



The Knowledge Hub

PROJECT PLANNING WORKBOOK

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Contents

This workbook provides general information and guidance and is not a substitute for independent legal or professional advice.

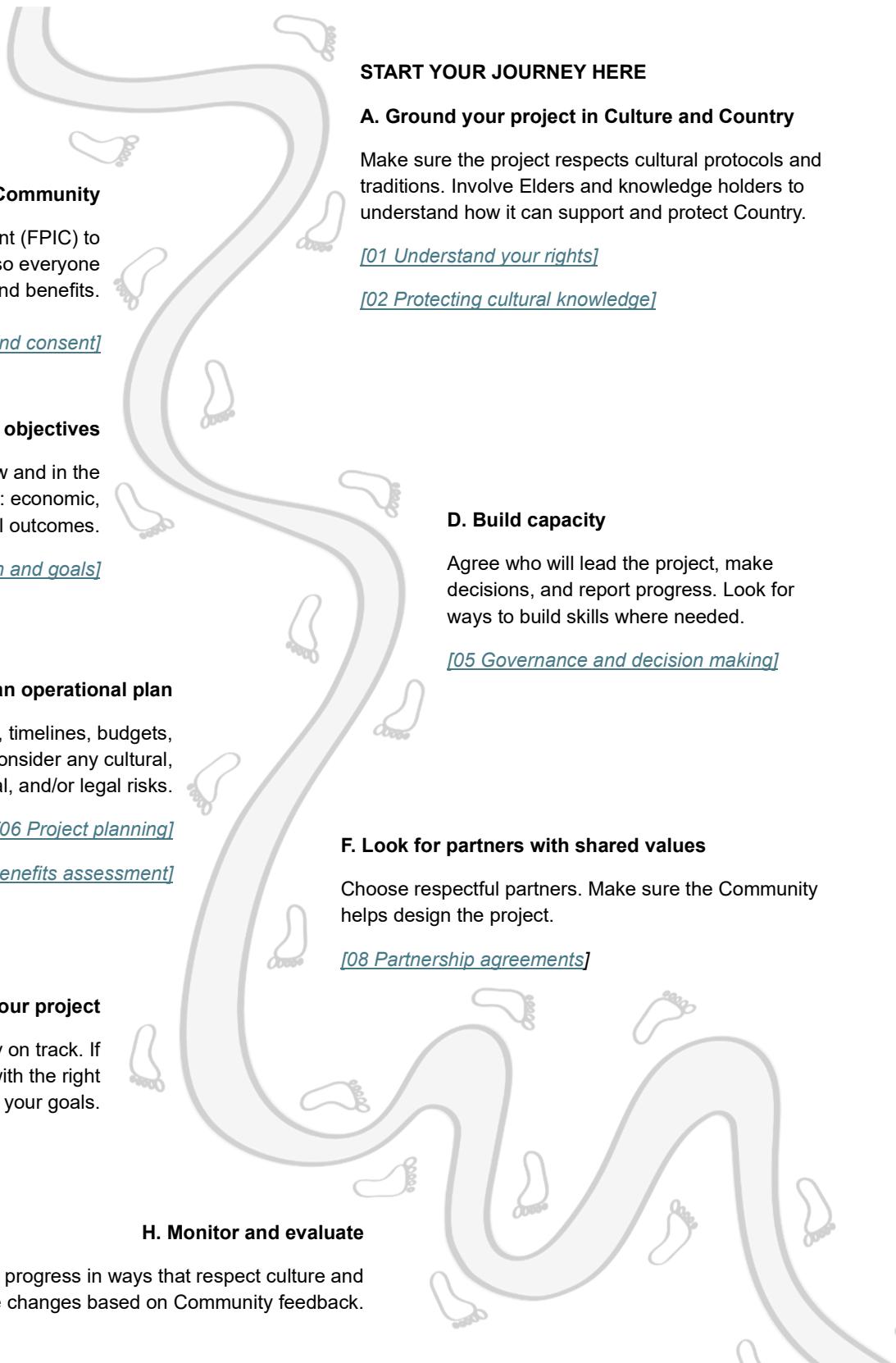
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Acknowledgement of Country

In all of the ILSC's activities we pay our respect to the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands, waters and skies on which we live and work. We honour the resilience and continuing connection to Country, culture, and community of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia. We recognise the decisions we make today will impact the lives of generations to come.

00 Starting a new project

Developing or co-designing a new project can be empowering. It can bring together Community voices and create a shared vision grounded in culture and connection to Country.



