



PART B - Making the Business Case for Improving Indigenous New Apprenticeships

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PART B – Making the Business Case for Improving Indigenous Australian Apprenticeships

Why develop a business case for Australian Indigenous Apprenticeships?

Building the capability of your organisation to engage with Indigenous Australians and their communities to enhance New Apprenticeship outcomes is an important business investment decision. It will mean investing time, people and dollars in developing effective strategies and putting them into place. You will obviously want to consider such an important investment in a business-like manner.

We suggest you consider developing a Business Case to map out a structured and systematic approach to take you from your current situation to achieving your goals.

If your organisation is a NAC, you will also want to make sure that you meet, or exceed, your contractual obligations in the most efficient way.

If your organisation is an RTO, you will also want to ensure that you meet your obligations under the Australian Quality Training Framework.

Taking pro-active steps to cater for the diverse needs of people in our society also makes good business sense.



For more information visit the Australian Apprenticeships website:

www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au

What is a business case?

A business case provides a framework to help you identify and document all the relevant information that you will need to make a business decision about enhancing your engagement in Indigenous Australian Apprenticeships.

To develop your business case we suggest you follow the steps below:

1. Develop a profile of your local Indigenous communities and organisations
2. Identify your organisation's current strengths and weaknesses, along with opportunities and barriers, in terms of enhancing your business activity in this area
3. Set new participation goals and targets and develop effective strategies to achieve them
4. Develop a plan for implementing your strategies that includes:
 - o key tasks to be done
 - o setting realistic timelines
 - o estimating the resources required and a budget to get the job done
5. Identify and treat risks that could prevent you achieving your goals.

B1 Developing a profile of your local Indigenous communities and organisations

One of your first tasks in building your organisation's capability is to ensure that your staff have an adequate knowledge and understanding of the Indigenous people, organisations and communities in your locality. This research is vital if you are to develop effective business strategies to enhance your involvement in Indigenous employment and training. Here are some relevant questions to get you started:

Do you know about your local Indigenous communities and their history?

- What is the name of the traditional Indigenous custodians of the land where you are?
- What languages/s did/do they speak?
- Where did/do their lands extend?
- Who were/are the neighbouring peoples?
- Are any Indigenous words used to name local features – electorates, municipalities, areas, streets, and geographical features? What do they mean or refer to?
- In your area, what are the main historical events associated with the arrival of non-Indigenous peoples?
- What are the demographic features of the Indigenous population in your area (eg. population, locations, age profile, high school aged population, number of unemployed)?

Do you know the key local Indigenous leaders, organisations and networks?

- What are the names of the main local families today?
- What are the main local Indigenous communities in your locality and who are the leaders of those communities? What are their contact details?
- What are the main local Indigenous organisations (eg. IECs, CDEPs, ICCs)? What have they been set up for? What are their main issues and current concerns?
- Which government departments that deal with Indigenous Australians operate in your locality?
- Are there Indigenous role models in your locality whom you could access to support young Indigenous Australian Apprentices?
- Which high schools have high numbers of Indigenous students?
- Are there VET in Schools or School-based Australian Apprenticeship programs operating in the local schools?
- Have you made contact with local high schools (eg. Principals, Aboriginal Education Assistants, careers counsellors) and DEST Indigenous Education Field Officers?
- Does the local TAFE have a Specialist Indigenous Unit?

By the way, do you know the answers to the following questions?

1. Forget sportsmen and women. Name ten well-known contemporary Indigenous people and what they are known for?
2. Who designed the Aboriginal flag and when? What is the significance of its features?
3. What does the Torres Strait Islander flag look like? What is the significance of its features? Who designed it?

(Answers are given at the end of this PART)



See PART C Topic C2 – *Improving cross-cultural awareness and understanding for more information about Indigenous cultural groups.*



Now look at the information on researching your local communities and organisations in PART D. The Activity Sheet D1 will help you prepare your profile.

B2 Identifying your organisation's strengths and weaknesses along with opportunities and barriers

The following questions will help you decide 'Where are you now?' and 'Where could you be in the future?'

If you can answer most of these questions positively, you're doing very well!

Are Australian Apprenticeships part of your business already?

- Do you have specific targets in place for Indigenous Australian Apprenticeships success?
- Do you have practical strategies in place to achieve them?
- Do you employ Indigenous trainers, field staff, and/or other support personnel?
- Do you maintain regular contact with members of local Indigenous communities about issues related to employment and training?
- Do you take special steps to support Indigenous trainees to complete their training?

