

Self-assessment tool to assess council alignment with each of the Priority Reform areas

Introduction to the self-assessment tool

The self-assessment tool has been developed to assist councils to evaluate their current alignment with key areas of the **National Agreement on Closing the Gap's** Priority Reform areas. Please note, the indicators contained in the self-assessment tool and the guidance provided for next steps are indicative only and should be tailored to each council's circumstances and local context. It is recommended that the self-assessment exercise involve the perspectives of a range of council representatives including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have the appropriate cultural lens and understand the local community.

To use the self-assessment tool to support councils' continuous improvement, councils are encouraged to:

- ◇ Discuss results internally with relevant teams and leadership, and with any existing Aboriginal Advisory Committees and local Aboriginal organisations/partners.
- ◇ Prioritise two or three focus areas for improvement each year.
- ◇ Integrate agreed actions into IP&R documents such as the Delivery Program and Operational Plan, where possible.
- ◇ Revisit the self-assessment annually to track progress and maintain accountability.

We have provided an example scenario to demonstrate how a council might apply and use the self-assessment tool at the end of this document.

Scoring Guidance

To help councils understand their current level of alignment with the Priority Reforms, use the following scoring method. This will assist in identifying areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

Each indicator should be scored based on the level of alignment that best describes the council's current practice:

- Highly Aligned: 4 points
- Aligned: 3 points
- Partially Aligned: 2 points
- Not Aligned: 1 point

Scoring guides are provided under each section which help to determine an overall score for each Priority Reform area. To calculate a composite score across all areas, total the scores across all indicators. Use the following ranges to interpret your results:

- 91 – 104 points: Strong alignment with Priority Reform Areas.
- 74 – 90 points: Moderate alignment – some improvement needed.
- 56 – 73 points: Emerging alignment – targeted action required.
- Below 52 points: Limited alignment – significant reform needed.

Use this sheet to total your council's scores across all Priority Reforms. Record the total score for each PR area and calculate an overall alignment score.

Example scenario:

The following example illustrates how a council could use the self-assessment tool in conjunction with the Toolkit to identify areas for improvement and strengthen its alignment with the Priority Reform areas.

SCENARIO

A regional NSW council has been working in partnership with several Aboriginal organisations to improve outcomes for local Aboriginal communities. The Council has recently read through the Closing the Gap Toolkit for Local Government and decided to use the self-assessment tool to review its current level of alignment with the Priority Reform areas.

PROCESS

A small working group was formed, including the Director of Community Services, the Aboriginal Community Development Officer, two elected councillors, and representatives from two key Aboriginal organisations which the council has a collaborative working relationship with. The group met over two workshops to complete the self-assessment for each Priority Reform area.

Scores were agreed through discussion, using the information and examples provided in relevant section of the Toolkit (e.g. partnership agreements, engagement frameworks and procurement policies). Results were entered into the summary scoring sheet to produce the following picture:

PRIORITY REFORM	TOTAL SCORE	ALIGNMENT LEVEL
PR1 – Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision-Making	16	Emerging
PR2 – Building the Community-Controlled Sector	11	Strong
PR3 – Transforming Government Organisations	15	Emerging
PR4 – Shared Access to Data and Information	8	Limited
PR5 – Employment, Business Growth and Economic Prosperity	11	Limited

INTERPRETATION

The results showed strong relationships with local Aboriginal organisations (PR2), emerging alignment for shared decision-making (PR1) and organisational transformation (PR3) but weaker structures for data sharing (PR4) and economic prosperity (PR5). The group agreed these were priority focus areas for improvement.