01 Understand your rights

Before starting a project on Country, make sure you understand your rights — like legal ownership of land/waters, Native Title rights, or other interests.

What someone can do on Country often depends on who owns the land/waters and the laws that apply.

In Australia, these are the main systems that determine legal rights at a specific location – they may overlap:

- **Torrens (Freehold)Title** – This is the main system used to record who owns land
- **Native Title** – Recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights to land and water
- **Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs)** – Agreements between Traditional Owners and others about land and water use
- **State/Territory Land Rights** – Laws that give Aboriginal groups rights to land
- **Pastoral and Mining Leases** – Long-term use of land for farming or mining
- **Crown Land** – Land owned by the government

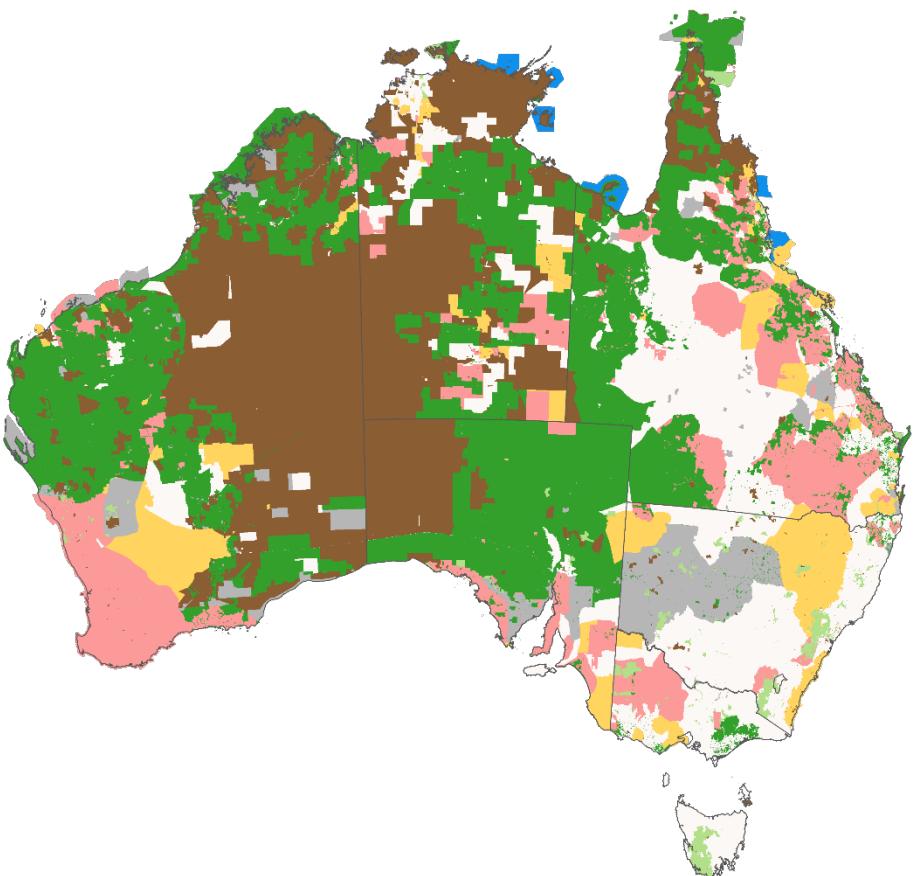
It is important to understand your rights under Commonwealth and state/territory laws, and to seek independent legal advice about specific project details.

Your rights can give you the power to negotiate, protect Country, and make sure projects align with your Community's priorities. They may also give you the authority to approve or reject a project.

01 Understand your rights

Indigenous rights and interests

Image provided by the Indigenous Carbon Industry Network



- Class 1 - Legal Right (Indigenous owned tenure, or Exclusive Possession Native Title Determined)
- Class 2 - Eligible Interest Holder (Non-Exclusive Possession Native Title Determined)
- Class 3 - Eligible Interest Holder or Agreement (Jointly Managed Parks)
- Class 4 - Indigenous Land Interest (BAI - ILUA)
- Class 5 - Indigenous Land Interest (BAI - Native Title Claim Pending Decision)
- Class 6 - Management Responsibility (Indigenous Protected Areas)
- Class 7 - Determined (No Native Title)
- Class 8 - Other

Note: The dataset underlying this map is based primarily on publicly available spatial data, complemented by private information sources. It is acknowledged that there may be some errors in the dataset and that Indigenous land and sea interests are broader than what is presented in the dataset. Further, due to the scale of the analysis, the data should not be relied upon for accuracy at a local or project-level scale.

