VOICES OF OUR SUCCESS

SHARING THE STORIES AND ANALYSIS FROM THE 2014 INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE AWARDS

AUSTRALIAN Indigenous Governance INSTITUTE

Acknowledgements

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Foreword

The Indigenous Governance Awards (Awards) are an event that yields so many positive lessons. They illuminate the untold achievements of Indigenous organisations and bring manifold stories of success into the public eye. The 2014 Awards make it clear that when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are empowered to take the lead, anything is possible.

For me, being a judge of these Awards is an absolute honour. It is both humbling and inspiring to be the Chair of the judging panel, a role that I am proud to have held for almost ten years. I wish all Australians could see and hear what I have heard on site visits over the years to the finalist organisations. I truly believe that if they did, many would hold a completely different view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because the dialogue is starkly different from the public discourse we have for too long had to endure. This dialogue focuses on success and achievement; it speaks of innovation and resilience; and is founded on trust and respect.

In 2014 we received stellar applications from 113 Indigenous led incorporated organisations and non-incorporated organisations and projects. These applicants have shown an outstanding commitment to strong, effective Indigenous governance. The organisations have demonstrated how progress can be made, and have changed the dialogue with their determination, vision and courage. Together they symbolise viable solutions to the numerous social and economic issues affecting Indigenous Australia, from which we have much to learn.

The 'Sharing the Stories of Success' publications have become an integral part of the Awards, showcasing experiences, practices and insights gleaned from Awards applicants. In 2014 we have added an additional component of analysis with the intent to: highlight the governance strategies most frequently used by applicants, exemplify innovative solutions, and compare responses to the 2012 Awards applicant cohort to ascertain if strategies differ in relevance over time or between stages of organisational development (incorporation).

As the analysis demonstrates, the 2014 Awards applicants do very well in what all good organisations do – provide reports, hold meetings, manage finances, develop their communities and write long-term strategic plans. But there is something specifically unique to each of the applicants that make them so successful: they are driven by the interests of the people that they are serving.

Based on principles of self-determination, cultural legitimacy, innovation, practical effectiveness and sustainability, the 2014 applicants have provided realistic examples of the types of accomplishments achieved when best-practice governance strategies are implemented. These organisations have used strong governance to deliver power and decision-making to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, enabling them to manage and organise, to be in charge of their social and economic development and to maintain their cultural values. From their influential examples and this powerful dialogue, we have a lot to learn and can be inspired to discover and generate our own positive change.

These Indigenous led organisations have succeeded in creating positive change in their local communities where too often outsiders have failed. Their use of effective governance strategies has effected real, positive outcomes in the communities in which they are operating.

It takes strong leaders and strong organisations to do this. They have changed the discourse to one of success and are an inspiration to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Nations, our organisations, and many other Australians. I commend them.

Professor Mick Dodson AM
Chair, Indigenous Governance Awards

Publishers

The Australian Indigenous Governance Institute (AIGI) is a unique Indigenous led national centre of governance knowledge and excellence. We envision a future Australia where Indigenous nations can pursue and exercise their right to self-determination and economic development through strong self–governance. We know that practically effective and culturally legitimate governance is the staple building block for delivering real change.

AIGI seeks to realise this change by assisting Indigenous nations in their efforts to determine and strengthen their own sustainable systems of self-governance. We are passionate about working alongside Indigenous nations to develop their communities, restore economic prosperity, improve the daily lives of their families, inspire youth leadership, and bring a renewed sense of cultural integrity and wellbeing to their peoples. We call this nation building.

AIGI fulfils this vision by connecting Indigenous Australians to world-class governance practice, informing effective policy, providing accessible research, disseminating stories that celebrate outstanding success and solutions, and delivering professional training and development programs.

Reconciliation Australia is the national organisation promoting reconciliation between the broader Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our vision is to build an Australia that is reconciled, just, and equitable for all. To do so, we are dedicated to building relationships, respect and trust between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians. We believe a reconciled Australia is one where:

- There are strong two-way relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and rights are a proud part of our everyday life;
- Our national wellbeing is enhanced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strength and prosperity;
- The collective rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are recognised and respected.

