June 2023

Co-Design Lessons Learned Report

National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)

pwc

PwC's Indigenous Consulting

Disclaimer

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers Indigenous Consulting Pty Limited (PIC) to conduct a Co-Design Lessons Learned Project to identify lessons from the co-design process facilitated by NIAA. The Co-design Lessons Learned Report documents the lessons learned to support collective learning and continuous improvement for future co-design work facilitated by NIAA and other government agencies in the context of Indigenous policy making. PIC prepared this report solely for NIAA's use and benefit. In doing so, PIC acted exclusively for the NIAA and considered no-one else's interests. PIC accepts no responsibility, duty, or liability to anyone other than the NIAA in connection with this report for the consequences of using or relying on it.

Acknowledgement

PIC acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and seas of Australia and we pay our respects to Elders past, present, and for generations to come. PIC would like to thank all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who participated in this research project and recognise the time taken to share their wisdom and expertise. Please note that the term 'Indigenous' has been used throughout this document to respectfully refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people involved in the Co-design Lessons Learned Project.

A Note on Terminology

In this report, the term 'Indigenous co-design stakeholder' respectfully refers to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are involved in the co-design process. This may include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are experts in a particular area (e.g., an academic with expertise in the Governance of Indigenous Data), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are professionals (e.g., health professionals), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are leaders in their community (e.g., Elders), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are impacted (either directly or indirectly) by the co-design outcome.

PIC Diversity Graphic – People's hands coming together to form a circle.

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

This Co-design Lessons Learned Report presents the lessons gained from a co-design process facilitated by the NIAA to develop a Framework for the Governance of Indigenous Data. This Report aims to provide the NIAA and other government agencies with practice-informed knowledge and practical tips to improve the way co-design processes are undertaken with Indigenous co-design stakeholders in the future.

Project Background and Context

NIAA Co-Design Process

In August 2021, the Deputy Secretaries Data Group (DSDG) – a group that oversees whole-of-government data activities at the Commonwealth level – agreed to establish a Sub-Committee on the Governance of Indigenous Data (the Sub-Committee) and a Data Champions Network (DCN) Working Group on the Governance of Indigenous Data (the Working Group).

These groups comprise key Indigenous co-design stakeholders in the field of Indigenous data (with representatives from the university sector and Indigenous community and research organisations) and select Australian Public Service (APS) members with relevant data expertise.

The task of the Sub-Committee and Working Group was to co-design an APS-wide Framework on the Governance of Indigenous Data (the Framework) (for more detail on the process, refer to Appendix F - NIAA Co-design Process: Key Actions).

PIC Co-Design Lessons Learned Project

In January 2023, the NIAA engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers Indigenous Consulting (PIC) to conduct a Co-Design Lessons Learned Project to identify lessons from the co-design process to support collective learning and continuous improvement for future co-design work facilitated by Government in the context of Indigenous policy making.

From February 2023 to June 2023, PIC conducted a mixed methods research project by administering a survey and conducting interviews with the Sub-Committee and Working Group to understand their experiences of and reflections on the co-design process, including suggestions for improving future co-design practices between Government and Indigenous (APS and non-APS) stakeholders.

The Lessons Learned Project had three main objectives:

To support NIAA and other government agencies to:

Objective 1:
Build trust and accountability in the co-design process.

Objective 2:
Understand the lessons learned.

Objective 3:
Promote continuous improvement in co-design in the context of Indigenous policy making.

Key insight into the importance of lessons learned projects provided by secondary research:

In her 2018 article, 'The Promise of Co-Design for Public Policy', strategic designer and researcher Emma Blomkamp (University of Melbourne) concludes that co-design is an emerging field of practice in the public sector and many of its claims about its potential to design better outcomes in policy, programs and services need to be assessed and disseminated across government to build evidence and support future co-design work.

"As a novel means for creatively engaging citizens and stakeholders to find solutions to complex problems, co-design holds great promise for policy … [G]overnmental organisations and policy workers should be exploring ways to adopt and embed this practice." (Blomkamp, 2018.)

This Lessons Learned Report does not provide feedback on the specific content or quality of the Framework itself. The lessons are by no means exhaustive and do not offer an authoritative source on co-design and how to apply it across all public sector co-design projects.

The lessons, recommendations and tips contained in this report should be considered in the context of your co-design project.

Co-Design Lessons Learned

Overview

The Lessons Learned Project discovered three main Lessons:

Lesson #1
Embed Cultural Safety

Co-design between Government and Indigenous co-design stakeholders requires partnerships based on respect and trust. Cultural safety is the foundation upon which respectful and trusting relationships are built.

Lesson #2
Share Power

Co-design between Government and Indigenous co-design stakeholders requires equitable and transparent shared decision-making processes to support Indigenous co-design stakeholders to have genuine influence over decisions that affect their life outcomes.

Lesson #3
Tailor the Co-design Process

Co-design between Government and Indigenous co-design stakeholders requires developing a clearly defined and fit-for-purpose co-design approach to ensure Indigenous co-design stakeholders' needs and aspirations are met.

As outlined below, each lesson learned comprises:

1. a description of the lesson learned;
2. a key recommendation;
3. an action to support the lesson learned;
4. tips to support the actions; and
5. a 'what to watch out for' section to assist government co-design facilitators during the co-design process to stay on track.

All key findings and information that make up the lessons learned derive from the Survey and Interview data.

Co-Design Lessons Learned

Lesson #1
Embed Cultural Safety

Lesson learned:

Co-design between Government and Indigenous co-design stakeholders requires partnerships based on respect and trust. Cultural safety is the foundation upon which respectful and trusting relationships are built. The concept of 'cultural safety' in a co-design process is made up of various personal components (e.g., people's mindsets and behaviours) and organisational components (e.g., equal representation in groups) and needs to be understood before the co-design process begins.

Key recommendation:

Build and maintain your organisation's cultural safety to ensure a culturally safe co-design work environment.

Action

Practical action to support cultural safety in the co-design process include:

1. **Determine what cultural safety means in practice by facilitating a cultural safety workshop with Indigenous co-design stakeholders.**

Tips

Tips to support the first practical action:

- **Develop** a clear cultural safety plan agreed to by all parties before the co-design process begins.

- **Develop** a Social Contract in partnership with/led by Indigenous co-design stakeholders that includes key principles and behaviours to support cultural safety, self-determination, and authentic partnerships.

- **Conduct** a cultural safety survey at key points in the co-design process (depending on the size of the project) to measure cultural safety and identify strategies to improve it.

- **Engage** an independent Indigenous facilitator to deliver the cultural safety workshop.

What to watch out for:

A co-design process that has difficulty articulating what cultural safety means to Indigenous co-design stakeholders and how it is being supported during the co-design process. This could lead Indigenous co-design stakeholders to experience the co-design process as culturally unsafe. Possible indications of Indigenous co-design stakeholders experiencing this issue may include: low levels of engagement; remaining quiet in group settings; voicing concerns with little to no follow up from government.

Co-Design Lessons Learned (continued)

Lesson #1
Embed Cultural Safety

Action

Practical action to support cultural safety in the co-design process include:

2. **Build cultural awareness among non-Indigenous co-design stakeholders by delivering ongoing cultural safety training.**

Tips

Tips to support the second practical action:

- **Commit and invest in** adequate time and resources to build a base-level of cultural safety among all non-Indigenous co-design stakeholders before the co-design process begins.

- **Identify** local Indigenous cultural training providers to deliver training.

What to watch out for:

A co-design process that places the responsibility of building the co-design team's cultural safety on Indigenous co-design stakeholders. This could lead to Indigenous co-design stakeholders being excluded from participating in the co-design process, due to additional demands and responsibilities. Possible indications of this issue arising may include: Indigenous co-design stakeholders concerned about the efficacy of the co-design process and experiencing an inadequate amount of time and resources to participate in the co-design process.

A cultural safety program that does not deliver ongoing substantial training. This could lead to superficial understandings of cultural safety and a work environment that is culturally unsafe. Possible indications of this issue arising may include: Indigenous co-design stakeholders having a lack of motivation and engagement and complaints of indirect/covert racial discrimination.

Co-Design Lessons Learned (continued)

Lesson #1
Embed Cultural Safety

Action

Practical action to support cultural safety in the co-design process include:

3. **Build and maintain culturally appropriate engagement processes with local Indigenous communities (if engaging with them) by developing clear engagement protocols.**

Tips

Tips to support the third practical action:

- **Identify** Indigenous co-design stakeholders (e.g., local Elders and community leaders) to assist in developing a set of protocols to respectfully engage with local Indigenous communities involved in/impacted by the co-design process.
- **Seek advice** from local Indigenous community facilitators to support your agency or organisation to build respectful relationships with local Indigenous people and groups.
- **Seek advice** from a professional Indigenous co-design practitioner to assist your agency or organisation to develop a best-practice engagement framework.

What to watch out for:

A co-design process that does not develop respectful and trusting relationships with local Indigenous communities. This could lead to co-design processes failing to meet the outcomes intended, including the needs and aspirations of those who are most impacted by the outcome. Possible indications of this issue arising may include: Indigenous co-design stakeholders concerned that the co-design process has not sufficiently engaged with community and that the co-design outcome is misrepresented by government.

Co-Design Lessons Learned (continued)

Lesson #1
Embed Cultural Safety

Action (Agency/APS-Wide)

Practical action to support cultural safety in the co-design process include:

4. **Drive Indigenous cultural safety in your agency by developing organisational cultural safety policies and procedures.**

Tips

Tips to support the fourth practical action:

- **Develop** cultural safety policies and procedures in partnership with/led by Indigenous government stakeholders to support cultural needs during the co-design process.

- **Develop** an employment plan for increasing Indigenous employment in your agency and for supporting professional development of Indigenous staff in co-design practices.

- **Develop** the employment and professional development plan in partnership with/led by Indigenous government employees and an independent professional Indigenous co-design practitioner.

What to watch out for:

A co-design process that does not have existing policies and procedures to support Indigenous co-design stakeholders' cultural needs. This could lead to cultural safety concerns and challenges for Indigenous co-design stakeholders. Possible indications of this issue arising may include: Indigenous co-design stakeholders excluded from the co-design process because it does not accommodate for cultural events; informally reporting racial discrimination without having a formal avenue to go through.

A co-design process in which Indigenous government stakeholders are greatly outnumbered by non-Indigenous government employees.

A co-design process where there is little to no Indigenous representation in the co-design team and in senior positions.

Co-Design Lessons Learned (continued)

Lesson #1
Embed Cultural Safety

Action (Agency/APS-Wide)

Practical action to support cultural safety in the co-design process include:

5. **Maintain trusting relationships by supporting government/agency stakeholders to genuinely commit to and invest in the co-design process.**

Tips

Tips to support the fifth practical action:

- **Seek advice** from potential government co-design stakeholders about how best to support their commitment to the co-process and participate in a consistent, reliable and respectful manner (e.g., developing adequate handover procedures).

What to watch out for:

A co-design process that has changing representatives from non-Indigenous government stakeholders. This could lead to Indigenous co-design stakeholders perceiving and experiencing government as failing to take the co-design process seriously, which produces feelings of mistrust. Possible indications of this issue arising may include: agency representatives passing on the responsibility of attending co-design meetings to others in a rushed and informal manner.

Co-Design Lessons Learned (continued)

Lesson #2
Share Power

Lesson learned:
Co-design between Government and Indigenous co-design stakeholders requires equitable and transparent shared decision-making processes to support Indigenous co-design stakeholders to have genuine influence over decisions that affect their life outcomes.

Key recommendation:
Embed equitable decision-making processes into the co-design process.

Action

Practical action to support power sharing in the co-design process include:

1. **Establish and maintain effective partnerships by developing co-design governance structures and processes.**

Tips

Tips to support the first practical action:

- **Gain advice** from Indigenous experts/leaders in the co-design area/issue, including local Elders, community leaders, and community-controlled organisations about who will be best placed to represent the partnership.

- **Consider** potential benefits of partnering with broader existing Indigenous governance structures (e.g., community-controlled organisations).

- **Establish** clear partnership processes and agreements on project roles and responsibilities in the co-design process.

- **Establish** an Indigenous co-chairing arrangement that is independently elected by Indigenous co-design stakeholders to ensure Indigenous voices are prioritised throughout the co-design process, with equal representation in numbers between Indigenous and non-Indigenous co-design stakeholders.

- **Support** Indigenous stakeholders to have adequate time and space to build rapport and work together on all aspects of the co-design process.

What to watch out for:

A co-design process that does not include Indigenous co-design stakeholders in the process of establishing co-design governance structures and processes. This could lead to inadequate Indigenous representation and a power imbalance in favour of government.

A co-design process that lacks a clear and shared understanding of stakeholders' roles and responsibilities. This could lead to a co-design process becoming confused and the co-design team fragmented.

Co-Design Lessons Learned (continued)

Lesson #2
Share Power

Practical action to support power sharing in the co-design process include:

2. **Facilitate Indigenous leadership of the co-design process by developing a co-design brief/business case in partnership with Indigenous co-design stakeholders.**

Tips

Tips to support the second practical action:

- **Facilitate** Indigenous co-design stakeholders to contribute to co-design project funding decisions by developing a co-design business case before government funding is applied for.

- **Seek advice** from local Indigenous community facilitators to support your agency or organisation to develop a co-design brief with local Indigenous people and groups.

- **Seek advice** from an independent professional Indigenous co-design practitioner about how to lead a co-design process to ensure equitable decision-making processes and practices.