ACTION PLANNING

The Council used the reflection prompts in the self-assessment tool to identify three priority actions to strengthen alignment, which built in their existing strengths and partnerships while targeting improvement areas:

1. Formalise existing partnerships (PR1 + PR3): Co-design a Memorandum of Understanding with key Aboriginal partner organisations committing them to work together collaboratively across community engagement, cultural awareness training and input into key council programs. This could later evolve into a formal partnership.
2. Embed Aboriginal Data Governance (PR4): Work with Aboriginal partners to establish a local data-sharing protocol and build staff capacity in data literacy and reporting.
3. Review procurement policies and processes (PR5): Introduce a dedicated Aboriginal procurement target, review internal procurement policies and processes, and establish support for local Aboriginal businesses in the area to learn about council's procurement processes.

OUTCOME

By the following year, Council re-assessed its progress using the same tool and found improved scores across PR1, PR3, PR4 and PR5 demonstrating tangible progress toward areas aligned with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Summary Score Sheet

PRIORITY REFORM	TOTAL SCORE	ALIGNMENT LEVEL
PR1 – Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision-Making		
PR2 – Building the Community-Controlled Sector		
PR3 – Transforming Government Organisations		
PR4 – Shared Access to Data and Information		
PR5 – Employment, Business Growth and Economic Prosperity		

Priority Reform 1

Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making

Indicators	Highly Aligned (4)	Aligned (3)	Partially Aligned (2)	Not Aligned (1)	SCORE
1.1 Council is pursuing formal partnerships with Aboriginal organisations, with formal mechanisms for shared decision-making in place	Council has formal, co-developed partnership agreements (e.g., MOU, place-based agreement) with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations or governance bodies, which guide shared decision-making and are regularly reviewed.	Formal partnership mechanisms exist and are used but may not be regularly reviewed or co-developed.	Engagement occurs with Aboriginal stakeholders, but no formal agreements or clear decision-making processes are in place.	No shared decision-making mechanisms or engagement structures exist.	
1.2 Aboriginal community-controlled partners are resourced and supported to engage with council	The council supports Aboriginal partners with resourcing (financial or in-kind), capacity-building, and long-term relationship development.	Some resourcing and capacity-building support is provided, but inconsistently.	Minimal support is offered to Aboriginal partners or is limited to project-specific activities.	No support or resourcing is provided to Aboriginal partners.	
1.3 Council governance structures include Aboriginal representation and decision-making authority	Aboriginal representatives are embedded in council governance and have genuine decision-making power (e.g., voting rights, co-chair roles). Recommendations are formally tabled at council meetings. Minutes and recommendations are published via council's website.	Aboriginal representatives are part of advisory structures but lack decision-making authority.	Occasional consultations occur, but Aboriginal stakeholders are not part of governance structures.	Aboriginal people are not included in governance or decision-making.	
1.4 Cultural governance protocols are embedded and respected	Council applies and adheres to cultural governance protocols developed with Aboriginal communities in all relevant decisions and projects.	Council recognises and attempts to follow cultural protocols but lacks formal guidance or consistency.	Cultural protocols are acknowledged but rarely incorporated into council processes.	Cultural governance is not considered in council decision-making.	
1.5 Transparent and accountable processes are in place for shared decision-making	Processes for decision-making with Aboriginal partners are co-designed, documented, implemented and outcomes are publicly reported.	Decision-making processes are documented and include some transparency but lack public reporting or shared development.	Some processes exist but are unclear or inconsistently applied.	No processes exist or are communicated around decision-making with Aboriginal partners.	

Priority Reform 1

Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making

Total Score for PR1:

Scoring Guide:

18 – 20 points: Strong alignment with Priority Reform Area.

14 – 17 points: Moderate alignment – some improvement needed.

10 – 13 points: Emerging alignment – targeted action required.

Below 10 points: Limited alignment – significant reform needed.

Example actions according to alignment area:

- **Strong alignment:** Continue reviewing agreements regularly and sharing outcomes publicly.
- **Moderate alignment:** Strengthen Aboriginal decision-making in governance structures and consider formalising partnerships.
- **Emerging/limited alignment:** Consider how existing engagement with Aboriginal groups can be strengthened or formalised through governance structures.