We believe that stronger relationships, built on shared knowledge and respect, are central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples controlling their life choices and fully participating in the economic and social opportunities enjoyed by the wider community. We aspire to enable all Australians to contribute to reconciliation and to breakdown stereotypes and discrimination.

Major Supporters

Annamila

The Annamila Foundation is proud to support the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute (AIGI) and fund its core operations. The partnership with AIGI helps Annamila realise its vision for a more just and creative Australia. At its heart, the Annamila relationship with AIGI is about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples taking greater control of their own lives – an aspiration that Annamila shares passionately.

bhpbilliton

As a leading global resources company, Indigenous peoples are critical partners and stakeholders for BHP Billiton, both within Australia and around the world. Many of BHP Billiton's operations are located on or near Indigenous lands. The long-term nature of these operations allows strong and long lasting relationships to be built with the Indigenous communities in which the company operates and those neighbouring operations.

Through these relationships, based on respect trust and mutual benefit, BHP Billiton aims to contribute to the economic empowerment, social development needs and cultural wellbeing of Indigenous peoples.

Effective governance is at the heart of successful economic and community development, instilling confidence in organisations and their leadership, which in turn enhances the ability of organisations to achieve their objectives. Effective governance is crucial if lasting change is to be achieved through self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

BHP Billiton is proud to have partnered with Reconciliation Australia more than a decade ago to establish the Indigenous Governance Awards to highlight the extraordinary achievements of a diverse range of Indigenous organisations across Australia. The success that the leaders and members of these organisations have achieved is outstanding and the stories shared through these Awards are inspirational.

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Terminology

APPLICANTS

The incorporated and non-incorporated Indigenous organisations that applied to the Indigenous Governance Awards in 2012 and 2014.

CULTURE

A whole system of knowledge, beliefs, ideas, values, powers, laws, rules and meanings that are shared by the members of a society, and together form the foundation for the way they live[1].

GOVERNANCE

How people choose to collectively organise themselves to manage their own affairs, share power and responsibilities, decide for themselves what kind of society they want for their future, and implement those decisions[2].

INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

Refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

The role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and philosophical systems, cultural values, traditions, rules and beliefs play in governance processes, structures and institutions[3].

INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE AWARDS (AWARDS)

A biennial event created by Reconciliation Australia and BHP Billiton to identify, celebrate and promote effective Indigenous governance.

INDIGENOUS ORGANISATION

An organisation that is majority Indigenous-led and controlled (that is, at least 51% of the governing body are Indigenous)[4].

ORGANISATION

Refers to a group of people working together to achieve a common goal. This includes groups that are formally incorporated (e.g. registered under the CATSI Act or Corporations Act) as well as non-incorporated groups, projects, programs and initiatives.

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1 Indigenous Governance Toolkit Section 2.0.1

2 Indigenous Governance Toolkit Section 1

3 Indigenous Governance Toolkit Section 1.2

4 Reconciliation Australia, 2014.

Indigenous Governance Awards

The Indigenous Governance Awards (Awards) were created in 2005 by Reconciliation Australia in partnership with BHP Billiton. The Awards identify, celebrate and promote effective governance in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and projects nationwide.

Effective Indigenous governance is about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples making and implementing decisions about their lives, communities and futures. The Awards showcase success in incorporated Indigenous organisations (Category A) and non-incorporated Indigenous projects (Category B), and recognise Indigenous governance models; innovation; effectiveness; self-determination and leadership; cultural relevance and legitimacy; and governance resilience.

An independent panel of governance experts is convened to judge the Awards. The winners and those highly commended for each category are awarded a share in $60,000, a 12 month mentoring partnership with a high profile corporate partner, communications and promotion package, and participation in the Awards presentation and workshops. All organisations that apply receive feedback on their applications and governance from the judging panel, which is a great opportunity to receive expert advice and reflect on organisational governance arrangements.

Further information is available at www.reconciliation.org.au/iga/.