02 Protecting cultural knowledge

What to expect

Cultural knowledge is valuable and should be protected.

Before sharing your cultural knowledge, it is important to agree what can be shared, who it can be shared with, what it will be used for, and how it will be protected.

If your family, Community or organisation has given you permission to share knowledge with an outside group — like a researcher, government, or business — you should consider whether it would be appropriate to have a written agreement in place. You might consider obtaining Legal advice about this.

A good agreement helps protect your rights and makes sure your knowledge is protected.

Use this checklist as a tool to see if your cultural knowledge and rights (ICIP) are being respected.

1. Confirming what you will share

- Have we been given the opportunity to consent to have our information recorded and what is the evidence?
- Have we seen a copy of the information after we have shared it and do we still agree to share it?
- Have we been given the opportunity to determine where our information will be used?
- Will the information we have provide be in a publication, used by third parties, kept on file?
- Have we been asked if we would like to be acknowledged or attributed in any publication?
- Have we agreed what other information we are willing to share?
- Have we agreed who we are sharing this information with?
- Will our Community benefit from sharing this information?
- Are we confident how our cultural knowledge will be used?
- Are we clear on how our cultural knowledge can not be used?

2. Having the right protection in place

- Has our cultural knowledge been acknowledged as Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)?
- Will our data be de-identified? What is the evidence?
- Will we still own the knowledge we are going to share?
- Will we be able to check the project plan to make sure our rights are respected?
- Will we be able to withdraw our permission if the agreement is broken?

3. Keeping a record

- Do we have an agreement that confirms these details?
- Do we have a record of what information we shared?
- Do we have a record of who we shared it with and when?

02 Protecting cultural knowledge

A formally written agreement setting out each parties' responsibility is recommended.

Subject to alternative agreements/arrangements on a case-by-case basis, example clauses might include:

- The Traditional Owners retain ownership of all cultural knowledge (ICIP) shared during the project and have the right to withdraw permission or use of ICIP if the Project Partner does not act in accordance with cultural protocols and directions set out by the Community in this agreement.
- The Project Partner acknowledges that ICIP may be incorporated in the Project and agrees that ownership of any ICIP rights will remain with the Traditional Owners or custodians and agrees to act in accordance with any cultural protocols and directions of the Community.

03 Engagement and consent

New opportunities can often mean taking risks

When asked to consent (or agree) to a new opportunity on Country it is important to be aware of the project details.

If you are not the project owner, you will want to know how the project might impact Community and Country. You will also want to know who has the 'legal right' to make decisions during the project.

This helps you understand how much influence you can have, especially if Traditional Owners don't have the 'legal right' to say no.

The person or organisation asking about a project may have competing rights or interests, or specific legal requirements that need to be met. This could affect your role and decisions throughout the project.

Before getting involved or signing anything, make sure you are given clear and honest details about how decisions are made and who is in charge.

This document outlines what to expect during engagement and before consent.

True collaboration should happen early—before plans are set and before any work begins.

Key project stages:

1. Designing the project	} Engagement and consent
2. Planning the project details	
3. Starting the project	
4. Reviewing the project outcomes during and after it finishes	

If you are asked to get involved in a new project, it's important to find out:

Question	Purpose
What	What is the project about, what will happen, what resources will it need, what benefits are there for the Community?
Why	Why is this project important to them? Why do you think this project is important to Community?
Who	Who are the decision makers at all stages of the project? Who will benefit?
When	When will it happen and how long will it take? Break it up into phases.
How	How will we be engaged?

Understanding the purpose (what, why, who, when and how) can help to:

- Avoid unnecessary cost and effort
- Reduce risks
- Maximise influence
- Enable benefit sharing

The following page shows a list of things to look out for when someone is asking you to get involved in, or consent to, a project on Country.

03 Engagement and consent

What to expect

Use these questions to guide conversations with project partners.

Asking for details (what, why, who, when, how) – and getting them in writing – helps build trust and strong partnerships.

1. Respect for our rights, interests, and culture

- Has our Country been acknowledged?
- Are our rights being understood and applied?
- Is our right to self-determination being recognised?
- Have they taken time to learn about our Community, our language, our Culture?
- Are our cultural protocols being respected and followed?

