A CULTURAL PROTOCOL FOR EVALUATION

A guide for the Indigenous Australia Program team and external consultants to support and encourage good practice.

The **Fred Hollows** Foundation

This publication may contain images of persons that have passed away. The Fred Hollows Foundation would like to acknowledge these persons and pay our respects to them and their families.
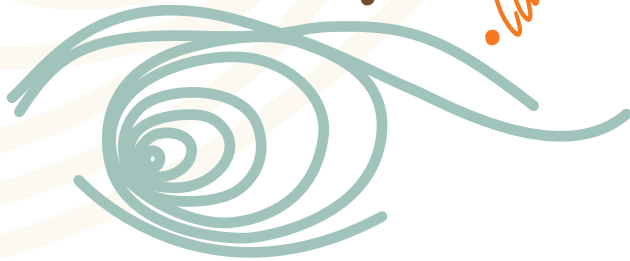
Reciprocal Respect

Cultural Humility

Acknowledgements

Cultural Protocol

~ The journey of each evaluator

• Communities

◉ The circles represent the many layers of community perspectives: Spirituality, Physical & mental wellbeing, empowerment, engagement & history.

This *Cultural Protocol for Evaluation* provides guidance for those who are involved with evaluation-related activities with The Fred Hollows Foundation's Indigenous Australia Program (IAP). The IAP works in partnership with relevant agencies to plan and implement programs to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and end avoidable blindness. Through this process, the IAP strives to work in collaborative, participatory and respectful ways, and this carries over to our approach to evaluation of these programs.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to assist IAP staff and external evaluation consultants to ensure that activities are undertaken with the appropriate respect for, and participation of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities.

This protocol has been developed incorporating IAP staff knowledge and experience, as well as Australian and international evaluation and research approaches to working with Indigenous people and communities.

There are three elements to the protocol:

1. Reciprocal Respect
2. Cultural Humility
3. Acknowledgement

Each of the sets of information provided in this guidance complement the other elements. Our hope is that this guidance will support and encourage good practice.

USING THE CULTURAL PROTOCOL AS A RESOURCE

Those using this document can refer to the various elements to inform their professional approaches and processes. This guidance is intended to complement other sources of guidance for IAP staff and professional evaluators, such as those on ethics, approaches, selection of tools and questions and reporting. It is important that this protocol is used in conjunction with the specific cultural and communication protocols for the individual community that is participating in the evaluation.

This cultural protocol could:

- be used to generate discussion about cultural considerations

- be used to clarify expectations

- be incorporated into organisational processes to lead towards system change

- be used to explain why cultural considerations may influence an evaluation process; local procedures, appropriate timing, avoidance and gender relationships

- be used to inform the design and implementation of evaluation processes

- be used as a tool to link the historical context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the impact that still resonates

- provide an opportunity for self-reflection

- be used to build cultural capacity and competence

- be used as an educational tool

- be part of the healing process

- be used as a guide to feel comfortable to ask questions

- deepen cultural understanding to consider sub-cultures and the complexity that exists in the political landscape

- be used to contribute to developing cultural humility for everyone involved

To undertake successful evaluation processes and deliver the kinds of evaluation products that are expected by both organisations and communities, reciprocal respect between people involved is crucial.

The concepts and suggested approaches below are provided to highlight the lessons learned about how reciprocal respect might be achieved within an evaluation context.

We recognise that everyone brings their own values, experiences and integrity to assist them in this kind of work. We recognise that people participating in evaluations also have their own life experiences that shape their views of the practice of 'respect'. Some suggested elements of this concept are included below.

ENGAGEMENT

Meaningful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants and stakeholders is an essential part of developing an understanding of the context of the evaluation. Consultation and negotiation should achieve mutual understanding about the proposed evaluation's purpose, scope and expected benefits. Community support for the evaluation process should be gained through ongoing consultation and negotiation. Evaluation facilitators should provide opportunities for people to define their own space and meet on their own terms.

RECIPROCITY

The evaluation process and outcomes should seek to maximise positive benefits for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities involved. Benefits and value arising from the evaluation should be shared.

RECOGNISING DIVERSITY

Evaluation processes and products should recognise, acknowledge and affirm the diversity of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, including differences relating to gender, age, priorities and concerns specific to cultural heritage.