Indigenous Governance Toolkit

The Indigenous Governance Toolkit (the Toolkit) is a free multi-media online resource developed for Indigenous nations, communities, individuals and organisations searching for information to assist their work in building governance. It covers all the basics: rules, values, culture, membership, leadership, decision-making, conflict resolution and organisational structure. It features tools to help get started, useful guidance on ways to meet changing conditions, and suggestions for refreshing good practice.

The Toolkit places culture at the heart of understanding and building of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander modes of governance. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have many cultural values and behaviours in common, but their governance solutions will be tailored to meet different needs and governance challenges, diverse histories and changing future goals.

The Toolkit facilitates a developmental approach to governance capacity building. There are combinations of information sheets, diagrams, templates, videos, charts and worksheets to make key concepts accessible and to encourage participation. In addition, case studies and video interviews with Indigenous Governance Awards finalists are included to show real-life examples of ideas that work. There is an online glossary of key terms to break down the jargon and also links to specialist websites for those seeking further information on related topics.

The Toolkit is accessible at toolkit.aigi.com.au.

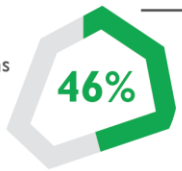
1 Executive Overview

1.1 AT A GLANCE

Adaptive, responsive and sustainable governance with the majority of organisations in operation for well over a decade

71% of incorporated applicants established before the year 2000.

Organisations are 'for purpose'; prioritising design of governance and operations to suit those they serve



Only 46% of incorporated applicants are registered under the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC). About half describe themselves as not-for-profit.

Organisations are exploring innovative ways to fund culturally appropriate and effective programs

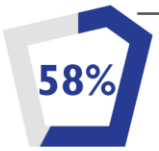
80% of incorporated applicants' financial plans focus on diversification to reduce reliance on grant funding.

71% of incorporated applicants utilise a mixed funding model that combines: corporate philanthropy, NGO partnerships, self-generated income and government grants.

Despite widespread funding uncertainty, organisations are rapidly expanding to meet community demand

24% of incorporated applicants are in a period of organisational growth and governance improvement.

Organisations are diverse and are supporting their future leaders



58% of non-incorporated applicants run youth engagement programs and initiatives as part of their operations.

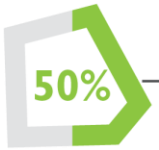
Half of the directors of the top 500 ORIC corporations are women.

Culture plays a central role in effective operations

76% of incorporated and...

...68% of non-incorporated applicants use culture-smart solutions throughout their governance arrangements and organisational practices.

Indigenous leadership underlies self-determination



Half of the incorporated applicants identify as being 100% Indigenous led.

1.2 WHAT COUNTS: INNOVATIONS AND EMERGING TRENDS

The applicants of the 2014 Indigenous Governance Awards (Awards) confirm what we already know: that strong governance is a change enabler. What additionally stands out about the applicants is that they are inherently 'for purpose'. These organisations strongly prioritise mutual accountability and innovatively craft governance arrangements to ensure that projects, services and programs serve the interests of those they impact.

To ensure that the appropriate interests are served, Indigenous organisations embed multiple opportunities for client, stakeholder and community input in organisational structure, systems and operations makeup. These processes result in the placement of community and culture at the crux of organisational governance and operations, which proves crucial in establishing the legitimacy and 'social licence' of an organisation. Importantly, it equips organisations with the capacity to serve and empower their own communities to address local social, cultural and economic needs.

> "Culture underpins everything we do, and it is at the root of all our planning and decision-making; the way we recruit, select and induct our staff; the content and language of our training materials; the way we approach training and service delivery for our students; and the behaviour of our staff and Management Committee."
>
> **Marr Mooditj Training Inc.**

The critical setting of cultural practices and values in Indigenous organisational design is a fundamental discussion point. The Awards reinforce the fact that Indigenous peoples and their organisations deem 'culture-smart' ways of working and interacting as essential to all aspects of their governance. Applicants consistently demonstrate the influence of culture in shaping their organisation's strategy, operations and functionality.

In fact, culture is an underpinning imperative for self-determination, sustainability and efficacy within Indigenous organisations.