Does your organisation have enhanced cross-cultural awareness?

- Do your staff recognise and express respect for the cultures of Indigenous clients in ways that are acceptable to and appreciated by them?
- Are your non-Indigenous staff able to learn about Indigenous cultures and local Indigenous cultures in particular?
- How much do your staff know about the backgrounds, aspirations and needs of your Indigenous Australian Apprentices?
- Do your staff have ongoing relationships with your Indigenous Australian Apprentices and their families?
- Does your organisation offer effective support to Indigenous Australian Apprentices at all stages of their training?
- Is intensive support available for trainees whose skills in reading and writing English and in numeracy are below conventional levels?
- Do your staff make regular use of the life experiences and knowledge of trainees to make connections with their education and training?
- Does your organisation offer flexible learning arrangements to cater for an individual student's education/training needs?
- Are there regular opportunities available for Indigenous trainees to work cooperatively with other Indigenous people?
- Are a variety of relevant learning strategies, resources and media regularly used?
- Are Indigenous peers, mentors or members of staff used to support individual Australian Apprentices?
- Do your staff work with key members of the local community to discuss possible strategies to enhance attendance and participation of their people?
- Do your staff help Australian Apprentices to connect their education/training with achieving their longer-term aspirations?



Before you start, look at PART C Topics C1-C6 for ideas about possible future directions.



Then look at the information on brainstorming and conducting a SWOT analysis in PART D Section D2 *Charting your future directions*. Activity Sheet D2 will help you collect relevant information, structure group discussions and record the outcomes.

B3 Setting new participation goals and targets and developing strategies to achieve them

What are you going to achieve in the next year? What are realistic goals and targets? How will you achieve them?

What is a goal?

A goal is an aim or statement of what you are trying to achieve. Goals differ in important ways from targets and performance indicators.

Australia's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy for Vocational Education and Training *Partners in a Learning Culture 2000-2005* is a good place to start. The over-arching goal is to eliminate the gap between the success rates of Indigenous and non-Indigenous trainees. This is where your thinking and planning should start.

Your goals must be clear, concrete and easily understood. They should also be measurable. For example:

- *We will increase the recruitment and retention of Indigenous Australian Apprentices by extending and improving services to our Indigenous clients.*

What is a target?

Targets differ from goals in their degree of detail and timing. Targets are statements which define how goals will be achieved and by when.

So, for the goal defined above, relevant targets might be:

- *We will expand our network of Indigenous contacts by developing two new partnerships with community organisations.*
- *We will increase the number of Indigenous Australian Apprentices by 10% over the next 12 months.*
- *We will lift retention and completion rates of Indigenous Australian Apprentices by 10% over the next 12 months.*

While goals may be lasting, your targets can be progressive or adjusted as circumstances change.

Why set targets?

Targets and performance indicators define and drive work. They focus attention on what is to be achieved and are most effective when they:

- provide specific performance indicators without pretending to be comprehensive
- are reasonable and within reach
- are limited in number.



B3 Setting new participation goals and targets and developing strategies to achieve them (continued)

What are strategies?

If your goals are an end point and your targets describe what you are trying to achieve specifically, your strategies describe how you will achieve your goals and targets.

First of all, think 'big picture'. Staff from a wide range of NACs, RTOs and community organisations around Australia have suggested a number of broad strategy areas that will lead to improvements. These are:

- making the Australian Apprenticeship system work better for Indigenous Australians
- improving cross-cultural awareness and understanding
- engaging Indigenous communities and organisations through expanded networks and partnerships
- marketing Australian Apprenticeships to suit local needs
- engaging Indigenous learners and their communities in formal training
- mentoring employers and Indigenous trainees to enhance retention.

If one of your key goals is to build the capability of your organisation, you could start thinking about your strategies by using this list. Think about the areas of improvement that will be most relevant to your context. You may think of other strategies that suit your situation.



Now look at the 'why', 'what' and 'how' issues, case studies and practical hints for improving performance in each of these broad strategy areas in PART C Topics C1-C6.



Use the Activity Sheet D3 in PART D to develop your goals, targets and key strategies.