- **Include** the main objective of the co-design process, who it will involve, problems it seeks to solve, clear description of the need, value and benefits of co-design, co-design stages, and resources required.

What to watch out for:

A co-design process with pre-defined government parameters. This could lead to co-design outcomes that do not benefit Indigenous co-design stakeholders. Possible indications of this issue arising may include: Indigenous co-design stakeholders uncertain about how the co-design issue has been framed; passive/inactive collaboration in designing solutions, due to possible disagreement about the assumptions government has made and that underpin the co-design project.

A co-design process that lacks appropriate participatory design techniques. This could lead to Indigenous co-design stakeholders being excluded from speaking openly about lived experience expertise and contributing to/leading key decisions that affect the co-design process. Possible indications of this issue arising may include: rigid co-design workshops that have difficulty facilitating creative and inclusive participation.

Co-Design Lessons Learned (continued)

Lesson #2
Share Power

Action

Practical action to support power sharing in the co-design process include:

3. **Support Indigenous co-design stakeholders' capacity to engage in the co-design process by adequately compensating them for their time and expertise.**

Tips

Tips to support the third practical action:

- **Seek advice** from Indigenous co-design stakeholders (e.g., local Elders, community leaders, professionals, and community-controlled organisations) about what best represents adequate compensation and renumeration for engaging Indigenous co-design stakeholders in the co-design process.

- **Seek advice** from government organisations or agencies about what rate is adequate to renumerate Indigenous co-design stakeholders in the co-design process, drawing on professional consultant rates.

- **Commit and invest in** resources required to adequately compensate/renumerate Indigenous co-design stakeholders at the outset of the co-design process.

What to watch out for:

A co-design process in which the government does not reciprocate as part of a genuine partnership with Indigenous co-design stakeholders. This could lead to Indigenous co-design stakeholders feeling exploited. Possible indications of this issue arising may include: Indigenous co-design stakeholders feeling as if the co-design process has not honoured Indigenous perspectives; opinions that government has not been listening properly; time is being wasted without adequate depth of exploration of the co-design issue.

Co-Design Lessons Learned (continued)

Lesson #2
Share Power

Action

Practical action to support power sharing in the co-design process include:

4. **Build and maintain a clear and shared understanding of the co-design process by negotiating a shared vision with Indigenous co-design stakeholders and align the team's expectations**

Tips

Tips to support the fourth practical action:

- **Facilitate** an open and honest discussion with Indigenous co-design stakeholders about how best to respond to any 'hard' government limitations on the co-design process, prioritising Indigenous co-design stakeholders' needs.

- **Workshop** with Indigenous co-design stakeholders to explore, dialogue, and agree upon a shared vision of the co-design process with clear guiding objectives.

- **Develop** a clear and detailed Scope of Work in partnership with/led by Indigenous co-design stakeholders, including a clear description of what is in and what is out of scope, key stakeholders, proposed process for engagement, key roles and responsibilities, details of the secretariat support, and group communication preferences/methods.

What to watch out for:

A co-design process that does not have a clear and shared understanding of the co-design scope of work. This could lead to Indigenous co-design stakeholders experiencing the co-design process as uncoordinated and lacking direction, possibly requiring a re-start of the co-design process. Possible indications of this issue arising may include: lack of confidence about the direction the co-design process is heading in; disagreement about the scope's parameters and how it was developed.

Co-Design Lessons Learned (continued)

Lesson #2
Share Power

Action

Practical action to support power sharing in the co-design process include:

5. **Support Indigenous co-design stakeholders' capacity to actively participate in the co-design process by determining and implementing what is required to do so.**

Tips

Tips to support the fifth practical action:

- **Seek advice** from Indigenous co-design stakeholders (e.g., local Elders, community leaders, and community-controlled organisations) to determine if capacity building is wanted/needed by Indigenous co-design stakeholders involved in/impacted by the co-design process, and if so, what necessary supports are required to ensure Indigenous co-design stakeholders actively participate in the co-design process.

- **Seek advice** from government co-design stakeholders to see what supports are needed to enable non-government Indigenous co-design stakeholders to actively participate in the co-design process.

- **Develop** a capacity building plan for the co-design process in partnership with Indigenous co-design stakeholders, determining how best to build capacity, skills, and leadership in local Indigenous co-design stakeholders to be involved in the co-design process, including training, skills transfer, and resources.

What to watch out for:

A co-design process that does not support active participation of Indigenous co-design stakeholders beyond a traditional consultation model. This could lead to Indigenous co-design stakeholders being excluded from the co-design process. Possible indications of this issue arising may include: imbalance of Indigenous participation compared to non-Indigenous participation levels.

Co-Design Lessons Learned (continued)

Lesson #3
Tailor the Co-design Approach

Lesson learned:
Co-design between Government and Indigenous co-design stakeholders requires developing a clearly defined and fit-for-purpose co-design approach to ensure Indigenous co-design stakeholders' needs and aspirations are met.

Key recommendation:
Tailor the co-design process with Indigenous co-design stakeholders.

Action

Practical action to support tailoring the co-design process include:

1. **Support Indigenous leadership in the co-design process by including Indigenous co-design stakeholders at the outset of setting up the co-design process.**

Tips

Tips to support the first practical action:

- **Seek advice** from an independent professional Indigenous co-design practitioner about how best to facilitate a pre-co-design workshop with Indigenous co-design stakeholders (preferably face-to-face) to collectively explore, dialogue, and agree upon a co-design approach that will meet their needs.

- **Commit to and invest in** adequate time and resources to bring Indigenous co-design stakeholders together to develop the co-design approach (e.g., compensation and renumeration to attend an all-day pre-co-design workshop).

- **Develop** a co-design roadmap that outlines key stages and activities involved in the co-design process, ensuring the roadmap is flexible and can adapt to changing needs.

What to watch out for:

A standardised, 'one-size fits all' co-design approach that fails to respond to the needs and aspirations of Indigenous co-design stakeholders. This could lead to a co-design process that struggles to facilitate a genuine dialogue with Indigenous co-design stakeholders and explore the co-design area/issue in depth. Possible indications of this issue arising may include: perceptions that the co-design process is not responding to Indigenous co-design stakeholders' needs.

Co-Design Lessons Learned (continued)

Lesson #2
Tailor the Co-design Approach

Action

Practical action to support tailoring the co-design process include:

2. **Build and maintain an effective co-design team by developing a team comprising stakeholders with different kinds of knowledge.**

Tips

Tips to support the second practical action:

- **Ensure** the co-design team has a mix of lived experience, professional and specialist expertise appropriate to the co-design area/topic, including co-design professionals.

- **Commit to and invest in** adequate time and resources to facilitate a team recruitment process in partnership with Indigenous experts/leaders in the co-design area, including local Elders, community leaders, and community-controlled organisations.

- **Ensure** stakeholders in your agency or organisation have an adequate level of understanding in relation to the co-design area/topic/issue. If not, develop and implement a learning plan before the co-design process begins.

What to watch out for:

A co-design team that does not have appropriate kinds of knowledge to contribute to the co-design process, with stakeholders who lack confidence about their level of understanding of the co-design area/issue. This could lead to stakeholder disengagement and valuable resources being wasted. Possible indications of this issue arising may include: lack of engagement from stakeholders.

Co-Design Lessons Learned (continued)

Lesson #2
Tailor the Co-design Approach

Action

Practical action to support tailoring the co-design process include:

3. **Support active engagement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous co-design stakeholders in the co-design process by preparing them for co-design workshops.**

Tips

Tips to support the fourth practical action:

- **Develop** and distribute a co-design workshop brief/instructional guide to all stakeholders before undertaking co-design workshop/s.

- **Facilitate** a preparatory co-design workshop with all stakeholders to build a shared understanding of what is required of them to participate and to build rapport as a team.

What to watch out for:

A co-design process that does not facilitate in-depth participatory design workshops. This could lead to Indigenous co-design stakeholders' needs and desires being unexplored and solutions designed unequally by a small selection of the co-design team. Possible indications of this issue arising may include: lack of equal participation and feedback from Indigenous co-design stakeholders during a co-design workshop.

Co-Design Lessons Learned (continued)

Lesson #2
Tailor the Co-design Approach

Action

Practical action to support tailoring the co-design process include:

4. **Gain a good understanding of the current state in which the co-design process seeks to be applied (e.g., the current state of employment policy and program outcomes on the ground) by conducting research.**

Tips

Tips to support the fifth practical action:

- Commit to and invest in adequate time and resources to facilitate a team recruitment process in partnership with Indigenous experts/leaders in the co-design area, including local Elders, community leaders, and community-controlled organisations.
- Ensure stakeholders in your agency or organisation have an adequate level of understanding in relation to the co-design area/topic/issue. If not, develop and implement a learning plan before the co-design process begins.

What to watch out for:

A co-design process that does not understand the current challenges and needs of stakeholders. This can lead to an inadequate framing of the co-design issue. Possible indications of this issue arising may include: Indigenous co-design stakeholders experiencing the co-design process as inadequately responding to the key barriers, needs, and opportunities on the ground.

Co-Design Lessons Learned (continued)

Lesson #2
Tailor the Co-design Approach

Action (Agency Level Action)

Practical action to support tailoring the co-design process include:

5. **Support the co-design process by building general co-design capacity in your agency or organisation.**

Tips

Tips to support the third practical action:

- **Build** on policy teams' expertise, including regional offices or staff embedded in local communities, policy information, program/service data, and grant funding guidelines.

- **Identify** local co-design training providers to upskill your agency or organisation in practicing/embedding co-design in the workplace.

- **Develop** a tool to assess your organisation's readiness to undertake co-design.

- **Embed** a 'lessons learned' review process to support future co-design work.

What to watch out for:

A co-design environment and team that does not have a clear and shared understanding of 'co-design' and how the team is operationalising it. This could lead to confusion and low levels of confidence in the co-design process. Possible indications of this issue arising may include: Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholder perceptions of ways of working being standard.

Co-Design Lessons Learned

The diagram below presents an example step-by-step co-design process of the first twelve stages to contextualise the lessons learned. It is not intended to be prescriptive. As stated, the lessons, recommendations, actions, and tips contained in this report should be considered in the context of your co-design project.

Step 1

Conduct a Contextual Research Inquiry

Gain a good understanding of the current state (needs, challenges, opportunities) in which the co-design process will be applied.

Step 2

Build a Co-design Team

Recruit co-design participants with different kinds of knowledge (lived experience, professional and specialist expertise) appropriate to the co-design area.

Step 3

Establish Co-design Governance

Establish and maintain co-design governance structures and processes for effective partnerships.

Step 4

Engage an Indigenous Co-design Practitioner

Depending on scope and scale of co-design process, engage an independent professional Indigenous co-design practitioner/team to lead the co-design process.

Step 5

Facilitate a Cultural Safety Workshop

Facilitate a workshop with Indigenous co-design stakeholders to determine what is needed to support cultural safety in practice.

Step 6

Facilitate Cultural Safety Training

Build a good level of cultural safety awareness among non-Indigenous co-design stakeholders.

Step 7

Pre-Co-design Workshop (Approach)

Facilitate a pre-co-design workshop with Indigenous stakeholders to explore, dialogue, and agree upon a co-design approach that will meet their needs.

Step 8

Develop a Social Contract

Develop a Social Contract in partnership with/led by Indigenous co-design stakeholders

Step 9

Develop a Scope of Work

Develop a clear and detailed Scope of Work in partnership with/led by Indigenous stakeholders.

Step 10

Co-design Workshop

Facilitate a face-to-face co-design workshop with Indigenous stakeholders.

Step 11

Co-design Workshop – Testing and Validation

Facilitate a second co-design workshop with Indigenous stakeholders to explore, dialogue, test and validate key findings and outputs from the first workshop.

Step 12

Facilitate a Cultural Safety Survey

Conduct a cultural safety survey to measure cultural safety and if necessary, identify strategies to improve it.

Steps 10 – 12 are iterative/cyclical
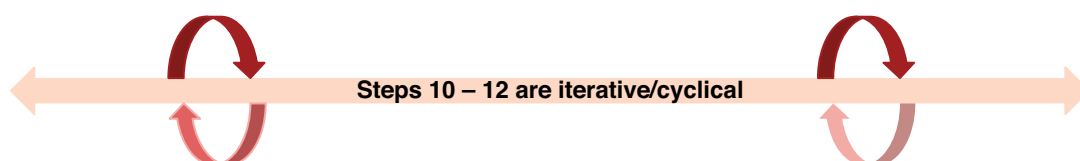
1 Introduction

Introduction

NIAA Co-Design Process

In August 2021, the Deputy Secretaries Data Group (DSDG) – a group that oversees whole-of-government data activities at the Commonwealth level– agreed to establish a Sub-Committee on the Governance of Indigenous Data (the Sub-Committee) and a Data Champions Network (DCN) Working Group on the Governance of Indigenous Data (the Working Group).

These groups comprise key Indigenous co-design stakeholders in the field of Indigenous data (with representatives from the university sector and Indigenous community and research organisations) and select Australian Public Service (APS) members with relevant expertise. The task of the Sub-Committee and Working Group was to co-design an APS-wide Framework on the Governance of Indigenous Data (the Framework).

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) facilitated the co-design process with the Sub-Committee and Working Group between 2022 and 2023. A draft Framework was developed for review and endorsement by the Sub-Committee in June 2023. The two groups had a total of 56 members with 45% Indigenous representation.