Priority Reform 2

Building the Community Controlled Sector

Indicators	Highly Aligned (4)	Aligned (3)	Partially Aligned (2)	Not Aligned (1)	SCORE
2.1 Council funds or partners with ACCOs to deliver services	Council actively funds, contracts, or co-designs services with ACCOs on a long-term basis.	Council engages ACCOs for some services or short-term projects.	Council has minimal engagement with ACCOs, limited to one-off activities.	Council does not partner or fund ACCOs.	
2.2 Council provides dedicated resources or in-kind support for the ACCO sector to ensure Aboriginal communities have access to services that are culturally appropriate and locally driven	Council has long-term, dedicated resources or capacity-building available specifically for ACCOs.	Council offers dedicated resources, in-kind support or capacity-building support to ACCOs.	Council offers ad-hoc or limited resources or in-kind support for ACCOs.	No resources or support are provided to ACCOs.	
2.3 Council measures and reports on outcomes of ACCO partnerships	Council co-develops outcome measures with ACCOs, collects data, and publicly reports progress.	Council collects some data on outcomes of ACCO partnerships but does not co-develop measures or report publicly.	Council measures outputs rather than outcomes, with limited ACCO involvement.	No measurement or reporting on ACCO partnerships occurs.	

Total Score for PR2:

Scoring Guide:

11 – 12 points: Strong alignment with Priority Reform Area.

9 – 10 points: Moderate alignment – some improvement needed

7 – 9 points: Emerging alignment – targeted action required.

Below 10 points: Limited alignment – significant reform needed.

Example actions according to alignment area:

- **Strong alignment:** Expand resourcing and outcome reporting with Aboriginal partners.
- **Moderate alignment:** Increase long-term contracting with ACCOs and develop outcome measures collaboratively.
- **Emerging/limited alignment:** Identify opportunities to fund or partner with local ACCOs for service delivery.

Priority Reform 3

Transforming Government Organisations

Indicators	Highly Aligned (4)	Aligned (3)	Partially Aligned (2)	Not Aligned (1)	SCORE
3.1 Council actively eliminates racism and discrimination in its systems and services	Council has formal anti-racism policies, complaint mechanisms, and cultural safety standards co-designed with Aboriginal partners; leadership regularly monitors and reports progress.	Council has policies and procedures to address racism and discrimination, with input from Aboriginal people.	Council has general diversity and inclusion statements but limited specific measures addressing racism.	Council does not address racism or discrimination in its systems or services	
3.2 Council embeds cultural safety and responsiveness across its workforce and services	Cultural safety is embedded through mandatory training, co-designed frameworks, and regular cultural audits with Aboriginal partners.	Council provides cultural awareness training and incorporates cultural considerations in service design.	Council offers occasional training but lacks consistent embedding of cultural safety.	Council does not provide cultural safety training or embed responsiveness in services.	
3.3 Council recruits, supports, and advances Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff	Council has strategies and measurable targets for Aboriginal employment at all levels, including leadership pathways, with strong support mechanisms.	Council has some strategies for Aboriginal employment but limited focus on leadership or advancement.	Council employs Aboriginal staff without structured support or advancement pathways.	Council has no strategies or active recruitment for Aboriginal staff.	
3.4 Council reforms funding and contracting to prioritise Aboriginal organisations	Council has long-term, flexible funding and procurement policies that prioritise ACCOs, with transparent reporting.	Council includes Aboriginal organisations in funding and procurement processes, though not consistently prioritised.	Council engages Aboriginal organisations on an ad-hoc basis with limited contracting.	Council does not fund or contract with Aboriginal organisations.	
3.5 Council tailors engagement frameworks to Aboriginal communities	Council has formal, co-designed engagement frameworks tailored to local Aboriginal communities, regularly reviewed and applied across all council activities.	Council has engagement frameworks that include specific strategies for Aboriginal communities, though not consistently co-designed or applied.	Council engages Aboriginal communities on a case-by-case basis without formal frameworks.	Council does not tailor its engagement frameworks to Aboriginal communities.	
3.6 Council provides impactful cultural awareness and capability training for staff and councillors	Council delivers mandatory, ongoing and local-based cultural awareness and capability training co-designed with Aboriginal partners, embedded in workforce development and evaluated for impact.	Council provides regular cultural awareness training for staff and councillors, with some Aboriginal input.	Council provides ad-hoc or optional training with limited Aboriginal involvement.	Council does not provide cultural awareness or capability training.	
3.7 Council ensures accountability and transparency in its transformation efforts	Council co-designs accountability processes with Aboriginal partners, publishes regular reports, and tracks progress against transformation commitments.	Council documents and monitors some transformation activities, with limited public reporting.	Council has some informal accountability practices but no structured reporting.	Council does not have accountability or transparency processes for PR3 transformation.	

