



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

HISTORICAL AWARENESS

- Respect that transgenerational trauma is a real issue within First Nations communities.
 - Understand that the church has had varying influences on First Nations Peoples, both negative and positive.
 - Be aware of the history involving Missions and the 'role' they had in the Stolen Generations.
 - Be mindful, sadly, that the church was affiliated with the removal of Aboriginal children and denial of Aboriginal culture as part of Australia's earlier policies. Although much healing has been done, much is yet to do.
 - If people appear hesitant, be patient – they will let you know when they're ready to engage.
- You can break down people's perceptions through conversations and maintaining strong and meaningful relationships with community representatives and elders.
 - Ensure you have completed the Djurali Cultural Awareness training on success factors learning.
 - Ensure you have completed the mandatory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Inclusion and safety program.
 - Be mindful of cultural load. If you are unsure or have questions, reach out to our First Nations Engagement Manager, or other local First Nations organisations that welcome enquiries.

KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

- What Aboriginal organisations are in your area? Our resource guide is a good starting point!
 - Are there any identified Aboriginal liaison officers within government departments or community organisations that you can connect with?
 - Identify any local advisory groups and respectfully ask for an invitation to attend. Ask yourself if you can make a meaningful contribution to this group before reaching out.
 - Listen to your local First Nations community to gain understanding of their needs.
 - Join in or establish your own local Reconciliation Committee and invite First Nations member/s
- to provide advice on current issues and ways of working cooperatively together.
- Understand the diversity within the community. People may come from different language groups and will have varying knowledge and understanding of their culture, and/or Lore. Just because someone identifies as Aboriginal doesn't mean they are an expert on all aspects of Aboriginal history or culture.
 - Be aware of your own unconscious bias and avoid stereotyping.
 - Language matters – referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as 'they'/'them' is offensive and inappropriate.

RESPECTING CULTURAL PROTOCOLS

- There are many terms used by Government to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or First Nations Peoples. Most communities in NSW prefer the term Aboriginal rather than Indigenous. Seek clarification from your local community on correct terminology to use. Refer to our Cultural Protocols document for information and guidance.
 - When visiting community, be mindful of current events such as 'Sorry' business.
 - Establish a strong rapport through continued contact to identify local community cultural protocols.
 - Become familiar with culturally significant events and dates such as 'Sorry Day'. Check the calendar of significant dates.
- Have a community presence and participate in community events such as NAIDOC and Reconciliation weeks. Attend to be present and engage with community, and answer questions rather than solely to promote your service. Refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Significant Dates.
 - When hosting functions or gatherings, be sure to invite an Elder or community representative to perform an 'Acknowledgment' or 'Welcome' to Country and be sure to also extend an invitation to key representatives within the local community.
 - Be considerate by offering a gift or payment to community members who perform an 'Acknowledgement' or 'Welcome' as this is a service which is being provided.



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BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS

- Introduce yourself to your local First Nations Community members and organisations - don't be afraid to start a conversation!
- Be sure to attend and be present at community events held within First Nations communities. Consistency is important.
- Introduce yourself first and not your programs. Establish a rapport before you start promoting your services, unless you're asked specifically.
- Listen to the needs of the community, let the people lead you. The community can advise and guide you on what their needs are.
- Build your confidence and understanding by asking questions... 'you won't know if you don't ask'.
- Relationships are 2 way – look closely at how you can both support each other; it can't be all one way.
- Build trust by maintaining contact and following through on any commitments you make.
- Actively seek out local First Nations business and contractors. You can search the Supply Nation website to help guide you.

SERVICE DELIVERY

- Consult community to identify any barriers that may exist for First Nations Peoples engaging with your services and address where possible.
- Be clear on what you can and cannot do. Saying 'Yes' can be more damaging than saying 'No'. It's best to identify what you're able to provide before committing.
- Follow through on your actions in a timely manner.
- Build capacity within your team by employing more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
- Identify and promote vacancies through community contacts encouraging First Nations People to apply.
- Don't let funding cycles dictate timeframes. Communities will not be governed by funding... community needs are what's important.
- Don't take funding opportunities away from Aboriginal based services. Best practice is to partner with the First Nations organisations or community Elders and/or representatives.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Be aware of the Social Justice issues reported in the media such as Raise the Age and Close the Gap, and their impacts within the local community.
- Don't assume that all First Nations Peoples have a 'knowledge' of these issues and/or want to discuss it.
- Only discuss these issues if it is raised by the community.
- Learn how the Society is responding or if they have responded to these matters through the Policy and Advocacy team.
- Overall, be sensitive to all issues that are directly related to First Nations Peoples and communities, and remember that listening to understand, not to respond, is key.

For more information about the
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Community Engagement Plan
please email reconciliation@vinnies.org.au



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works