Group Numbers:*

Group	Total	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous
DSDG Sub-Committee (APS Members)	16	15	1
DSDG Sub-Committee (Non-APS/Indigenous Members)	8	0	8
DSDG Sub-Committee (Non-APS/ Non-Indigenous Members)	1	1	0
DCN Working Group (APS Members)	17	15	2
DNC Working Group (Non-APS/Indigenous Members)	14	0	14
Total	**56**	**31**	**25**

* Membership numbers represent a point-in-time when the Survey and Interview process was conducted. The membership fluctuated slightly over time, both before and after the Co-design Lessons Learned Project.

Introduction

PIC Co-Design Lessons Learned Project

In January 2023, the NIAA engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Indigenous Consulting (PIC) to conduct a Co-design Lessons Learned Project (the Lessons Learned Project) to identify lessons learned from the co-design process to support collective learning and continuous improvement for future co-design work facilitated by Government in the context of Indigenous policy making.

The Lessons Learned Project had three main objectives – to support NIAA and other government agencies to:

1. Build trust and accountability in the co-design process;

2. Understand the lessons learned; and

3. Promote continuous improvement in Indigenous co-design.

This Lessons Learned Report presents the lessons learned gained from the co-design process facilitated by the NIAA and does not provide feedback about the specific content or quality of the Framework itself. The lessons learned are by no means exhaustive and do not offer an authoritative source on co-design or how to apply it across all public sector co-design projects.

The lessons learned aim to provide the NIAA and other government agencies that plan to facilitate a co-design process with Indigenous co-design stakeholders with some practice-informed knowledge to support it.

Project Methodology

The Lessons Learned Project sought to answer three main research questions:

1. To what extent did the Sub-Committee and Working Group come to a shared agreement about how to co-design the Framework?

2. How well is the co-design process being conducted?

3. What lessons are there for future co-design projects in the context of Indigenous policy making?

A mixed-methods approach was used to ensure equal value was placed on quantitative and qualitative data and enable convergent validation.

Project Methodology

There were two data collection points in the project:

4. **An anonymous Survey** conducted in March 2023 (47% response rate – see Appendix A: Rapid Feedback Report) with closed ended questions and a small amount of free-text responses seeking feedback about the Sub-Committee's and Working Group's experiences and reflections on the co-design process; and

5. **An in-depth, semi-structured one-on-one Interview process** conducted in May 2023 (each interview being ~45 minutes in length with 21 participants in total – please see below) to provide the Sub-Committee and Working Group with an opportunity to further expand upon their reflections and to provide PIC with practical suggestions to support collective learning and continuous improvement for future co-design work facilitated by Government in the context of Indigenous policy making.

Survey and Interview Participants:

Survey participation by group and non-Indigenous/Indigenous status				
Group	**Membership**	**Non Indigenous - Survey Participants**	**Indigenous Survey Participants**	**Total Participation**
Data Champions Network (DCN) Working Group	31	18 of 31 (58%)	5 of 31 (16%)	23 of 31 (74%)
Deputy Secretaries Data Group (DSDG) Sub-Committee	26	10 of 26 (38%)	4 of 26 (15%)	14 of 26 (53%)
Total	**57**	**28 of 57 (50%)**	**9 of 57 (16%)**	**37 of 57 (65%)**

Interview participation by group and non-Indigenous/Indigenous status				
Group	**Membership**	**Non Indigenous - Interview Participants**	**Indigenous Interview Participants**	**Total Participation**
Data Champions Network (DCN) Working Group	31	9 of 31 (29%)	3 of 31 (9.6%)	12 (21%)
Deputy Secretaries Data Group (DSDG) Sub-Committee	26	5 of 26 (19%)	4 of 26 (15%)	9 (15.7%)
Total	**57**	**14 of 57 (24%)**	**7 of 57 (12%)**	**21 of 57 (36.8%)**

Findings and Data Analysis

Survey

Quantitative survey results were analysed to determine the extent to which Indigenous and non-Indigenous members in the Sub-Committee and Working Group agreed or disagreed with statements relating to the co-design process, using a 5-point Likert agree-disagree scale.

For each result, a 'key takeaway' containing a brief description of the level of agreement/ disagreement and suggestions on how to improve the co-design process was produced.

There were twenty-four key takeaways. Qualitative survey results were thematically analysed and generated twenty-one key themes relating to ways to improve the co-design process and future co-design processes (see Appendix A – Rapid Feedback Report).

Interviews

Interview data were captured using a scribe on a virtual whiteboard and generated approximately seven-hundred sticky notes grouped according to five key lines of enquiry (see below). Results were then thematically analysed and grouped by Indigenous and non-Indigenous members.

Interview Key Lines of Enquiry:

1. **Co-design** – what does co-design mean to you and what are some of the key elements of an ideal co-design process?

2. **Shared understanding** – how can a shared understanding of the co-design process be built to ensure trust and confidence?

3. **Collaboration and consultation** – what do 'traditional' government consultation processes look like and did the co-design process go beyond them?

4. **Sharing power** – how can we share power and decision-making more equally?

5. **Self-determination and cultural safety** – how can co-design processes support Indigenous self-determination and cultural safety?

Synthesis

Quantitative and qualitative results from the Survey and Interview process were systematically reviewed and a narrative synthesis (convergent validation) was conducted to summarise and explain the key findings, which were grouped according to the key lessons learned.

Each lesson learned was then broken down into an individual key recommendation, followed by practical actions to support implementing the recommendation, tips to support the actions, and a 'what to watch out for section' to assist government co-design facilitators during the co-design process to stay on track.

These lessons learned are a combination of key findings derived directly from the survey and interview process.

What is Co-design?

Research consistently identified the need for a clear and shared understanding of what 'co-design' means for members of the Working Group and Sub-Committee.

This was identified as a potential problem for future co-design practices, as to effectively apply co-design it is obvious that the co-design team needs to understand what it is they are applying.

The Lessons Learned Report provides a brief overview of what co-design typically refers to, as gaining a basic understanding of co-design and the context in which it is being implemented provides us with a more detailed understanding of the lessons learned.

Co-design is generally understood as a collaborative approach to solving complex problems, bringing together professionals (e.g. policy makers), specialists (e.g., Indigenous experts with specialist knowledge in Indigenous data), and people who have experience with — or may be affected by — certain issues.

Co-design is also generally understood to be 'user-centred' or 'human-centred' in that people with lived experience of the issue are placed at the 'centre' of the design process.

In the context of government policy making (e.g., in the context of health), designing solutions in deep collaboration with people that have experience of the problem …

> *…demonstrates a shift from seeking involvement or participation after an agenda has already been set, to seeking consumer and clinician leadership from the outset so that consumers and clinicians are involved in defining the problem and designing the solution.*
>
> Agency for Clinical Innovation
> A Guide to Build Co-design Capability

Overview of Co-design

A crucial difference between traditional methods of consultation used by government and co-design methods of engagement is that co-design requires deep collaboration at the very beginning of policy and program conceptualisaiton. From there, co-design ensures a distinct approach that is participatory and design-led is embedded throughout the co-design process.

Co-design requires empowering potential users of the program and/or service to frame up the very problem in which the co-design process is responding to, with creative and participatory collaboration practices embedded from start to finish.

On the other hand, traditional consultation typically includes stakeholders later down the policy development line, when the problem, agenda and dominant assumptions relating to how to respond to the issue are already well-established.

Spectrum of Participation

Co-design is commonly depicted as sitting on a spectrum or ladder of participation that typically includes five types of engagement, with each one representing a certain level of participation or engagement, including the level of influence stakeholders have on decisions, which increases as you go along the spectrum (see Appendix B – Participation Spectrum for more detail).

The following spectrum has been adapted from three different sources (see Appendix E – References).
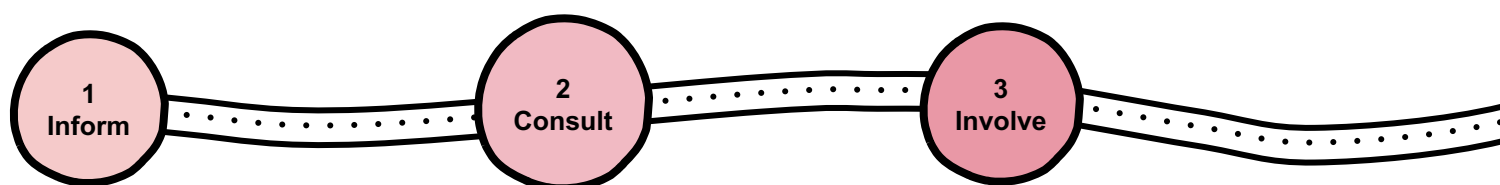
Inform
Government intent to not engage stakeholders but keep them informed about what government decides to do in relation to a pre-framed problem and government agenda. The problem has been formulated using secondary research. Stakeholders are given 'factual' information to assist them in understanding the problem, opportunities, and solutions developed.

Consult
Government intent to engage stakeholders using a standard consultation method (e.g., focus groups and surveys) to obtain their feedback on a pre-framed problem and government agenda. Stakeholder views and input into possible solutions are considered when decisions are made. Information about how their feedback has been responded to is shared.

Involve
Government intent to work directly with stakeholders to understand their needs, concerns, and aspirations and input their feedback into possible solutions using standard engagement methods (e.g., focus groups and one-to-one interviews). Solutions to a largely pre-framed problem and government agenda is guided by stakeholder involvement. How stakeholder input has been incorporated into the output is shared.

Spectrum of Participation
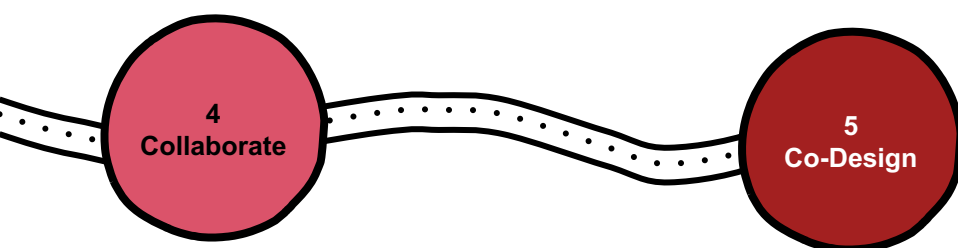
Collaborate

Government intent to use stakeholder experiences and expertise develop solutions together using more collaborative engagement methods (e.g., workshops). A partnership is established with stakeholders and their input is included in each aspect of the decision-making process to ensure the preferred solution is implemented.

Co-Design

Government empowers stakeholders impacted by the outcome to become equal partners in collaboratively framing up and designing solutions that meet their needs and aspirations. Power and resources are shared (devolved to ensure equality) and specific co-design research and design activities are employed (e.g., design ethnography, personas, mind mapping, role-playing) from start and finish.

A Diverse Knowledge Base – Valuing Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing

The participatory design-led techniques applied in co-design seek to engage different kinds of knowledge, including "tacit knowledge that can be holistic, non-verbal, non-linear and intuitive" (Akama & Prendiville, 2014, p. 34).

In the context of Indigenous policy making, co-design seeks to produce a more multi-layered view of the world by using participatory design-led methods to respectfully engage with and honour Indigenous co-design stakeholders' previously marginalised knowledge, "knowledge that has not usually been part of mainstream research inquiry" (Hesse-Biber, 2010) to drive policy solutions.

It is for this reason that the NSW Government has integrated Dr Tyson Yunkaporta's 8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning into its co-design process, a framework that helps governments "bring Aboriginal perspectives – ways of being, knowing and doing – to the forefront of [the] co-design process" (Agency for Clinical Innovation, 2023).

Common Principles of Co-Design

Basic principles that commonly guide co-design processes typically include (see Appendix C – Co-design Principles for more detail):

1. **Equal Partnership/Sharing Power** – People participate as equal partners and share power in relation to planning, research/discovery, designing and deciding what gets implemented.

2. **Respect and Trust** – Trusting relationships bring people together and people's unique values and perspectives are respected.

3. **Inclusiveness/Designing Together** – People work together in an inclusive space to design and implement solutions (adapted from)

In the context of co-design in Indigenous policy making, it is important to draw on additional co-design principles, for example:

1. **Cultural Leadership** – co-design processes strongly connect to cultural leaders in a way that is appropriate for each community.

2. **Community-led Design** – co-design processes are determined by communities according to local context and culture.

3. **Capability Driven** – co-design processes match the unique capabilities and strengths of each community (adapted from Langton & Calma, (2021)

Sample Co-design Principles: Sharing Power, Cultural Leadership, Designing Together, Respect and Trust, Capability Driven, Community-led Design
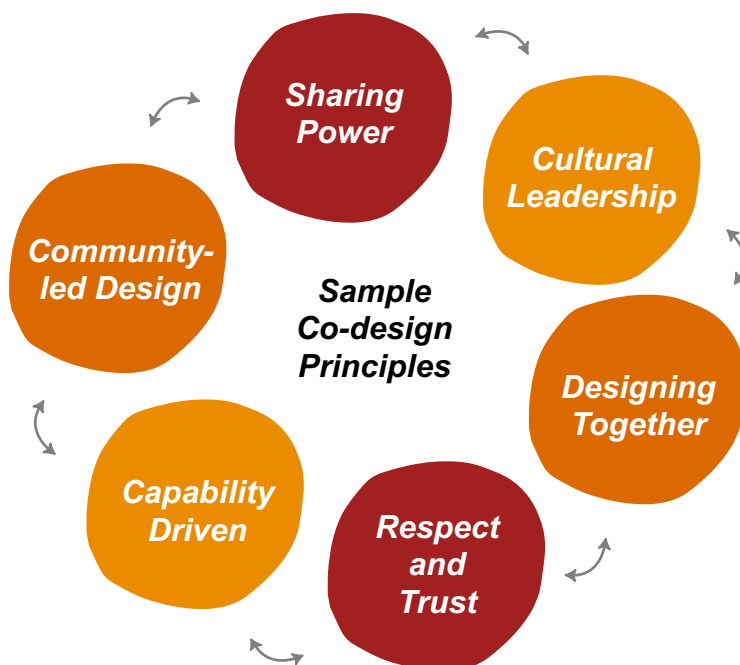
Common Co-Design Enablers

Key enablers in the implementation of co-design in the public sector typically include (adapted from Blomkamp, 2018):

1. Time and Resources

Co-design needs sufficient time and resources for:

- Detailed co-design workshops.
- Adequate investment in relationship building and capability building.
- Appropriate compensation for participants with lived experience, professional, and specialist expertise.
- Appropriate investment in leadership and compensation for consistent membership in governance arrangements.
- Extension of project timeframes if required.