2. Enough time to build trust and consider what is being asked (consent)

- Are we being asked for consent without being pressured into a decision?
- Are we being asked to get involved or provide consent before the project has started? If not, why not?
- Are timeframes constrained by legislation or other factors?
- Will we be paid for our time?
- Are they respectful to our community, governance and leadership?
- Are they taking time to build a relationship with us?
- Can we withdraw our consent if we want to? (This must be in writing)

3. Meaningful engagement and shared decision-making

- Are we being included in the design, planning, and development of the project?
- Is there a shared understanding of co-design and is this built into the project?
- Have we been given enough time to think and talk with Community?
- Are our community decision-making processes being respected?
- Will they listen to what matters to us throughout the project?
- Do we have all the information we need to make a decision?
- Are we confident that the information provided is correct?

4. Clear agreements, protection of cultural knowledge and data sovereignty

- Have agreements been put in writing so expectations are clear?
- Is our data sovereignty being respected? What is the evidence for this?
- Can we withdraw our consent for the use of our cultural knowledge?

5. Monitoring and accountability

- Are they being open and honest about their intentions and actions?
- Are they taking our feedback seriously and acting on it?
- Will they keep us up-to-date?
- Are we involved in monitoring how things are going and will we be paid?
- Are our cultural values being included in the monitoring process?

03 Engagement and consent

6. Real benefits for Community

- Has the long-term impact on Country been considered?
- Are there real and tangible benefits for our Community and have these been recorded in an agreement or contract?
- Have we had a say in how these benefits are shared?
- Are these benefits shared fairly

04 Defining your vision and goals

Defining your vision and goals – both now and for the future – is important for long-term success.

Agreeing on these things can help you make clear decisions and stay focused on your goals.

Use the table to outline your vision and goals.

Area	Vision (Long term - what we want in the future)	Goals (Medium term - what we need to achieve)	Objectives (Short term - steps to achieve goals)
Economic	<i>A thriving local economy led by Community and employment opportunities that do not rely on government funding</i>	<i>10 new jobs in 3 years; 2 new revenue generating opportunities; \$XX in community revenue annually</i>	<i>Increase employment; demand for our services; Secure sustainable income streams</i>
Social	<i>A strong, healthy, and connected Community where everyone thrives</i>	<i>20% increase in school completion; a new health program; Upgraded community centre</i>	<i>Improve health and wellbeing; Strengthen education and training; Support young people</i>
Environmental	<i>Country is protected, respected, and cared for through traditional knowledge and leadership</i>	<i>Land management plan in place; Annual report shared with Community</i>	<i>Promote caring for Country initiatives; Lead environmental monitoring on projects</i>
Cultural	<i>Culture is lived, shared, and celebrated across generations</i>	<i>Cultural protocols embedded in all projects</i>	<i>Confidence in how our knowledge is used and protected</i>
Other	<i>Our Community leads decisions about our future with strong governance and partnerships</i>	<i>Community reps on all project boards; Free, Prior, and Informed Consent principles adopted and implemented</i>	<i>Ensure community-led decision-making; Build long-term partnerships; Embed Free, Prior, and Informed Consent in all engagements</i>

05 Governance and decision making

Project governance is critically important because it outlines who is responsible for what and how decisions are made.

Consider writing down these things for each project you are involved in.

- 1. Project name** [Insert name of the project]
- 2. Purpose and goals** [Describe the purpose of the project and the goals]
- 3. Ways of working** [List the key ways you will work together e.g. being respectful, community-led decision making]
- 4. Communication** [Describe how the project is run, how feedback is collected, and how changes are made] This might include:
 - Keeping meeting minutes and records of decisions
 - Providing regular updates at meetings (or by email)
 - Agreeing what happens if there are disagreements and how these are resolved
- 5. Decision making** [Using your Rulebook and Constitution as a guide, refer to the table below to show what decisions need to be made, who makes them, and how they're made]

Decision Type	Role (who makes decision)	Responsibilities	How (how is decision made)	Decision making authority
Cultural matters	Elders, Cultural Custodians	Cultural guidance, oversight	Consensus, when required	Final say on all cultural matters
Strategic decisions	Project steering committee / leadership group	Strategic guidance, risk oversight funding approval	Consensus, monthly reviews	Approval of changes to project scope, budget, timeline
Operational decisions	Project lead	Day-to-day management	Majority agreement	Approval of changes to schedule and resources within agreed project scope
Implementation decisions	Project working group	Local implementation, engagement	Majority agreement, weekly meetings	Decisions based on tasks within project plan
Community engagement	All community members	Feedback (participation through working group)	Community meetings, prior to project commencing	Initial project scoping

06 Project planning

With clear goals, respectful partnerships, and strong governance, a plan becomes more than a roadmap—it becomes a tool for empowerment, sustainability, and achieving desired outcomes.

