

2025 RAP Impact Survey



Guide to Partnerships

It is a requirement for all organisations to report on their partnerships in the RAP Impact Survey.

Your RAP has its own actions and deliverables associated with establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.

This partnership information applies to questions 14 and 15 in the survey.

Background

Partnerships have become an increasingly used solution to address complex, cross-sector, contemporary challenges – of which reconciliation is one.

If realised in a collaborative way, partnerships can create transformational change by providing equal voice and self determination to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through addressing points of difference such as power and race dynamics.

We have included partnership questions and definitions in the RAP Impact Survey since 2020 to gain insight and data on organisations' abilities to partner with First Nations organisations/communities.

This data supports Reconciliation Australia to more broadly understand how RAP organisations are being challenged or succeeding in their relationships and partnering initiatives.

Information from these questions can be used to better support RAP organisations' partnership needs, through providing tailored resources, training, and capacity building opportunities.

What do we mean by partnership?

Reconciliation Australia's Indigenous Governance Program defines partnerships as advancing relationships that contribute to a more just and reconciled Australia through building trust, understanding and amplifying the importance and impact of Indigenous governance practices.

Partnerships create more ways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership to be heard in decision-making systems and institutions where they are often unheard.

They contribute to a broader understanding of reconciliation in Australia. They are models for effective relationships between Indigenous and other governance structures.

Through developing this guide with the Partnership Brokers Association - the global standard-setter for partnership brokering - a partnership is defined as:

"A mutually beneficial relationship where both parties have equal input into goal setting."

Goal setting includes understanding of shared risk, conflict resolution techniques, and communication methods.

This definition **does not include a typical commercial relationship which would often include funding relationships, subcontracted work, and contracted services**. These types of relationships are often transactional and result in one entity holding most of the power.

These types of relationships should typically sit within your organisation's procurement reporting.

For example, it is not a partnership if the relationship is one where a single organisation has all of the control in outlining the KPIs, desired outcomes, ways of working, and communication methods. In these relationships, it is often that work is done in exchange for a financial cost and there is minimal sharing of the risks or benefits.

Pro bono work can be a grey area.

We understand that for many corporate organisations, partnership work occurs within your pro bono remit as it involves the time and resources of employees, rather than direct financial contribution.

In this situation, it depends on how the partnership is established. For example, are both parties involved in the goal-setting process? Does it include the attributes of partnership as listed below?

1. **Common purpose** – A project which is co-defined by both partners not just one.
2. **Shared and individual interests** – All partners have individual motives for achieving the shared objectives.
3. **Co-creation of design and solutions** – Partners are given equal voice in designing, adapting, and achieving the partnership.
4. **Shared risks and benefits** – The burden of risk, as well as rewards from success, are equally shared between partners.
5. **Mutual accountability** – Both partners have mechanisms to ensure actions are fulfilling their partnership expectations.

Why do we define partnerships this way?

As we call for our RAP partners to act now more than ever, it's important to reflect on the way we understand partnerships and the different types of engagement with First Nations organisations.

Below is the Partnership Brokers Association's relationship continuum which defines transactional and transformational.

It is important to note that this is not a scale of good versus bad. **Transactional** work is very important and transactional relationships can be a clear and easy way of working when you need a service to be delivered.

However, we define **transformational** partnerships under the collaborative side of the spectrum to ensure **we are supporting self-determination of First Nations organisations**.



Partnership Brokers Association – relationship continuum.

Reporting on your partnerships

It is most important to remember that not all partnerships are alike. Each relationship must be assessed in the unique context in which it functions.

Please assess your partnerships using this framework and report them accordingly in questions 14 and 15.

If you have further questions, please contact us at RAP.reporting@reconciliation.org.au.