2. Collaboration and Innovation

Co-design needs to facilitate collaborative and innovative practices by:

- Setting up the right bureaucratic arrangements to allow for openness. experimentation, flexibility, adaptiveness, and responsiveness.
- Committing to capacity building in the APS to embed "all kinds of new knowledge, structures, and practices" (Blomkamp, 2018).

3. Trust and Mutual Learning

Co-design needs to build trusting relationships and authentic partnerships by:

- Embedding enough time and resources to ensure the process of relationship building is sufficient.
- Ensuring all participants are involved in a stable and consistent manner.
- Facilitating mutual learning and shared understanding between diverse participant groups.

4. Culture and Support

Co-design needs to have a supportive culture by:

- Committing to devolving and sharing power and responsibility between government and non-government leaders and accepting the risks of diminished government control.
- Questioning and shifting entrenched public sector values.
- Getting significant sponsorship/buy-in and investment to remove obstacles and scale solutions.

2 Key Findings – Lessons Learned

Key Findings – Lessons Learned

2.1 Research Questions

Question 1: To what extent did the Sub-Committee and Working Group come to a shared agreement about how to co-design the Framework?

The majority of Sub-Committee and Working Group members who engaged in the Lessons Learned Project had a general understanding that:

- the Sub-Committee were leading the development of the Framework;

- the Working Group were working at the direction and guidance of the Sub-Committee; and

- the development of the Framework involved online meetings and out-of-session arrangements to review and provide feedback on draft artifacts.

Beyond this, members had little understanding of how co-design as a practice was being applied to develop the Framework. Evidence showed that non-Indigenous APS participants were less likely than Indigenous participants to question how the co-design process had been set up/conducted. The co-design process seemed to work well for non-Indigenous APS participants and provided them with a valuable product (the draft Framework).

In contrast, Indigenous participants (in addition to a minority of non-Indigenous APS members) were more likely to express concern about the co-design process, mainly for the reason that they felt it could have done more to explore the needs and aspirations of Indigenous participants, and thus address the co-design area/topic more deeply.

In conclusion, the Sub-Committee and Working Group reached a tenuous agreement about how to co-design the Framework.

Question 2: How well is the co-design process being conducted?

Evidence revealed differing perspectives and opinions on how well the co-design process was conducted. There were participants – the majority of whom were non-Indigenous APS members, but also a minority of Indigenous participants – who believed it was 'effectively conducted', and there were participants – the majority of whom were Indigenous participants, but also a small handful of non-Indigenous APS members – who believed it was 'ineffectively conducted'.

Overall, there were a significant number of members in both groups that felt as if the co-design process needed a more structured and iterative approach to not only build connection among team members and build cultural safety, but also to facilitate deep collaboration and strategic design practices to produce impactful solutions for government and Indigenous community stakeholders.

In conclusion, the co-design process was moderately effective in how it was conducted.

Key Findings – Lessons Learned

Lesson #1
Embed Cultural Safety

Lesson learned:
Co-design between Government and Indigenous co-design stakeholders requires partnerships based on respect and trust. Cultural safety is the foundation upon which respectful and trusting relationships are built. The concept of 'cultural safety' in a co-design process is made up of various personal and organisational components and needs to be understood before the co-design process begins.

Key recommendation #1:
Build and maintain your organisation's cultural safety to ensure a culturally safe co-design work environment.

Key findings relating to Lesson #1 include:

1. Culturally safe co-design work practices were supported by having a strong non-APS Indigenous leadership group in the DSDG Sub-Committee, which provided direction and guidance to the DCN Working Group to develop the Framework, together with a strong non-APS Indigenous leadership group in the Working Group to ensure they were following the Sub-Committee's direction and guidance. This meant that the Sub-Committee and Working Group had a good degree of Indigenous decision-making authority that supported Indigenous voices throughout the co-design process.

2. Culturally safe co-design work practices could be significantly improved if there was an equal balance of Indigenous and non-Indigenous APS members in both governance groups. Research showed that Indigenous APS members experienced cultural safety concerns because non-Indigenous APS members outnumbered Indigenous APS members, which made it difficult for the latter to raise and address their cultural safety challenges and promote their priorities.

3. Indigenous co-design stakeholders often have to 'walk in both worlds' and 'wear two hats' – balance work duties and responsibilities in their professional role (e.g., the public sector, academia, or community organisation) with commitments to family and community, and if a co-design process does not embed a culturally safe approach (e.g., if it puts too much responsibility on a small handful of Indigenous co-design stakeholders to 'walk in both worlds' without adequate support, time, and resources), the co-design process can lead to significant cultural safety concerns and challenges, thus negatively impacting upon co-design outcomes.

Key Findings – Lessons Learned

Lesson #1
Embed Cultural Safety

Co-design Participant Quote

"I don't want to contribute anymore [to the co-design process] and harm the community – an output without good representation from community leaders is culturally unsafe. I'm accountable to my communities and the government is putting too much responsibility on a small number of Indigenous people to design [the co-design output]." – Indigenous participant

"There needs to be a balance of representatives because there needs to a balance of priorities and agendas, so that outcomes meet the needs of both groups." – Non-Indigenous participant

4. Culturally safe co-design work practices could be significantly improved if Indigenous co-design participants were involved at the outset of the co-design process in defining what cultural safety means to them and how it looks in practice, thus giving the government an opportunity to embed real solutions to support cultural safety before the co-design process begins.

"Indigenous members were excluded from the process of working out what makes a culturally safe work environment." – Indigenous participant

"We need to think about community. Co-design outcomes affect people's lives."
– Indigenous participant

5. Indigenous co-design participants are vulnerable to experiencing racism when working with non-Indigenous government workers, due to low levels of cultural competency.

"We need to address the casual systemic racism that is in [government] systems if we're going to incorporate lived experiences [into the co-design output]." – Indigenous participant

"[Non-Indigenous APS participants] were talking about [Indigenous] people in third-person even though they [Indigenous people] were in the same room … they discussed processes, not [Indigenous] people's lived experiences." – Indigenous participant

"We need cultural competency work done at the outset. [There are] some serious behavioural barriers." – Indigenous participant

Key Findings – Lessons Learned

Lesson #1
Embed Cultural Safety

6. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous co-design participants felt more confident to work with each other and speak openly about their concerns after co-designing a Social Contract. Before a Social Contract was developed, certain APS non-Indigenous participants did not feel confident to express their opinions and suggestions for fear of offending Indigenous participants, and certain Indigenous non-APS participants felt more secure to enter into a working arrangement with government. The Social Contract included five principles covering areas such as Indigenous-led co-design (i.e., recognising bias and cultural authority), learning (i.e., feedback and accepting the unknown), communication (i.e., listening and dialogue), and meetings (i.e., agenda and attendance).

7. Co-Chairing arrangements, in which there was one non-APS Indigenous co-chair and one APS non-Indigenous co-chair, worked well because Indigenous voices were prioritised and the process was democratically set up, run, and endorsed by Indigenous participants. This arrangement increased co-design participants' confidence in the co-design process, in the sense that the process could maintain momentum and clarity of actions in line with identified co-design needs.

> **"There was the right co-chair to lead the meeting of the day to ensure the right voices are heard."** – Indigenous participant

8. Inconsistency of team participation from APS non-Indigenous participants (and the resulting changing of who represents the agency during meetings) can cause significant trust issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, as the government is perceived as not taking the co-design process seriously.

9. Trust is a critical component to a successful co-design process and without culturally safe approaches, trust is difficult to build. Trust enables co-design participants to connect, share, and build rapport as a team. Gaining trust means that people are treated equally, with honesty, dignity, and respect.

> **"Changing [government] people a lot makes it hard to re-establish trust, especially from the point-of-view of Indigenous personnel."** – Indigenous participant

Key Findings – Lessons Learned

Lesson #1
Embed Cultural Safety

Key findings relating to Lesson #1 include:

10. Impersonal engagement methods (e.g., online meetings in which government members had their cameras turned off) made Indigenous co-design participants feel as if a 'holding space' for generating real dialogue and problem solving was not possible, in addition to a level of mistrust that was felt as a result.

11. Determining the extent to which Indigenous co-design participants – those affected by the co-design outcome – should be involved in the co-design process is a cultural safety concern, because there needs to be an appropriate balance between depth and breadth of input from Indigenous stakeholder groups with a range of lived, professional, and specialist expertise to ensure adequate representation and leadership in the co-design process.

12. Considering if co-design projects should be aligned with government initiatives such as the National Agreement on Closing the Gap is seen as a cultural safety concern, as existing government commitments to support cultural safety for Indigenous co-design participants need to be honoured and held accountable.

13. Indigenous notions of 'self-determination' in the co-design process can be an ambiguous concept and it needs to be discussed and agreed upon to ensure it is honoured and supported practically. Good intentions do not always translate into effective ways of supporting self-determined processes.

14. If ways of working fall into 'silos' (e.g., government stakeholders work on developing co-design artifacts independently from non-APS Indigenous co-design participants), then a breakdown of communication may ensue between stakeholders, which can jeopardise trust and cultural safety, in the sense that important decisions could be made that exclude non-APS Indigenous co-design participants from providing input.

Key Findings – Lessons Learned

Lesson #2
Share Power

Lesson learned:
Co-design between Government and Indigenous co-design stakeholders requires equitable and transparent shared decision-making processes to support Indigenous co-design stakeholders to have genuine influence over decisions that affect their life outcomes.

Key recommendation #2:
Embed equitable decision-making processes into the co-design process.

Key findings relating to Lesson #2 include:

1. An equitable co-design work environment was somewhat supported because the NIAA team could easily share any relevant information with co-design participants in a relatively open manner.

2. Equitable decision-making processes could be significantly improved if pre-meeting information and/or resources were shared before the meeting, allowing enough time for co-design participants to get across the material and prepare their responses. Research showed that co-design participants received critical pre-meeting information only days before a meeting, which made it impossible for them to feel empowered to provide genuine input into the co-design process.

3. Equitable decision-making processes could be significantly improved if co-design participants were involved in every stage of the co-design process. Research showed that Indigenous participants felt excluded from the co-design process when the power of authoring (the final draft Framework) was in the hands of government.

> "I felt there was a risk from the beginning [of the co-design process] … because the power of authoring was in the hands of government. The government decides what will be included [in co-design outputs] and what won't be. They decide what will be diluted or not. Feedback was taken away and then incorporated [into co-design artifacts] and then framed in a different way [through a strictly government lens] that took away from what was originally intended."
> – Indigenous participant

Key Findings – Lessons Learned

Lesson #2
Share Power

4. An equitable co-design work environment was somewhat supported because the co-design team facilitating group consultations were able to make them somewhat inclusive and responsive to people's needs. This supported co-design participants to dialogue, explore, and recognise each other's needs and validate how their input influenced the co-design process.

5. Equitable decision-making processes could be significantly improved if consultation methods were more inclusive and respectful of different ways of generating participant feedback (e.g., facilitating small breakout sessions in co-design workshops). Research showed that Indigenous and non-Indigenous co-design participants did not feel supported (by the engagement methods used) to speak openly and challenge dominant positions.

> **"We needed safer breakout groups so we can be honest about what we think."**
> – Indigenous participant
>
> **"The size of the group in meetings was challenging. It may have contributed to unequal contribution from participants."** – Non-Indigenous APS participant
>
> **"I never really had a space to talk because the meetings relied on talkative people. We need to get feedback from the quieter people."** – Indigenous participant

6. Equitable decision-making processes could be significantly improved if Indigenous co-participants were involved in setting up the governance structures before the co-design process began, to ensure Indigenous participants can effectively lead the co-design process.

> **"I wasn't involved when [co-design governance] structures were being set up and then put in place."** – Indigenous participant
>
> **"Leadership is different to power. Leadership is for clarity and direction. Not just contributing to change but leading it."** – Indigenous participant

Key Findings – Lessons Learned

Lesson #2
Share Power

7. Project timelines need to be flexible enough to support Indigenous decision-making processes, which sometimes can differ from non-Indigenous processes (e.g., Indigenous participants may require more time to connect with community members around decisions that may affect them). Time pressures imposed by government can stifle decision-making processes by rushing the team.

8. Developing trusting relationships and effective partnerships can depend on the extent to which the government and Indigenous participants have the same amount of influence on decision making, including the ability to challenge decisions and develop alternative solutions. If there is a significant imbalance in decision making power in favour of government, Indigenous participants will feel excluded.

9. If there are any 'hard' government limitations in the co-design process, then taking time to work through possible project 'trade offs' to set expectations and align efforts could be helpful.