Priority Reform 3

Transforming Government Organisations

Total Score for PR3:

Scoring Guide:

24 – 28 points: Strong alignment with Priority Reform Area.

19 – 23 points: Moderate alignment – some improvement needed.

15 – 18 points: Emerging alignment – targeted action required

Below 14 points: Limited alignment – significant reform needed.

Example actions according to alignment area:

- **Strong alignment:** Maintain transparency through published reports and regular review of key frameworks and actions.
- **Moderate alignment:** Update recruitment strategies, introduce specific policies/strategies that address racism with input from Aboriginal people.
- **Emerging/limited alignment:** Identify key stakeholders and develop a consistent approach to engagement, develop on-going cultural safety training for staff.

Priority Reform 4

Shared Access to Data and Information

Indicators	Highly Aligned (4)	Aligned (3)	Partially Aligned (2)	Not Aligned (1)	SCORE
4.1 Council shares relevant data with Aboriginal communities in accessible and disaggregated formats	Council provides timely, disaggregated local and regional data in plain language and accessible formats, co-designed with Aboriginal partners.	Council provides some relevant data to Aboriginal communities, though not consistently in disaggregated or co-designed formats.	Council shares limited or ad-hoc data with Aboriginal communities, with minimal accessibility and co-design considerations.	Council does not share data with Aboriginal communities.	
4.2 Council recognises and respects Aboriginal Data Sovereignty	Council has formal policies recognising Aboriginal Data Sovereignty, ensures Aboriginal partners have authority over data throughout its entire lifecycle.	Council acknowledges Aboriginal Data Sovereignty, and involves Aboriginal partners in some aspects of data use and data practices.	Council informally consults Aboriginal partners on data but without clear governance arrangements or mechanisms to recognise Aboriginal Data Sovereignty.	Council does not recognise Aboriginal Data Sovereignty.	
4.3 Council contributes to regional and place-based data access	Council actively contributes local datasets to regional planning processes and ensures Aboriginal communities can access and use this information.	Council contributes some datasets to regional processes but information is not consistently accessible to Aboriginal communities.	Council occasionally shares data regionally, without ensuring Aboriginal community access.	Council does not provide data for regional or place-based planning.	
4.4 Council builds community capacity to use and apply data	Council co-designs initiatives with Aboriginal partners to build data literacy and analysis capacity, including training and resource support.	Council supports Aboriginal partners to strengthen data use through some training or resources.	Council provides minimal or ad-hoc support for Aboriginal partners to use data.	Council does not provide capacity-building support for Aboriginal partners in data use.	
4.5 Council ensures accountability and transparency in reporting data	Council co-designs reporting processes with Aboriginal partners, regularly publishes disaggregated results, and tracks CtG progress transparently.	Council publishes some reports or results relevant to Aboriginal communities, with limited co-design.	Council collects internal data but does not share results or progress publicly with Aboriginal partners.	Council does not report on data or CtG outcomes relevant to Aboriginal communities.	

Priority Reform 4

Shared Access to Data and Information

Total Score for PR4:

Scoring Guide:

- **18 – 20 points:** Strong alignment with Priority Reform Area.
- **14 – 17 points:** Moderate alignment – some improvement needed.
- **10 – 13 points:** Emerging alignment – targeted action required.
- **Below 10 points:** Limited alignment – significant reform needed.