The culture-smart approach places organisations in the best position to create solutions that reflect the aspirations of Indigenous peoples.

> We recognise that the journey to recovery and self-determination will only be successful if we incorporate a great, and real appreciation for our cultural traditions and beliefs. We create and structure our working environment and programs around Indigenous knowledge and worldviews."
>
> **Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre**

These insights into Indigenous governance are significant to current discussions around mainstream corporate culture. According to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission's (ASIC) 2014-15 strategic outlook report, poor corporate culture is a key risk driver of conduct that threatens the integrity of organisations and industries[5]. Culture is defined in this context as the shared set of values and assumptions that reflect the underlying mindset of an organisation. Understood in these terms, ASIC contends that poor organisational culture lends to poor decision-making, often at the expense of consumers and investors, which erodes trust, integrity and an organisation's social legitimacy. As corporate culture becomes subject to increased watchdog scrutiny, the lessons that the mainstream corporate sector can learn from the fundamental nature of cultural and social legitimacy in guiding Indigenous organisational conduct are evident.

By pursuing the methods described, Indigenous organisations are able to function in a culturally informed and productive manner. This is the often-untold story of Indigenous success in serving community needs: of Indigenous led solutions sustained by strong governance. By supporting this, we can help unlock change and prosperity in Indigenous communities.

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[5] Australian Securities and Investments Commission, 2014.

1.2.1 CULTURE-SMART SOLUTIONS

Culture-smart solutions are governance arrangements that are determined locally, capture members' priorities and resonate with their cultural values and relationships, and enable outcomes to be achieved. These arrangements are developed in a deliberate, considered and performance oriented manner emphasising practical applications that are workable and credible at the local level. This approach to governance innovation builds on existing Indigenous capabilities and expertise, and reinforces collective identities and rights.

In both 2012 and 2014, applicants identified culture as being at the heart of their operations and core values: that is, how the organisation conducts business externally, its structure and internal culture. This is a critical component of their mandate from members to govern, not the statutory rule book or constitution. Decision-making is an area where Indigenous cultural values and social processes appear to play a crucial role. This includes making sufficient time for issues to be considered and reconsidered by the governing body, community members and Elders, in order to mobilise a consensus, support informed decision-making and collective buy-ins for follow-up action. Importantly, applicants are backing up these preferred cultural processes with hard-headed mechanisms that enable them to delegate accountability, stay on top of monitoring the implementation of decisions, and to provide the governing body with regular 'action updates'.

56% of incorporated applicants identify reserved positions on the governing body as an important method of creating equal representation for particular Indigenous groups/interests within the operational region.

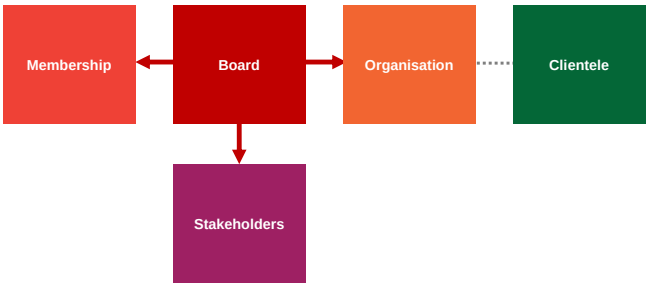
1.2.2 INNOVATIVE MODELS

Applicants are devising innovative governing structures and representatives' selection processes in response to local conditions and circumstances addressing the social, cultural and geographic requirements of their communities. Equitable representation is a central priority. Dedicating reserved positions for particular Indigenous groups/interests is an important method for creating fair representation of the different groups within the operational region. These frequently reflect traditional family and social structures, knowledge and rights holders, and geographical distribution.

A variety of culture-smart devices remixing traditional relations, reserved positions, nomination and voting are applied. Often this features widespread consultation prior to formal endorsement of the solutions. This ensures structures and selection processes that are fair, not in the standard democratic understanding, but in the resultant sharing of authority across all relevant parties.