> **"It is critical to set limitations and guardrails around what would be accepted [in the co-design process]. Co-design isn't just a 'blank canvas' - there should be guidance from both sides. This used a lot of time and energy and didn't allow us to workshop the detail … we didn't address the fundamental issues or the nuanced aspects of what we were doing."** – Indigenous participant

10. For decision making to be equal, participants with lived experience, professional, and specialist expertise need to be valued equally, governmental decision-making arrangements need to be open, flexible, coordinated and adaptive to responding to the co-design process, and include participants at a high-level position in government to support the decisions.

Key Findings – Lessons Learned

Lesson #3
Tailor the Co-design Approach

Lesson learned:
Co-design between Government and Indigenous co-design stakeholders requires developing a clearly defined and fit-for-purpose co-design approach to ensure Indigenous co-design stakeholders' needs and aspirations are met.

Key recommendation #3:
Tailor the co-design process with Indigenous co-design stakeholders.

Key findings relating to Lesson #3 include:

1. The Sub-Committee co-designed a strategic 'Work Streams Paper' that included five key focus areas with clear action items to assist coordinate development of the co-design process. This supported co-design participants to understand the various streams of work that needed to be undertaken during the co-design process.

2. The co-design process was effective in dedicating time and space at the outset of the process to facilitate an inclusive recruitment process which brought together an appropriate mix of participants with different kinds of knowledges relevant to the area. This made the co-design team feel excited about the potential of the co-design process to produce important outcomes. Research found, however, that there were a few non-Indigenous APS co-design participants who did not feel confident about their level of knowledge and understanding of the co-design area (Governance of Indigenous Data), which caused them to disengage from the process, implying that recruitment could have been done more carefully. In addition, even though the recruitment process was effective in bringing the right people together, the co-design process had trouble around clarifying people's roles and responsibilities during the co-design process.

> **"There was concern around the different people [in the APS] and what value they could provide to the project. There was limited understanding [of the co-design issue]."** – Non-Indigenous APS participant
>
> **"We need to have clarity around roles and responsibilities [of each member of the co-design team] – their purpose and area of expertise."** – Non-Indigenous non-APS participant

Key Findings – Lessons Learned

Lesson #3
Tailor the Co-design Approach

Key findings relating to Lesson #3 include:

3. The co-design process itself was not clearly defined and so a shared understanding of how the co-design process was planning to generate the intended outputs was lacking. Research showed that 'co-design' is an ambiguous term and can mean different things to different people. There was a need for the co-design process to have a clear and shared definition up front. If a co-design approach, including its principles, processes, and practices, is developed by a small handful of people before the process begins, it may cause participants to become confused as to how the process constitutes 'co-design' and how it will meet their needs. This can also cause the co-design process to become uncoordinated, which affects people's level of confidence in the process. If there is a low level of confidence among participants before the co-design process begins, the project may have difficulty getting off the ground and building trust. The co-design process would have benefited from first co-designing the approach to co-design with the co-design participants, to ensure it would meet the needs of participants.

> **"We need to ask: 'what is the process [of co-design and engagement]?' and then design the process – you can't wrap a conventional APS regime around it [the co-design process]"**
> – Indigenous participant

4. There is a need for the co-design approach to balance efficiency and quality in the sense that project time constraints need to be well-managed to ensure the co-design process does not become rushed and rigid, which can compromise quality of outcomes. But if the co-design process does not have any project 'guardrails or schedules, participants can perceive and experience the co-design process as being too 'open' and lacking structure. Adequate mechanisms, resources, and time to support iterative participatory design work is needed to collectively address challenges and solve problems.

Key Findings – Lessons Learned

Lesson #3
Tailor the Co-design Approach

Key findings relating to Lesson #3 include:

5. The NIAA team showed genuine intent to facilitate a co-design process that would meet the diverse needs and aspirations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants. This made co-design participants feel like the process was being taken seriously. However, the participatory methods of design crucial to co-design were lacking. Research found that there was real intent from the government to support engagement methods that 'go beyond' traditional consultation, but co-design participants did not see intent translated into action. This meant that the co-design process was at times experienced as 'superficial' and unable to facilitate a genuine dialogue between participants or explore deeper levels of the co-design area, including any possible alternative solutions. The majority of feedback relating to ways to go beyond traditional consultation methods, referred to meetings needing to be more collaborative and iterative.

> **"The government stretched the rubber band to try new stuff [different ways of engaging participants], but it just snapped back to standard government approaches [to engagement]. This could have been amazing."** – Non-Indigenous non-APS participant

> **"There was no real basis to have a dialogue and test thinking, to really engage with each other."** – Indigenous participant

6. 'Co-design' does not necessarily mean that Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, including cultural authority, will be embedded into the co-design process and there was an identified need to work out how co-design was actually embedding these elements.

> **"How was the co-design process working from an Indigenous point of view – we need to work this out – has cultural authority been considered and signed off [on the approach]?"** – Indigenous participant

Key Findings – Lessons Learned

Lesson #3
Tailor the Co-design Approach

Key findings relating to Lesson #3 include:

7. The co-design approach would have benefited from committing adequate time and resources to undertake a greater exploration phase in the beginning, so that Indigenous co-design participants' lived experience expertise could be honoured and more actively informed the development of the output.

> **"Timeframes compromised [the co-design process and we couldn't] engage the core parts of the discussion and getting the outcomes."** – Indigenous participant

> **"[Non-APS Indigenous participants had to] move at a pace according to APS pace."**
> – Non-Indigenous APS participant

> **"We rushed and went straight to process and concept, rather than people and exploration."**
> – Indigenous participant

> **"[I wish there had been] a lot more thinking about lived experiences, about Indigenous members coming to the [broader] group and providing enough time and space to let lived experiences be discussed and afford appropriate time and be heard – to incorporate lived experience into the outcome."** – Non-Indigenous APS participant
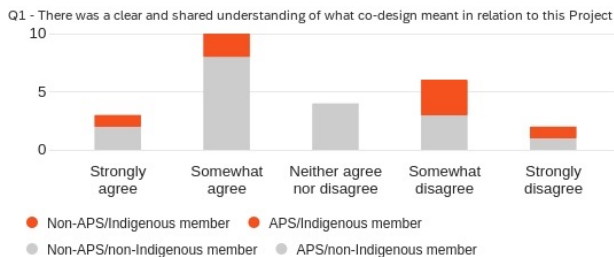
Appendix A: Rapid Feedback Report

Appendix A – Rapid Feedback Report

Co-Design Lessons Learned Project

Key findings – Section 1. *Setting up Co-design*

This outlines the key findings of Survey 1 - Co-Design Lessons Learned Project. This provides a collection of 'moment in time' findings arising from analysis of Survey 1 data, collected in February-March 2023.
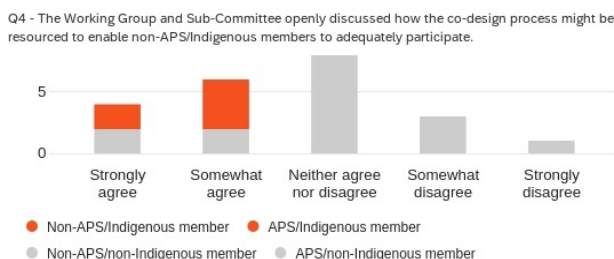
Q1 - There was a clear and shared understanding of what co-design meant in relation to this Project

● Non-APS/Indigenous member ● APS/Indigenous member
○ Non-APS/non-Indigenous member ○ APS/non-Indigenous member

Key Takeaway: Moderately positive sentiment toward the Statement from non-Indigenous and Indigenous members. However, Indigenous respondents were more likely to Disagree than Agree. *The Project would benefit from better informing members about what co-design means in relation to this Project.*
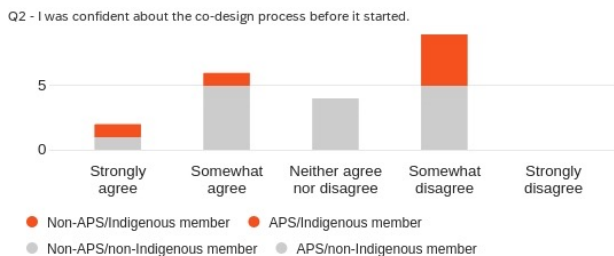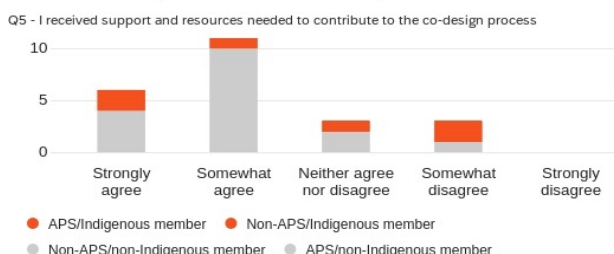
Q2 - I was confident about the co-design process before it started.

● Non-APS/Indigenous member ● APS/Indigenous member
○ Non-APS/non-Indigenous member ○ APS/non-Indigenous member

Key Takeaway: Moderately negative sentiment toward the Statement from non-Indigenous and Indigenous members. However, Indigenous members were more likely to Disagree than Agree. *The Project would benefit from members feeling more confident about the co-design process in relation to this Project.*
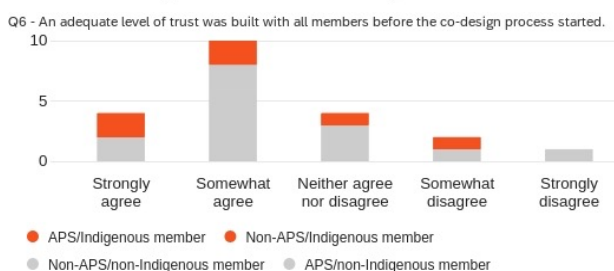
Q3 - The Terms of Reference (ToR) provides me with a clear understanding of how the Sub-Committee and Working Group will work together to inform the co-design process.

● Non-APS/Indigenous member ● APS/Indigenous member
○ Non-APS/non-Indigenous member ○ APS/non-Indigenous member

Key Takeaway: Moderately positive sentiment toward the Statement from Indigenous and non-Indigenous members. However, Indigenous respondents were slightly more likely to Disagree than Agree. A not insignificant amount of respondents were Ambivalent. *The Project would benefit from having a clearer ToR.*

Q4 - The Working Group and Sub-Committee openly discussed how the co-design process might be resourced to enable non-APS/Indigenous members to adequately participate.

● Non-APS/Indigenous member ● APS/Indigenous member
○ Non-APS/non-Indigenous member ○ APS/non-Indigenous member

Key Takeaway: Fairly positive sentiment toward the Statement from Indigenous and non-Indigenous members with only a small amount of non-Indigenous members who Disagreed. However, a not insignificant amount were Ambivalent. *The Project would benefit from additional discussion around resourcing.*

Q5 - I received support and resources needed to contribute to the co-design process

● APS/Indigenous member ● Non-APS/Indigenous member
○ Non-APS/non-Indigenous member ○ APS/non-Indigenous member

Key Takeaway: Mainly positive sentiment toward the Statement from non-Indigenous members and to a lesser extent Indigenous members. However, Indigenous members were much more likely to Disagree than Agree and also more likely to be Ambivalent. *The Project would benefit from revisiting what support and resources are required.*

Q6 - An adequate level of trust was built with all members before the co-design process started.

● APS/Indigenous member ● Non-APS/Indigenous member
○ Non-APS/non-Indigenous member ○ APS/non-Indigenous member

Key Takeaway: Mainly positive sentiment toward the Statement from non-Indigenous and Indigenous members. However, Indigenous respondents were slightly more likely to Disagree. *The Project would benefit from continuing to maintain and strengthen trust with all members.*

Key findings – Section 1. *Setting up Co-design*

> **Free text responses in relation to Question 5 revealed four Key Themes:**
>
> Q5: "I received support and resources needed to contribute to the co-design process."

1   **Power Imbalance (in favour of Government)**

Feedback from non-APS/Indigenous members indicated that Government intent to facilitate equal partnerships and share power with non-APS/Indigenous members has not translated into an equal decision-making process and that power is more likely to be in favour of Government. Government requirements (e.g., to complete the Framework according to timelines preassigned by the Government) outweigh non-APS/Indigenous member requirements (e.g. to ensure timeframes are flexible and adaptive so that the Framework is developed accurately).

2   **Broader engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities**

Feedback from non-APS/Indigenous members indicated that a Framework that will affect all Indigenous Australians needs to be designed with adequate input from Indigenous communities, to ensure their data needs and aspirations are met. To be aligned with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, Government need to engage the Coalition of Peaks and other relevant organisations to develop the Framework.

3   **Adequate Support**

Feedback from non-APS/Indigenous members and non-APS/non-Indigenous members indicated that Government provided adequate support to members (e.g., staff making themselves readily available to provide information, including written resources) to get members across the Project. Government staff were receptive and translated concerns into actions. At times, Government showed strong leadership and management.

4   **Out of Place**

Feedback from non-APS/Indigenous members and APS/non-Indigenous members indicated that there was some concern regarding the value they can contribute to the Project due to their limited knowledge and experience of the topic of Indigenous data governance**.**

# Key findings – Section 2. *Implementing Co-design*

Q7 -The Working Group and Sub-Committee has been an effective 'mechanism' to enable the co-design process.