Example actions according to alignment area:

- **Strong alignment:** Continue supporting local data use and reporting progress transparently.
- **Moderate alignment:** Improve accessibility and disaggregation of shared data.
- **Emerging/limited alignment:** Support leadership and operational staff's awareness of Aboriginal Data Sovereignty, start conversations with Aboriginal services on how council can support data-sharing.

Priority Reform 5

Employment Business Growth and Economic Prosperity

Indicators	Highly Aligned (4)	Aligned (3)	Partially Aligned (2)	Not Aligned (1)	SCORE
5.1 Council promotes Aboriginal employment within its workforce	Council has measurable Aboriginal employment targets across all levels, with strong pathways, mentoring, and leadership programs.	Council has strategies for Aboriginal employment and provides some pathways or mentoring support.	Council employs Aboriginal staff but has no structured employment strategy or advancement pathways.	Council does not have any Aboriginal employment focus or initiatives.	
5.2 Council supports Aboriginal business procurement and supplier diversity	Council has policies and targets to prioritise Aboriginal businesses in procurement, with transparent reporting and monitoring.	Council engages Aboriginal businesses in procurement processes, though not consistently or without clear targets.	Council occasionally engages Aboriginal businesses but without a systematic approach.	Council does not consider Aboriginal businesses in procurement or supplier diversity.	
5.3 Council facilitates partnerships that promote Aboriginal economic development	Council actively co-designs partnerships with ACCOs, Aboriginal businesses, and community groups to create sustainable local economic opportunities.	Council engages in some partnerships to support Aboriginal economic initiatives, though not consistently co-designed.	Council supports limited or ad-hoc partnerships for Aboriginal economic development.	Council does not engage in partnerships to support Aboriginal economic development.	
5.4 Council provides training, mentoring and business capacity-building initiatives for Aboriginal people	Council co-designs and delivers tailored training, mentoring, and enterprise development programs with Aboriginal communities.	Council supports some training or mentoring programs for Aboriginal communities, but not consistently co-designed.	Council provides minimal or general training opportunities without tailoring to Aboriginal needs.	Council does not provide or support training, mentoring, or capacity-building for Aboriginal people.	
5.5 Council ensures accountability and transparency in Aboriginal economic prosperity outcomes	Council co-designs accountability processes with Aboriginal partners and publicly reports progress against Aboriginal employment and business targets.	Council monitors and reports internally on Aboriginal economic initiatives, with limited public reporting or co-design.	Council collects some data on Aboriginal economic initiatives but does not report outcomes transparently.	Council does not measure or report Aboriginal economic prosperity initiatives.	
5.6 Council supports and retains Aboriginal employees, recognising cultural load	Council has strong retention strategies co-designed with Aboriginal staff, including recognition of cultural load, flexible work arrangements, mentoring, and wellbeing supports.	Council provides some retention supports such as mentoring or flexible arrangements, with some recognition of cultural load.	Council offers minimal or ad-hoc retention supports for Aboriginal staff, and has limited understanding of cultural load.	Council does not provide specific support for retaining Aboriginal employees, and does not recognise cultural load.	

Priority Reform 5

Employment Business Growth and Economic Prosperity

Total Score for PR5:

Scoring Guide:

- **21 – 24 points:** Strong alignment with Priority Reform Area.
- **17 – 20 points:** Moderate alignment – some improvement needed.
- **13 – 16 points:** Emerging alignment – targeted action required.
- **Below 12 points:** Limited alignment – significant reform needed.

Example actions according to alignment area:

- **Strong alignment:** Build on achievements by strengthening local procurement policies and retention frameworks.
- **Moderate alignment:** Develop measurable employment targets and co-designed business capacity-building programs.
- **Emerging/limited alignment:** Review procurement procedures and identify local Aboriginal businesses for engagement.