Key elements to consider when you are developing a project plan are listed below.

1. Overview

- Write down the project name, start date, end date, and total budget
- Summarise what you are planning to do
- Include the purpose, goals, and the value the project will deliver *[04 Defining your vision and goals]*

2. The project team

- Think about your organisation's current or proposed decision-making process and how this could support the project
- Who are the key people involved in the project (sponsor, manager, project team) and what are their roles and responsibilities
- Outline the skills and experience you will need, and if you have these or will need training or will need to be procured.
- How will you make decisions for this project *[05 Governance and decision making]*

3. Opportunity assessment

- How will you know the project is successful? *[07 Benefits assessment]*
- Are there similar projects you can learn from?
- Do you have what you need to take part in the project?
- What unique strengths do you bring (like location, knowledge, or services)?
- What skills and experience can your partners bring?
- How will the partnership work – who designs, decides, and funds it?
- Where will the funding come from?

4. Documenting the details

- Develop a detailed plan with timelines and decision points
- Identify risks and what you will do to stop them happening or reduce their impact
- Include risks to financial performance and how this can be minimised and managed
- Describe what you will need including equipment, training, funding and if this is needed after the project end date
- Will expertise from outside your organisation be needed

06 Project planning

- Describe how the business will be managed and run, including how you'll track progress and measure success.
- If the project is in a regional or remote area, explain how you'll manage natural resources like water, land, and animals to make sure the approach is sustainable.
- Outline key milestones in the project plan
- Decide what will be monitored by who

5. Project budget

- What is the total budget / project cost
- Write down all the costs (e.g. staff, materials, meeting costs, travel etc)
- What investment is needed from others
- What are the terms and repayment schedule (if relevant)
- Who is managing and tracking the budget
- Can the project continue after funding ends?

6. Monitoring and review (build this into your plan)

- Set up milestones to check in if the project is on track
- Think about what is working well and what isn't
- Look at opportunities to collect feedback from the Community and partners – what is the project's impact on people, culture, environment, and economy
- Consider how you will make changes and improvements
- Agree on ways to share outcomes and insights
- Plan what happens next – continue, improve, or end

07 Benefits assessment

Add or remove rows in the table to show the benefits and impact the project could have for your Community.

What does the project aim to achieve: _____

How does this align with your goals: _____

Benefit	Description	Impact				Notes
		None	Low	Medium	High	
Economic	Employment opportunities for community members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Increases demand for our products/services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Revenue sharing or equity arrangements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Investment in local economic development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Social	Improved health and wellbeing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Education and training opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Improved services and/or infrastructure (transport, tech, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Enhanced identity and stronger relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Environmental	Sustainable land use practices based on caring for Country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Community-led environmental monitoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Climate resilience and/or pollution reduction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Protection of biodiversity and ecosystems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Cultural	Respect and protection of culturally significant sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Inclusion of cultural protocols	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Preservation of cultural knowledge and language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Opportunities to celebrate and strengthen cultural identity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other	Community representation in governance and decision-making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Option to withdraw consent / say no	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Long-term partnership beyond project life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Legacy outcomes for future generations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

08 Partnership agreements

What to expect

Agreements should be clear, fair, and respectful.

They should support good communication, shared decision-making, and opportunities to build skills. Make sure key project details are confirmed before signing an agreement.

- Who has the right to speak for Country
- What rules need to be followed – within the Community and with the partner
- Who can make decisions
- How will Community be kept informed

Check agreements to see if they include:

1. Roles, and responsibilities

- What is going to happen
- What you've agreed to do
- What they've agreed to do
- Time frames – how long is the project and when will things happen
- Who is responsible

2. Protection of cultural heritage and environment

- Sacred sites
- Environmental values / caring for Country
- Cultural knowledge [01 Protecting cultural knowledge]

3. Project governance and decision-making

- Who makes decisions
- How disputes are resolved
- When updates are provided, to who, and how
- How progress will be tracked
- How outcomes will be assessed [05 Governance and decision making]

4. Shared benefits

- Job opportunities
- Training opportunities
- Money the project earns
- Other benefits [07 Benefits assessment]

5. Legal and ethical compliance

- Clauses for engagement, consent and protection of cultural knowledge
- Clauses for dispute resolution, review, changing, and ending the agreement



The Knowledge Hub is an initiative of the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC).

Online content, checklists and guide, including this Workbook, have been developed to support First Nations access to relevant information and increased participation in land and sea management projects.

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