- APS/Indigenous member
- Non-APS/Indigenous member
- Non-APS/non-Indigenous member
- APS/non-Indigenous member
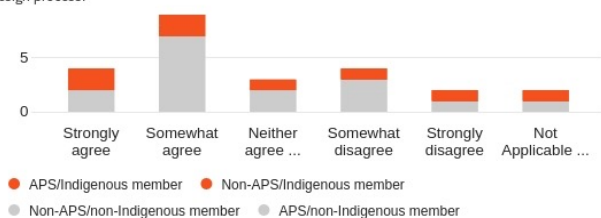
Q8 - The Social Contract developed by the DCN Working Group (Principles and Behaviours) effectively informed/supported the co-design process.
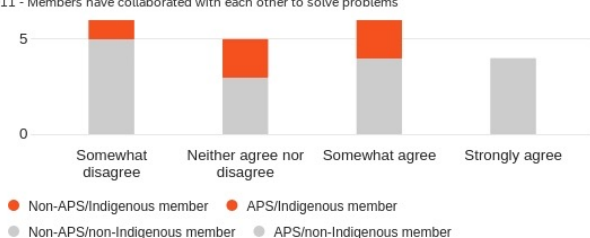

- APS/Indigenous member
- Non-APS/Indigenous member
- Non-APS/non-Indigenous member
- APS/non-Indigenous member
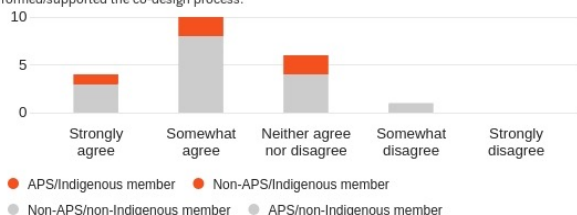
Q9 - I have felt free to speak openly to members.

- APS/Indigenous member
- Non-APS/Indigenous member
- Non-APS/non-Indigenous member
- APS/non-Indigenous member
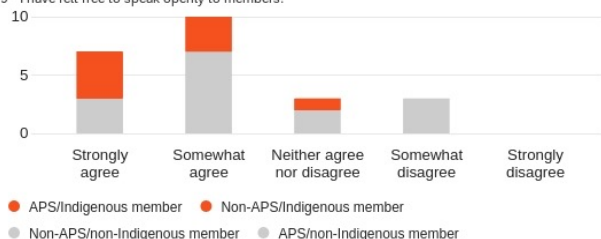
Q10 -Members have listened to my views/advice.

- Non-APS/Indigenous member
- APS/Indigenous member
- Non-APS/non-Indigenous member
- APS/non-Indigenous member
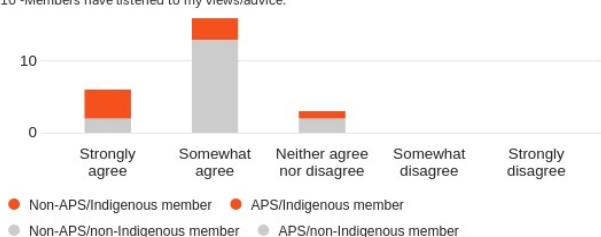
Q11 - Members have collaborated with each other to solve problems

- Non-APS/Indigenous member
- APS/Indigenous member
- Non-APS/non-Indigenous member
- APS/non-Indigenous member

Q12 - Members have collaborated with each other to challenge entrenched ways of working or biases, including systemic and institutionalised racism.

- Non-APS/Indigenous member
- APS/Indigenous member
- Non-APS/non-Indigenous member
- APS/non-Indigenous member
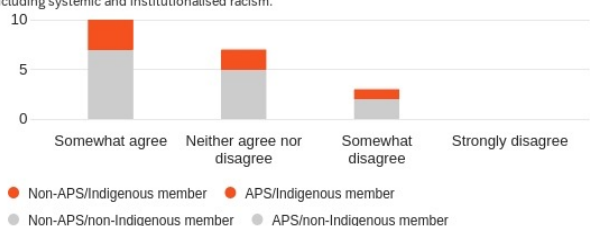
Key Takeaway: Fairly positive sentiment toward the Statement for non-Indigenous and Indigenous members. A not insignificant amount of respondents Disagreed and Indigenous respondents were slightly more likely to Disagree than Agree and also be Ambivalent. *The Project would benefit from reviewing and improving the efficacy of the 'mechanism' to enable co-design.*

Key Takeaway: Fairly positive sentiment toward the Statement mainly for non-Indigenous members and to a lesser extent Indigenous members, with minor Disagreement. A not insignificant amount of respondents were Ambivalent and Indigenous members were more likely to be Ambivalent than Agree. *The Project would benefit from further defining how the Social Contract informs the co-design process for all members.*

Key Takeaway: Mainly positive sentiment toward the Statement for non-Indigenous and Indigenous members with a minority of non-Indigenous members who Disagreed. A small amount of respondents were Ambivalent. *The Project would benefit from maintaining an environment in which members feel free and safe to speak openly about the co-design process.*
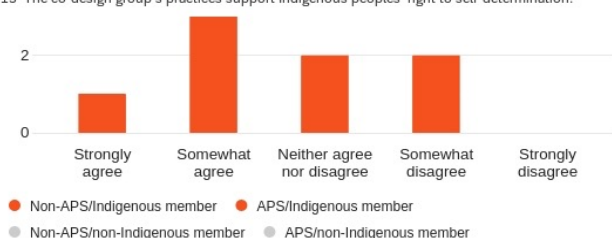
Key Takeaway: Mainly positive sentiment toward the Statement for non-Indigenous members and to a lesser extent Indigenous members, with no members Disagreeing. A small amount of respondents were Ambivalent and Indigenous members were slightly more likely to be Ambivalent than Agree. *The Project would benefit from providing support to Indigenous members so their advice is heard.*

Key Takeaway: Moderately positive sentiment toward the Statement for non-Indigenous and Indigenous members. However, the amount of respondents who Disagreed was only slightly below those who Agreed, and Indigenous respondents were more likely to Disagree and be Ambivalent than Agree. *The Project would benefit from supporting members to come together to collaborate.*

Key Takeaway: Moderately positive sentiment toward the Statement for non-Indigenous members and to a lesser extent Indigenous members. However, Indigenous respondents were more likely to Disagree and be Ambivalent than Agree. *The Project would benefit from providing additional support to members to collaborate with each other to challenge entrenched ways of working or biases.*

Key findings – Section 2. *Implementing Co-design*

Q13 - The co-design group's practices support Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination.

Legend:
- Non-APS/Indigenous member
- APS/Indigenous member
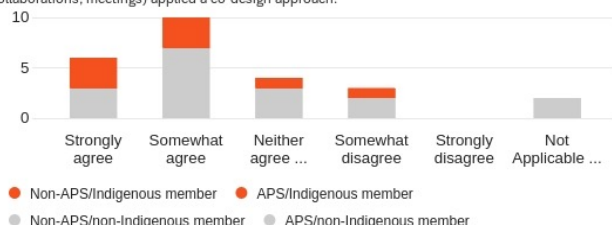- Non-APS/non-Indigenous member
- APS/non-Indigenous member

Key Takeaway: Moderately positive sentiment toward the Statement for Indigenous members. However, the amount of respondents who Disagreed and who were Ambivalent toward the Statement was the same as those who Agreed. *The Project would benefit from providing additional support to Indigenous members' right to self-determination.*

Q14 - An appropriate mix of participants with different kinds of knowledge (lived experience, professional and specialist expertise) have been brought together to co-design the Framework.
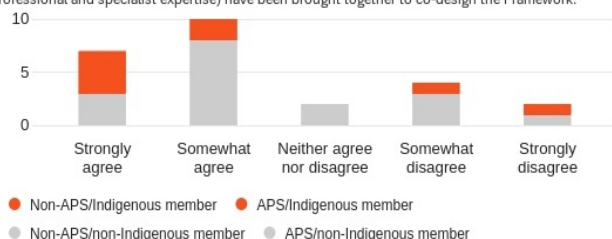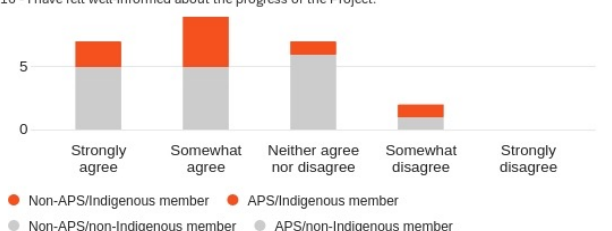

Legend:
- Non-APS/Indigenous member
- APS/Indigenous member
- Non-APS/non-Indigenous member
- APS/non-Indigenous member

Key Takeaway: Mainly positive sentiment toward the Statement for non-Indigenous and Indigenous members. A not insignificant amount of respondents Disagreed and Indigenous members were almost equally likely to Disagree than Agree. *The Project would benefit from reviewing the appropriateness of the mix to ensure appropriate knowledge, experience and expertise.*

Q15 - Activities I have participated in (e.g., group discussions, one-on-one or small group collaborations, meetings) applied a co-design approach.
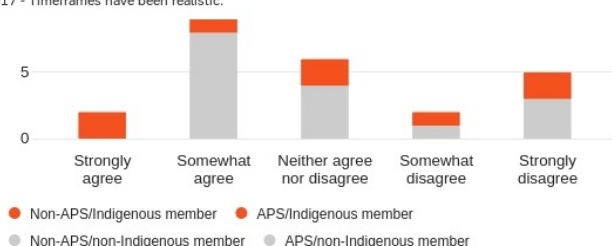

Legend:
- Non-APS/Indigenous member
- APS/Indigenous member
- Non-APS/non-Indigenous member
- APS/non-Indigenous member

Key Takeaway: Mainly positive sentiment toward the Statement for non-Indigenous and Indigenous members. Indigenous members were almost equally likely to Disagree than Agree. A not insignificant amount of respondents were Ambivalent, including Indigenous respondents. *The Project would benefit from ensuring activities included in the co-design process are clear and follow a co-design methodology.*

Q16 - I have felt well-informed about the progress of the Project.

Legend:
- Non-APS/Indigenous member
- APS/Indigenous member
- Non-APS/non-Indigenous member
- APS/non-Indigenous member

Key Takeaway: Fairly positive sentiment toward the Statement for non-Indigenous and Indigenous members. However, Indigenous respondents were more likely to Disagree than Agree and a not insignificant amount of respondents were Ambivalent, including Indigenous respondents. *The Project would benefit from further informing members about the progress of the Project.*
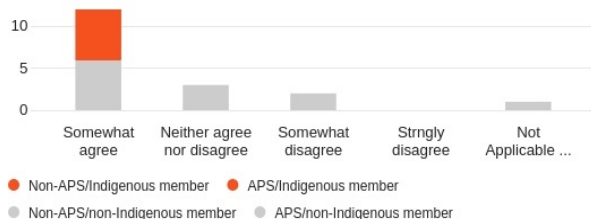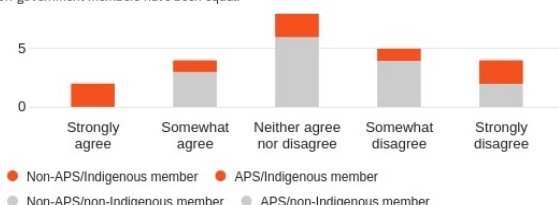
Q17 - Timeframes have been realistic.

Legend:
- Non-APS/Indigenous member
- APS/Indigenous member
- Non-APS/non-Indigenous member
- APS/non-Indigenous member

Key Takeaway: Moderately positive sentiment toward the Statement for non-Indigenous members and to a lessor extent Indigenous members. However, Indigenous respondents were more likely to Disagree than Agree and a not insignificant amount of respondents were Ambivalent, including Indigenous respondents. *The Project would benefit from reviewing timeframes to support quality outcomes.*

Key findings – Section 2. *Implementing Co-design*

Q18 - Competing demands (outside this Project) have prevented me from participating in the co-design process in the way I would have liked to.

Non-APS/Indigenous member ● APS/Indigenous member
Non-APS/non-Indigenous member ● APS/non-Indigenous member

Key Takeaway: Majority Agreement to the Statement from non-Indigenous and Indigenous members. A small number of respondents Disagreed and were Ambivalent – all non-Indigenous members. *The Project would benefit from planning how best to maximise participation in the co-design process and ensure competing demands do not prevent genuine engagement.*

Q19 - Power dynamics (authorising power to influence/make key decisions) between government and non-government members have been equal.

Non-APS/Indigenous member ● APS/Indigenous member
Non-APS/non-Indigenous member ● APS/non-Indigenous member

Key Takeaway: Moderately negative sentiment toward the Statement from Indigenous and non-Indigenous members. However, Indigenous members were more likely to Agree than Disagree. A not insignificant amount of respondents – more than those who Agreed – were Ambivalent, with Indigenous respondents. *The Project would benefit from reviewing power dynamics to ensure equality.*

Free text responses in relation to Question 7 and Question 12 revealed four Key Themes:

Q7: "The Working Group and Sub-Committee has been an effective 'mechanism' to enable the co-design process."

Q12: "Members have collaborated with each other to challenge entrenched ways of working or biases, including systemic and institutionalised racism."

1   **Cross-Communication between groups and members**

Feedback from non-APS/Indigenous members indicated that communication across groups and between members is insufficient. Information sharing is limited and so is the potential to generate a shared understanding of the co-design process. As a result, the co-design process has fallen into a standard bureaucratic way of working, in which different groups are working in silos. The approach is fragmented and lacks transparency. Feedback also indicated that there is a lack of understanding of why the 'mechanism' was set up in the first place and how it was meant to facilitate the co-design process.

