives and communities. They consider how this can be actualised in learning processes. There must be strong understanding of the governance of Aboriginal lands and spaces when having any partnership discussions about community development and associated training.

Strengths based approaches provide the parameters for the learning. Shared understandings are supported by industry partners' involvement and championing of individuals, communities and enterprises. In this way, industry partners become champions who connect the learners to key people and organisations and provide ways for people to engage.

Good engagement involves people with the expertise to support others to get started, the ability to customise for the location, identify and use information technology, assess and support artists or enterprise to meet their needs and goals.

Aboriginal people can negotiate their own cross cultural communications, they are experts in this. Partners should recognise and value the reciprocity in the learning exchange and through it come to a shared understanding of what is achievable.



Implementing effective workplace training

An Indigenous man who had developed his own skills and knowledge through working in student services and information technology support, and undertaking the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, had become an information technology (IT) trainer. As he has developed his practice through experience, he has addressed key issues in making training relevant, engaging and culturally appropriate. He developed new resources for teaching that relied on visual resources, reduced reliance on written text and introduced students to visually-based and useful IT tools.

His teaching provided individual students with a program to follow while he worked with people as they needed, on their area of learning need and individually, avoiding shaming them in front of others. The teaching program focused on hands-on experiences and reflected workplace realities. The program was designed to also reflect students' realities, lack of access to computers outside of hours and learners' work, family, cultural and other commitments. The course was supported by a training coordinator to work with people to determine personal training and development plans. These plans focused on responding to the skills development people wanted rather than imposing a course that ensured everyone passed an organisational requirement.

The integration and access of supporting programs such as literacy and numeracy is enhanced through involving gender specific staff. Workplace training and assessment is supported by effective trainer supervision and availability outside teaching and work hours.

Implementation of training was dependent on finding out what people wanted from training and working around the cultural obligations of communities. By working with key Indigenous people in the community, the trainer was able to identify potential training spaces, relevant contexts, people who could be involved as trainers and learners and the communication networks. Traditional owners facilitated discussions about the content of the training and its connections to community workforce and enterprise priorities. It is very important for trainers to have good background knowledge of the community with whom they are working. The background includes identifying previous provision of training, an individual's training history, work experience, life and cultural knowledge. This Indigenous trainer emphasised that communicating is different across cultures and how much this needs to be understood along with the impact different forms of conversation have on whether learners feeling included or excluded unintentional or not.



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Acknowledgements



Australian Government

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The logo for 'Reframing the Future' features the words 'Reframing' and 'the' in a black sans-serif font, with 'Future' in a large, bold, red sans-serif font. A purple arrow points to the right, passing behind the text.

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Disclaimer

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