RESPONSIBILITY

Evaluators have a responsibility to follow the practices related to the 'do no harm' concept[1], and to actively ensure that the wellbeing of participants is protected. This may include making sure that no unfair burden is placed on certain individuals or groups, and that people's privacy, human rights and dignity are protected. It may also include ensuring that the evaluation process does not contribute to discrimination, marginalisation or exclusion of individuals or groups.

WORLD VIEWS

All parties should seek to understand differences in world views and the influence of these world views on perceptions of success, process, respect and benefits. The benefits of balancing flexibility and rigour should be realised, and it should be acknowledged that sometimes this balance needs to be negotiated to suit different groups of people.

Evaluators should try to use strengths-based evaluation approaches and tools where possible, which will provide an opportunity to demonstrate respect for different world views.

All parties should recognise and respect the richness and integrity of the cultural inheritance of past, current and future generations.

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[1] See ACFID (Australian Council for International Development), Principles for Ethical Research and Evaluation in Development, 2013.

Having cultural humility means creating a space for self-reflection and careful consideration regarding your own assumptions and beliefs. It means maintaining a willingness to suspend judgement about a person or group based on generalisations you might make about their culture.

Cultural humility is an important step in helping to redress the imbalance of power inherent in relationships between practitioners and those that they serve and collaborate with on shared activities.

Related to this theme, when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in an evaluation context, it is important to:

• Acknowledge and recognise the custodians of the country that you are on

• Always be considerate, and communicate information to build trust and contribute to two-way learning

• Respect communities' past experiences of research and evaluation

• Be sensitive and seek clarification in a patient and respectful manner

• Seek and follow local protocols relating to the area you are working in, including local communication protocols.

You may need to seek a cultural guide or ask questions in each context to ascertain what is determined to be respectful, to represent trust-oriented behaviour and to demonstrate sensitivity.

Being culturally humble does not mean giving up one's values, but deepening an understanding of these values and those of others, and thus navigating cultural differences in ways which reduce the negative aspects of power imbalance.

In the two sections above, several references were made to the importance of identifying, acknowledging and respecting realities and issues in different contexts as part of evaluation processes. This section provides more explicit details, because the concept of 'acknowledgement' is particularly important when working in diverse cultural contexts.

PROTECTING KNOWLEDGE AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Evaluators have a responsibility to protect the knowledge and intellectual property of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities. The contributions of all individuals, groups, communities and services involved in the evaluation must be explicitly recognised, and participants should be consulted as how they would like to be identified or described in the evaluation. Traditional Owners and Elders should be acknowledged where appropriate.

RESPONDING TO COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

The priorities and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be reflected in the development of the evaluation outcomes.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CONTROL

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities should be consulted about how certain information, such as history, stories, community issues and culture, is represented in evaluations. The way in which this information is used and interpreted needs to be agreed to by the community.

MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK TO COMMUNITY

Feedback from the evaluation should be delivered to the relevant community or group in a form that is meaningful, and ready access to this material must be available. When writing up the evaluation, it is important to consider any possible effects of the way in which individuals or communities are depicted.

REPRESENTATION

Published evaluation material should not expose information that would be considered confidential or sensitive by the individuals or communities involved, and neither should it reinforce negative stereotypes. Published reports on evaluations should describe how cultural protocols were used in the evaluation, and how they influenced the evaluation process.

IAP staff are committed to working with external evaluators to collaboratively negotiate the respective roles and responsibilities required for this way of working to be put into practice. The IAP acknowledges that additional resources, particularly time, are required for this approach but strongly believe that working collaboratively will be beneficial for everyone involved.

Examples of where collaboration could occur include:

- Developing the terms of reference

- Facilitating introductions with partner organisations

- Providing logistical support (advice on language, appropriate clothing, travel & safety issues)

- Accessing local cultural protocols

- Engaging with expertise from communities and partner organisations

- Developing participatory ways of engagement and data collection

- Providing information about past evaluation and research undertaken in communities

- Exchanging knowledge about evaluation theory, methodology, processes and practices

- Discussing ways of presenting evaluation reports

- Feedback on drafts of reports

- ACFID (Australia Council for International Development) Effective Development Practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities http://www.acfid.asn.au/resources-publications/publications/practice-notes/effective-development-practice-in-aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-communities/view

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- ACFID, Guidelines for Ethical Research and Evaluation in Development, 2015, http://www.acfid.asn.au/aid-issues/files/ethics-guidelines

- AEA (The American Evaluation Association) Public Statement on Cultural Competence in Evaluation http://www.eval.org/ccstatement

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