2   **Moving forward**

Feedback from APS/non-Indigenous, non-APS/Indigenous, and non-APS/non-Indigenous members indicated a lack of clarity around how the co-design process has produced a common understanding of a way forward. Project outcomes to date are unclear and there is a sense of incoherence in relation to where the Project is at and where it is heading. Feedback indicated that members are also unclear if a common understanding of the key challenges/barriers to developing an effective Framework has been developed. Some respondents were unclear if the fundamentals of the Project scope have been ironed out.

Key findings – Section 2. *Implementing Co-design*

Free text responses in relation to Question 7 and Question 12 revealed four Key Themes:

Q7: "The Working Group and Sub-Committee has been an effective 'mechanism' to enable the co-design process."

Q12: "Members have collaborated with each other to challenge entrenched ways of working or biases, including systemic and institutionalised racism."

3 **Aligning the team**

Feedback from APS/non-Indigenous, non-APS/Indigenous, and non-APS/non-Indigenous members indicated a disconnect between members due to the diversity of needs and aspirations of the members. This diversity of needs has created a fragmented working environment and needs to be integrated into a coherent way of working to solve problems. This requires a clear understanding of member needs and how they connect to each other in a way that can move the Project forward.

4 **Substantive change in ways of working**

Feedback from non-APS/Indigenous, APS/non-Indigenous, and non-APS/non-Indigenous members indicated that despite good intentions to challenge entrenched ways of working, this has not translated into different ways of working. A more creative, dynamic, and responsive way of working has not been adequately implemented. Feedback also indicated that members feel as if they are not empowered to challenge traditional ways of thinking and working (e.g. policy arrangements; how data is conceptualised). In addition, even though the Project has effectively produced an individual understanding of the importance of addressing racism, there has not been any working through of the challenges.

Free text responses in relation to Question 13 and Question 16 revealed two Key Themes:

Q13: "The co-design group's practices support Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination."

Q16: "I have felt well-informed about the progress of the Project."

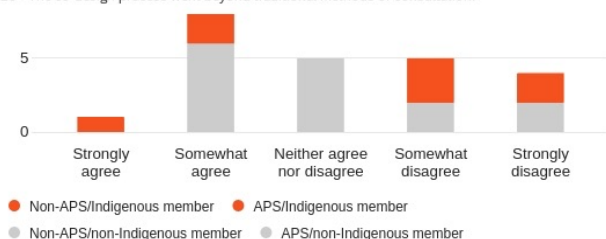**1** **Clarify and appropriately apply self-determination**

Feedback from non-APS/Indigenous members and APS/Indigenous members indicated that Government intentions to support self-determination exist but there is a view that the implementation of the co-design process needs to be discussed and questioned so that members can agree on the best way forward or to determine the most effective method of applying self-determination. Despite good intentions, the execution of self-determination has been misaligned to the Project and there has been no real substantial 'flow-on' effect. Some respondents noted that they were not entirely convinced that a co-design process is the most appropriate method for supporting self-determination.

2 **Project Refresh to achieve real progress**

Feedback from non-APS/Indigenous members indicated that the Project has moved too quickly from the 'Discovery' phase to the 'Delivery' phase and the rush to complete it according to pre-set timeframes inhibits the development of quality outcomes. The view was that more time needs to be given to the Discovery phase in which the scope, approach and content of the Project is revisited and worked out. Also, there was a view that Indigenous communities need to be 'well-informed' of the Project and that real progress requires community engagement.
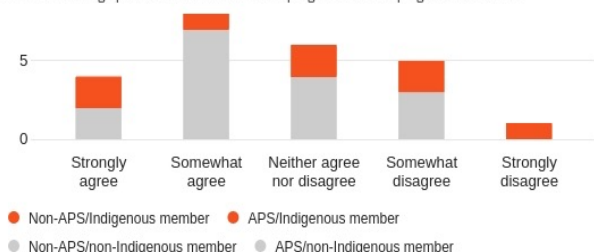
Key findings – Section 3. *Outcomes of Co-design*

Q20 - The co-design process went beyond traditional methods of consultation.

Legend:
- Non-APS/Indigenous member ● APS/Indigenous member
- Non-APS/non-Indigenous member ● APS/non-Indigenous member

Q21 - The co-design process has led to sufficient progress in developing the Framework.

Legend:
- Non-APS/Indigenous member ● APS/Indigenous member
- Non-APS/non-Indigenous member ● APS/non-Indigenous member

Q22 - I have felt culturally safe working in the co-design process.

Legend:
- Non-APS/Indigenous member ● APS/Indigenous member
- Non-APS/non-Indigenous member ● APS/non-Indigenous member

Q23 - Adequate mechanisms have been in place to review Framework drafts and provide feedback in an open, transparent, inclusive, collaborative, and respectful environment.

Legend:
- Non-APS/Indigenous member ● APS/Indigenous member
- Non-APS/non-Indigenous member ● APS/non-Indigenous member

Q24 - I have felt empowered to provide meaningful input into the co-design process.

Legend:
- Non-APS/Indigenous member ● APS/Indigenous member
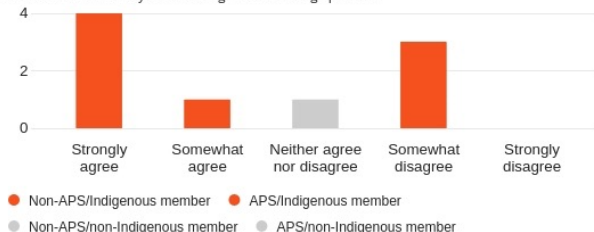- Non-APS/non-Indigenous member ● APS/non-Indigenous member

Key Takeaway: Equal positive and negative sentiment toward the Statement from Indigenous and non-Indigenous members. However, Indigenous members were more likely to Disagree than Agree. A not insignificant amount of respondents were Ambivalent – all non-Indigenous members. *The Project would benefit from reviewing the co-design process to ensure it goes beyond traditional methods of consultation.*
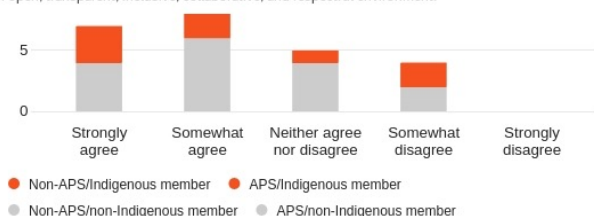
Key Takeaway: Fairly positive sentiment toward the Statement from Indigenous and non-Indigenous members. However, Indigenous members were more likely to Disagree than Agree. The amount of respondents who were Ambivalent equaled those who Disagreed. Also, Indigenous members were more likely to be Ambivalent than Agree. *The Project would benefit from reviewing the co-design process to ensure real progress is made and updates shared.*
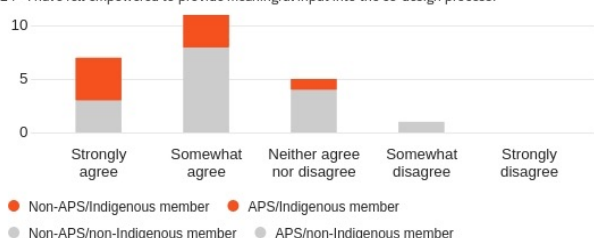
Key Takeaway: Fairly positive sentiment toward the Statement from Indigenous members. However, Indigenous members who Disagreed were not far behind. A not insignificant amount of respondents were Ambivalent. *The Project would benefit from reviewing and further supporting cultural safety in the co-design process.*

Key Takeaway: Mainly positive sentiment toward the Statement for non-Indigenous and Indigenous members. However, Indigenous members were more likely to Disagree than Agree and a not insignificant amount of respondents (more than those who Disagreed) were Ambivalent, with majority Indigenous respondents. *The Project would benefit from reviewing feedback mechanisms to ensure it is effective/adequate.*

Key Takeaway: Mainly positive sentiment toward the Statement from non-Indigenous members and to a lessor extent Indigenous members. There was little Disagreement. A not insignificant amount of respondents were Ambivalent, with majority Indigenous respondents. *The Project would benefit from continuing to maintain and support members' capacity to provide meaningful input into the Project.*

Key findings – Section 3. *Outcomes of Co-design*

Free text responses in relation to Question 20, Question 22, and Question 23 revealed three Key Themes:

Q20: "The co-design process went beyond traditional methods of consultation."

Q22: "I have felt culturally safe working in the co-design process."

Q23: "Adequate mechanisms have been in place to review Framework drafts and provide feedback in an open, transparent, inclusive, collaborative, and respectful environment."

1   **Getting beyond standard ways of working**

Feedback from non-APS/Indigenous members, APS/non-Indigenous members, and APS/non-Indigenous members indicated that the co-design process has not gone beyond standard, rudimentary methods of consultation. There was a view that there is a clear willingness to go beyond traditional methods, to do work differently and that this was somewhat evident in the beginning of the process, but it has turned out to be the same as every other standard Government engagement. Engagements have been ad hoc, unstructured, siloed, and constrained and rigidified over Microsoft Teams. There was a view that co-design requires creativity and collaboration and that dedicated face-to-face time needs to be carved out in members' diaries to come together.

2   **Clarify and apply culturally safe ways of working**

Feedback from non-APS/Indigenous members and APS/Indigenous members indicated that too many compromises have occurred and that a top-down model of design and development has caused confusion and communication breakdowns, all which jeopardise culturally safe ways of working. There was a view that a good level of potential exists to tailor the co-design process to what Indigenous members need and for it to be better aligned to Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. Another view was that the pressure and responsibility put on a small amount of Indigenous members to design the Framework is too cumbersome and therefore culturally unsafe.

3   **Align mechanisms of engagement**

Feedback from non-APS/Indigenous members and APS/non-Indigenous members indicated that a standard consultation method in an online environment is not conducive to appropriate reflection, reviewing and providing feedback to members. There was a view that co-design requires an adaptive, two-way communication channel between the right people in the right way, and for it to enable collaborative processes of engagement, face-to-face. There was a view that the process has been broadly respectful, but that Government needs have outweighed non-APS/Indigenous needs. Some had the view that pressure from the 'top-down' stifled non-APS/Indigenous voices and that certain non-APS/Indigenous ideas have become marginalised. Some have indicated that they have preferred to stay silent than attempt to get their opinion heard.

Key findings – Section 4. *Reflections of the Co-design process*

Free text responses in relation to Question 25 (What would you suggest being done differently for this co-design process?) revealed four Key Themes

1   **Engage Community**

Feedback from non-APS/Indigenous members indicated a desire to engage more broadly and partner with Indigenous communities, using governance arrangements already in place (e.g., membership base of the Coalition of Peaks) to ensure the Framework is set up to support and empower Indigenous engagement with data. This will also remove the pressure from the small amount of Indigenous members already responsible for developing the Framework.

2   **Pause, reflect, restart**

Feedback from non-APS/Indigenous members and APS/non-Indigenous members indicated that the Project needs to take stock of what has been done and determine the best way forward. The view is that the Team needs to prioritise actions and to realign efforts so that members are on the same page. Taking stock would also include listing key challenges that need to be addressed so members can move forward. The approach needs clear direction to ensure effective Project outcomes ensue. It is also important to ensure members are confident of the way forward. Some members had the view that the Team needs to return to more fundamental issues (e.g., Project scope and key challenges) to get better aligned and restart the process.

3   **Co-design**

Feedback from non-APS/Indigenous members and APS/non-Indigenous members indicated that the way forward needs to provide members with a shared understanding of what the next co-design stages will be. The view was that future co-design needs to support circular, iterative dialogue and allow for more time to discover members' diverse needs and aspirations in relation to this Project. This could involve leveraging the findings from the case studies to inform next steps in the co-design process and also enabling non-APS/Indigenous members to have regular input into how they would like to see the co-design process take place. One suggestion was to establish drafting sub-groups with appropriate members and divide topics into smaller chunks within those groups and convene shorter, more regular (weekly) meetings with those groups and then come back together to integrate to bounce ideas off each other and then have several rounds of design and validation.

4   **Team Make Up**

Feedback from non-APS/Indigenous and APS/non-Indigenous members indicated that the co-design process needs to ensure it has members with the right skills, knowledge, and expertise to contribute to the development of the Framework. There is a view that members need to better understand their roles and what they are required to do. One example is to work out if the process needs someone that can provide technical support and expertise on data to assist the Team with developing a robust, realistic Framework applicable across APS systems. Another example is to have someone who has a good understanding of all Government data initiatives in Australia to see where this Project can best plug into. Another example is to think about the legal team required to ensure the solution is robust and realistic.

Key findings – Section 4. *Reflections of the Co-design process*

Free text responses in relation to Question 26 (What would you suggest being done differently for future co-design Projects?) revealed four Key Themes

1 **Indigenous-centred approach**

Feedback from non-APS/Indigenous members indicated that more emphasis needs to be placed on Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing and to make the process Indigenous-centred and bottom-up. This would involve engaging with Indigenous communities and organisations in an in-depth manner and to set up regular communication between parties involved so as to reflect on progress and next steps within a Indigenous lens.

2 **Innovation**

Feedback from non-APS/non-Indigenous members and APS/non-Indigenous members indicated that future co-design projects need to start from the bottom-up and not try to develop something that can be overlayed onto existing Government structures, systems, and processes. There is a need to confront and interrogate and shift existing governance structures and barriers (including legislation) so that data can be controlled by Indigenous communities and organisations. It would be good to have senior representatives from the Government that can support a bottom-up approach.