B4 Plotting your way forward

An essential part of an effective business case is an implementation plan that plots the future course in terms of:

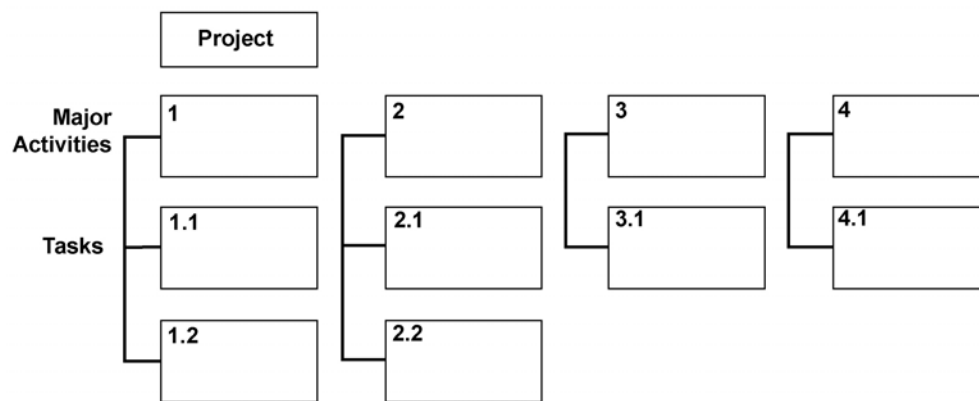
- identifying the key tasks to be done
- setting realistic timeframes
- estimating the resources required and a budget to get the job done.

Identifying the tasks

Implementing your business case is like conducting any project, it helps to visualise the major project activities and the discrete tasks required for each one. These activities and tasks define the work that must be done in order to accomplish your goals and targets. In essence, they provide you with a 'road map'.

In project management terms, you would be completing a 'Work Breakdown Structure' (WBS). However, the important thing is that you carefully identify what needs to be done to achieve your strategies, in terms of:

- the major project activities (or groups of tasks)
 - and the individual tasks (and sub-tasks).



The skill in constructing a useful WBS is to:

- clearly describe the major activities to be done
- identify the tasks associated with each activity
- consult with those who will do the work
- identify when each task is to be done in relation to the other tasks.

The WBS is a valuable tool for:

- estimating resources, time and cost
- establishing an order of tasks
- controlling the project
- reporting progress and outcomes.

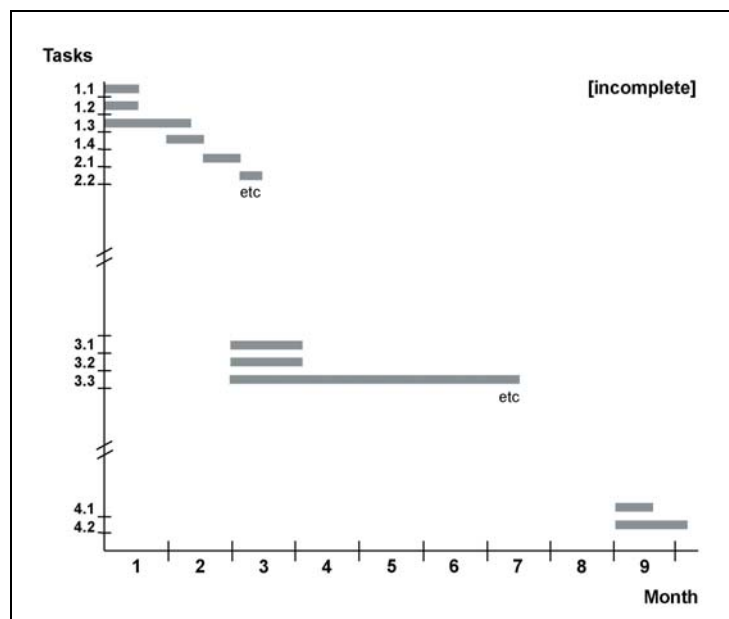
B4 Plotting your way forward (continued)

Developing a timeline

By carefully identifying the major activities and tasks, you have the basic information required to estimate an accurate timeline for implementing the chosen strategies.

Estimating a timeline involves addressing these questions for each task:

- what is the logical order in which the work is to be done?
- who is going to do the work?
- when will they do it?
- how long will each task take?



Estimating resources

When identifying resources and their costs, you should consider the need for:

- staff with specific knowledge and skills and their costs
- materials
- equipment/other capital resources
- specialised knowledge/skills beyond the capability of your organisation. This may lead to the need for consultants or contractors.

Brainstorm your resource requirements with your colleagues.

Preparing a budget

Estimate the costs of undertaking each task in the WBS by using the simple formula:

Time taken X resources required X cost per resource type

The budget will also include other factors such as administrative costs, overheads, capital costs and funds to cover unforeseen problems.