3 **Co-design**

Feedback from non-APS/non-Indigenous members and APS/non-Indigenous members indicated that future co-design projects need to have a better understanding of what co-design is and how it works (methods and processes) and to genuinely invest in face-to-face workshops. It needs to be more structured and provide all day face-to-face break out workshops with moments of integration and iterations on this method. It must provide more opportunity to participants to speak out and affect change. It could also provide greater support to non-APS/Indigenous members to lead the process. Leadership from non-APS/Indigenous members would support a more Indigenous-driven approach.

4 **Set Up and Approach**

Feedback from non-APS/non-Indigenous members and APS/non-Indigenous members indicated that Project timeframes need to be adaptive/flexible according to the needs of the Project. Also, for the approach to be more careful in the recruitment phase, ensuring all participants are suitable and can genuinely contribute to the needs and aspirations of the Project. More time needs to go into making sure the Team is integrated and not simply placed into a Project without prior connections.

Appendix B: Participation Spectrum (sample)

Appendix B – Participation Spectrum (sample)

Source	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower	Co-design
Victorian Government Co-design Spectrum Source: https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/Co-design-alongside-other-approaches.pdf	We will keep you informed about what we decide to do.	We will keep you informed, take on your feedback and let you know how it was incorporated in what we decided to do.	We will work with you to make sure your concerns and aspirations are included in the final decisions.	We will use your expertise to help create the final solution to the best extent possible.	We will create what you decide.	We will work together to understand and solve this problem from start to finish.
NSW Government Agency for Clinical Innovation Participation Ladder Source: https://aci.health.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/502240/Guide-Build-Codesign-Capability.pdf	We will provide you with information about the research group's / government's activities.	We will invite you to provide feedback about products and services developed.	*Does not include 'involve' level.*	We will make sure you are represented and can make recommendations and influence decisions.	We will make sure you can lead the development of activities, products and services with appropriate advice and support.	We will make sure you co-lead the development, design, implementation and evaluation of activities, products, and services.
International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Participation Spectrum Source: https://iap2.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/IAP2_Public_Participation_Spectrum.pdf	We will provide you with balanced and objective information to assist you in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	We will keep you informed, listen to, and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.	*Does not include a 'co-design level*
Notes:	'Inform' can also be referred to as 'designing at people' (e.g., what decision-makers and designers think and want).	'Consult', 'Involve', and 'Collaborate' can also be referred to as 'designing for people' (e.g., what designers and decision-makers want to know and achieve. Good intent usually ends up as system-centred, designer-centred, executive-centred, or staff-centred by implementation).			'Empower' and 'co-design' can be referred to as 'designing with people' or 'design is led by the people,' depending on the level of power shared. The notion of 'self-determined' solutions also fits within these two levels.	

This sample participation spectrum was adapted from:

1. Agency for Clinical Innovation (2019), *A Guide to Build Co-design Capability: Consumers and staff coming together to improve healthcare*, p. 5.
2. McKercher, (2020), Beyond Sticky Notes. *Doing Co-design for real: mindsets, methods, and movements.*
3. IAP2 Australasia (2019), *International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Participation Spectrum.*

Appendix C: Co-design Principles (sample)

Appendix C – Co-design Principles (sample)

Source	Equal partnership/share power	Respect and trust	Inclusiveness/Designing together
NSW Government Agency for Clinical Innovation Participation Ladder Source: https://aci.health.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/502240/Guide-Build-Codesign-Capability.pdf	Consumers, families and staff work together from the beginning with an equal voice and shared ownership and control.	Acknowledge and value the views, experiences and diversity of consumers, families and staff.	Consumers, families and staff work together to design, implement and evaluate improvements, activities, products and services.
WA Council of Social Service (WACOSS) Source: https://wacoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Definitions-and-Principles-Tool.pdf	People to participate as equal partners, with solutions to be focused on service users.	It is essential that there is an effective, facilitated process with freedom and safety to speak frankly so that issues can be genuinely addressed. This requires a relationship based on trust, respect, openness, and transparency that enables all participants to participate meaningfully, using methods of communication that enhance capacity to share ideas effectively.	Comprehensive inclusion of people who will use the services (and their families and carers as appropriate) as well as those who will deliver them. It is important to design with people, not just for them. Inclusion must be at the outset, not later when decisions have been made.
Beyond Sticky Notes: 'What is co-design. An overview.' Source: https://www.beyondstickynotes.com/what-is-codesign	When differences in power are unacknowledged and unaddressed, the people with the most power have the most influence over decisions. Co-design is about sharing power in planning, research (sometimes called discovery), designing and deciding what gets implemented.	Co-design isn't possible without relationships and trust. Sometimes communities don't trust organisations or external consultants. Often for good reasons. Building that trust takes time. It can't be rushed. You can't buy trust; it can only be earned – the better the social connection, the better the co-design process and outputs.	Co-design is about people taking part. That means offering many ways for people to take part and express themselves, for example, through visual, kinaesthetic and oral approaches. Co-design doesn't rely only on writing, slideshows and reports. Participatory approaches facilitate self-discovery and move people from meeting participants to active partners.

Appendix D: Interview findings per key line of enquiry

Appendix D – Interview Findings (per key line of enquiry)

Topic and key line of enquiry	Indigenous co-design participants	Non-Indigenous co-design participants
Co-design - What does co-design mean to you and what are some of the key elements of an ideal co-design process?	Co-design is a process which: • truly harnesses the potential of the group and develops solutions organically • empowers Indigenous participants to lead, not just contribute, to the process • two or more parties working together to develop something. Key elements include: • power sharing, information sharing, respect, patience, being very open from the beginning of the process, collaboration, trust, ability to have difficult conversations, challenge the status quo, allow for conflict and resolution.	• generates equitable outcomes • looks different in different contexts and so can be operationalised in a number of different ways • creates an equal balance of power between stakeholder groups • creates a partnership that can collaborate to solve problems • enables shared and equal participation and collaboration between members of a collective working group that does not have one set leader • you are doing with, not for. Key elements include: • trust and equality, partnerships, balance of power, transparency, and shared responsibility.
Future state - If you had a magic wand, and could make one thing happen to improve the co-design process, what would you wish for?	Ideal future government co-design is a process in which: • timelines do not undermine the process • APS meets how far Indigenous participants want to go • there is truth telling and different ways to tell and understand the story • community is empowered with appropriate data/knowledge to assist in making genuinely informed decisions • the approach is underpinned by a community strategy • capacity and capability are built in preparation for readiness to engage • community is engaged at the outset. • systems can undergo transformative change. • face-to-face engagement methods are prioritised. • resourcing to participate is adequate. • roles in partnerships are blurred to allow genuine mutual learning. • everyone has input into the scope at the outset. • people's lived experiences and expertise are valued. • senior government leadership and all key government players are consistent across the whole process. • government understands the history and impacts of colonialism and how it plays out in Indigenous people's lives and communities and what a strength-based approach to co-design looks like. • there is an equal number of Indigenous participants in the APS cohort. • research is informed by Indigenous research methods. • adequate money and resources to implement the solution is provided. • a clear understanding of how people got involved and why is provided. • the approach to the project is directed from the outside of government, using an Indigenous perspective. • APS members assist Indigenous participants to navigate government systems. • the proposal is shaped up with government by working closely together. • all governance structures are set up with all participants at the outset. • appropriate levels of maturity across all agencies and members are clear to drive the process forward in a strategic way	• all levels of government are included in the process. • intra- and inter-agency networks and groups are established to enable genuine cross-agency interaction. • face-to-face engagement methods are prioritised. • APS is assisted to know where to put co-design support in agencies to enable genuine co-design processes. • there is a shared understanding of the agenda. • personal relations are built. • experimentation is supported. • experiential knowledge is prioritised. • APS staff are not expected to work across holiday periods. • robust Indigenous facilitation is embedded at the outset. • the co-design process is co-designed. • cultural safety training is done at the outset. • knowledge sharing between diverse groups is genuine. • genuine trust is built. • clear planning and definition of the process takes place at the beginning, including clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and tasks. • there is better communication and facilitation mechanisms between agencies so that a rigorous testing and refining process can occur. • there is a more inclusive approach to consultation. • adequate resources to engage non-government participants to get a wider and more in-depth voice/representation are provided. • good levels of shared ownership across the group are generated. • a Terms of Reference provides good guidance. • cultural safety is maintained. • the entire process is transparent. • sincere intentions and motivation from all members are established. • shifting conservative APS culture to make it less risk averse is possible. • a clear definition of how the co-design is being used is developed. • cultural maturity between agencies is built to establish relations between agencies and community. • lived experience expertise is embedded into the process. • there are streamlined government mechanisms to enable non-APS Indigenous people in government policy making. • government takes on more responsibility to support Indigenous participants to engage. • government can collaborate and not force Indigenous participations to compromise so much that outcomes become watered down. • being flexible and adaptive to ways of working and having resources to pivot the approach. • Innovative ways to build partnerships are supported.

Topic and key line of enquiry	Indigenous co-design participants	Non-Indigenous co-design participants
Self-determination and cultural safety - How can co-design processes support Indigenous self-determination and cultural safety?	Future government co-design processes can support Indigenous self-determination and cultural safety by: • embedding cultural safety training into the process. • embedding real, practical solutions to support cultural safety. • going beyond good intentions to implement effective cultural safety solutions. • allowing more space and time to listen to Indigenous lived experience expertise. • engaging more broadly with community and understanding issues on the ground more thoroughly • building capability and capacity to make ability to contribute equal. • having the process led by Indigenous peoples. • not rushing the process. • engage in genuine and respectful ways.	• embedding cultural safety training into the process. • engaging more broadly with community and understanding issues on the ground more thoroughly. • having more Indigenous leadership.
Collaboration and consultation - What do 'traditional' government consultation processes look like and did the co-design process go beyond them?	'Traditional' government consultation processes look like processes that: • are uncoordinated and lack direction. • have unclear expectations of participants. • have minimal voices in the room and so unequal contributions. • marginalise voices that challenge the majority voice. • provide little time, space, and appropriate practices to work through problems and solutions. • pre-define and push an APS agenda. • use impersonal engagement methods. • values time-bound outputs over process. • places government in total control of developing solutions. • assume government members have a more knowledgeable perspective than non-government participants. • have too many people in the room without structure. • Use Indigenous participants in a 'tokenistic' manner.	• are top-down and passive • restrict information sharing • are too narrow in scope. • exclude stakeholders from the very beginning. • are uncoordinated and lack direction. • marginalise voices that challenge the majority voice. • use impersonal engagement methods
Sharing power - How can we share power and decision-making more equally?	Government can share power and decision-making more equally by: • sharing information and responsibility. • devolving power to Indigenous participants. • creating an environment in which lived experiences can be shared and valued. • creating an environment in which difficult conversations can be had in a respectful way. • providing adequate compensation and resources to enable sufficient engagement. • having equal authority to develop solutions. • government making the compromises, not Indigenous co-design stakeholders • ensuring Indigenous perspectives are driving the process. • putting in practical solutions to support Indigenous self-determination. • empowering communities to make decisions. • empowering Indigenous co-design stakeholders to have access to the information they need to make decisions and influence outcomes. • embedding Indigenous leadership.	• changing the culture so it is less risk averse. • involving Indigenous participants in decision making processes at the high level (e.g., Cabinet level). • dedicating more time to listening to Indigenous co-design stakeholders about their needs, aspirations, expectations, challenges, and opportunities. • showing more responsibility to share power. • make sure there is not a power imbalance at the outset. • addressing any siloed ways of working in agencies • ensuring legislation does not stifle the process. • creating an environment in which a real dialogue can take place and people can be held accountable. • including Indigenous co-design stakeholders at the very begging of the conceptualisation stage of the process.

Appendix E: References

Appendix E – References

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Appendix F – NIAA Co-design Process: Key Actions

Appendix F – NIAA Co-design Process: Key Actions

1. **September 2021** – NIAA identified and invited proposed non-APS members of the Sub-Committee, based on research in the field of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and governance and, in turn, the non-APS members nominated other non-APS people to be invited onto the Working Group.

2. **March 2022** – Nominations from non-APS members were sought for a First Nations co-chair. A vote was taken, and a co-chair was selected.

3. **April 2022** – The Terms of Reference (ToR) was endorsed, and the Sub-Committee agreed to invite non-APS members to the Working Group.

4. **May 2022** – A Work Streams document was developed with five themes – as co-designed by the Sub-Committee – for further investigation by the Working Group to help coordinate development of the Framework by the Working Group.

5. **August 2022** – A Social Contract was developed to build trust across members. A Data Lifecyle Diagram was also developed to open dialogue on where First Nations co-design can be embedded in touchpoints across the APS data lifecycle.

6. **November 2022** – The Working Group explored case studies to inform thinking on the Framework and prepared some early findings and a forward work plan for the project, extending the original timeframe of November 2022 to mid-2023.

7. **December 2022** – January 2023 – Each sub-group met twice to coordinate the co-writing of their relevant Framework sections. Out-of-session meetings and coordination were conducted as necessary.

8. **February 2023** – June 2023 – The Working Group met monthly to progress drafting of the Framework. Each iteration of the Framework was shared across the Working Group for further development.

9. **April 2023** – The Sub-Committee received the first draft of the Framework at its April meeting.

10. **May 2023 – June 2023** – The Working Group members undertook wider engagement on the draft Framework across their organisations and networks.

11. **May 2023** – The draft Framework was delivered to the Working Group and the Sub-Committee for feedback.

At PIC, our purpose is to improve the lives of Indigenous peoples and support self-determination through empowering Indigenous led models and solutions. With over 50 staff located in 8 offices across Australia, we offer a full suite of consulting services, regularly collaborating with PwC and its extensive array of specialist business services.
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