Use the Case Study in PART D Section D4 to help you develop a plan for implementing your chosen strategies.

B5 Identifying and treating risks that could prevent you achieving your goals

Why manage risks?

Managing risk means identifying and taking opportunities to improve performance as much as it means taking action to avoid or reduce the chances of something going wrong.

All change involves an element of risk. Some change may fail to deliver the benefits that were envisaged. However, you will only expand and improve services for your Indigenous clients if you are prepared to explore new ideas.

Identifying risks

Brainstorming and SWOT analysis are useful methods of identifying risks. You will have identified many of these in Step B2 of developing this Business Case. Some examples could be:

- *Engaging Indigenous community leaders takes longer than you think*
- *There are insufficient work-ready people to recruit*
- *Supplementary government funding sources may not be ongoing.*

Analysing and evaluating risks

After you have identified the risks, you will need to separate minor acceptable risks from major risks that must be managed. You should look at the likelihood of each risk occurring and the consequences for your organisation if it does.

You then need to decide whether the risks are acceptable or not. You should consider:

- the importance of your activity
- whether existing procedures and systems will ensure that people will act to minimise the likelihood or consequence of the risks
- the potential costs of the risk occurring, such as the \$ value and impact on the viability of your chosen strategies
- any possible benefits presented by the risk.

Treating the Risks

Options for treating risks can be as varied as the risks themselves. You can apply any of the five treatment options individually or in combination with the others.

- **Reduce the risk** – You could modify organisational policies/procedures, introduce training or have back up systems/strategies that reduce the likelihood and/or consequences of the risk.
- **Transfer the risk** – You could shift responsibility to another person or party by using insurance or contract requirements. However, risk transfer should be used with caution as your organisation may not be able to transfer its responsibilities under law.
- **Accept the risk** – You may decide to accept the risk after carefully analysing the strategies to avoid, transfer or reduce the risk and considering the cost involved.
- **Avoid the risk** – You may choose not to proceed with an activity or change strategies. This may be appropriate on occasions, but it could increase the significance of other risks, or create new risks.
- **Manage the consequences** – You could have a contingency plan in place, such as advice to staff, that covers the short term response to the risk occurring.

B5 Identifying and treating risks that could prevent you achieving your goals (continued)

Some key questions to ask are:

- What processes and controls are needed, or need to be improved, in order to minimise the risk?
- What resources are needed (people, money, technical)?
- What options are appropriate for treating the risk?
- What risks can be treated with strategies included in your Business Case and other processes?

Are the risk treatments cost effective? You may need to do a cost-benefit analysis.



Use the Activity Sheet D5 in PART D to plan how you would manage the risks associated with implementing your chosen strategies.

You now have a fully developed Business Case to present to your senior management.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS IN PART B Section B1

1. You may know of leaders such as Neville Bonner, Charles Perkins, Eddie Mabo, Vincent Lingari, Lowitja O'Donahue, Pat O'Shane, Evelyn Scott, Marcia Langton, Noel Pearson, Aiden Wridgeway.



For an up to date showcase of talented Indigenous Australians go to the website www.deadlys.vibe.com.au for a full list of the Deadly Award Winners.

2. The Aboriginal flag was designed in 1971 by Harold Thomas, a Luritja man from Central Australia.



The flag is divided horizontally into equal halves of black (top) and red (bottom), with a yellow circle in the centre. The black represents the Aboriginal people – past (ancestors who were the first people of this land), present and future. The yellow represents the sun, the giver of life and of light and warmth. The red represents Mother Earth from whom all life and spirituality have come.

3. The Torres Strait Islander flag was designed by 15 year-old Bernard Namok of Thursday Island and accepted by the Island Co-ordinating Council on behalf of all Torres Strait Islander people. The flag was first flown at the Torres Strait Cultural Festival at Thursday Island in May 1992.



The green upper and lower panels represent the land. The blue panel in the centre represents the waters of the Torres Strait. The black lines between the green and blue panels represent the Indigenous people of the Torres Strait. The white feathered dhari (headdress) symbolises all Torres Strait Islander people. The white of the star represents peace. The five divisions of the Torres Strait region are depicted in the five-pointed star: Eastern Islands; Western Islands; Central Islands (Waibene [Thursday Island], Nurapai

[Horn Island], Muralag [Prince of Wales Island], Kirriri [Hammond Island]); Northern Peninsular Area and mainland Torres Strait Islanders. The star, used in navigation, is an important symbol for the seafaring Torres Strait Islander people.