The mutual levels of accountability within Indigenous organisations are a stand out feature. In the applicants' governance models we effectively see the governing body involved in a 3-way accountability system: to their membership, the organisation (its staff and clientele) and wider stakeholders. This is in contrast to standard corporate law principles where the board's primary duty is to shareholder interests. Applicants frequently note their directors' high level of commitment, participation and connection as key reasons for organisational and project success. In turn, individuals' familiarity and respect for their leaders ensures trust in the capacity of the governing body and generates high levels of engagement with the organisation.

Indigenous three-way accountability



Applicants are incorporating under a variety of organisational types fit for their purpose: corporations, associations, trusts and co-operatives. As existing legal structures may not entirely suit their needs, many are innovatively navigating governance arrangements within current options. Interestingly, less than half (46%) of applicants are registered under the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC). This analysis features a relatively small sample size, however it suggests that half of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in operation are registered outside of ORIC and, therefore, there potentially exists double the number of organisations identified by ORIC. Further analysis is required to more fully understand the number and characteristics of Indigenous organisations.

Building governance capacity is a strategic organisational priority.

76% of incorporated applicants are investing in governance and professional skills development activities for their governing body.

1.2.3 SKILL-BASED GOVERNANCE

In order to select a suitable governing body, applicants consider a variety of factors. These include: the extent to which age, gender, background, work history and cultural groups are represented, alongside a mix of professional skills and experience, so that the responsibilities of the governing body are met. Some applicants identify external stakeholder appointments as an effective way to balance community representation and business expertise. These organisations hold a number of positions for independent or non-member directors with specialist skills and knowledge in operational fields. Simultaneously, applicants express the intention and/or presence of policy to ensure maintenance of a majority Indigenous board.

Applicants carefully consider their leadership's suitability for governance by identifying a number of qualities, skills and characteristics necessary for effective leadership. Local community and cultural understanding are important for governing. So too are acquiring new skills and areas of expertise for board roles and responsibilities; for example, financial literacy, running meetings, chairing, negotiation and mediation skills, policy-making experience, public speaking and strategic planning. Importantly, a number of the applicants invest in governance development to encourage community membership on boards by supporting people with local knowledge and leadership qualities to develop complementary directorial skills.

1.2.4 ADAPTIVE GOVERNANCE

It is clear that the ability to engage in adaptive (flexible and able to change) governance is a critical factor in organisational resilience over the long-term. This is particularly true in the face of challenges. Funding uncertainty; the lack of funds and/or an erratic and unstable funding environment, are common challenges for applicants. This impacts upon many of the determinants of effective Indigenous governance including the ability to plan, build organisational capacity, offer culturally informed services, provide training and retain stable staff and leadership. In response to this environment of uncertainty, an increasing number of applicants are pursuing methods of income diversification. This includes: developing a mixed funding model, identifying additional revenue streams, refining fundraising strategies, and exploring new forms of investment including enterprise development opportunities. Applicants also prioritise creation of new external partnerships to better align service delivery, share resources, foster innovation and increase impact.

In the context of changing conditions or the expansion of functions, applicants describe the need to reassess the 'fit' of their governing model. For several applicants, the management of rapid growth to meet community demand presents a key challenge: namely that existing structures cannot support the new size and complexity of offerings. To address this, applicants are re-developing the overall organisational structure to fit new circumstances and/or establishing cross sector collaboration with fellow Indigenous organisations. Many describe the creation of specialist roles to support administrative and governance management, providing training programs, while developing new policies and charters to support staff, services and programs as they evolve. The lesson here is that governance solutions are not final; they need to be reviewed, and at times reshaped, as changes arise.

1.2.5 RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE

In line with the ethos of mutual accountability, applicants are characterised by being committed to a culture of continuous improvement. They are highly responsive to feedback and prioritise the need to create opportunities to engage with their members, clients, stakeholders and the wider community. These opportunities occur in a number of ways. Applicants host local gatherings such as community open days or NAIDOC events to foster positive relationships. Stakeholders are kept up to date via AGMs, open meetings and annual reports. Joint strategic planning days with members, staff and partners open up the decision-making process for direct input.

Thorough, fair and clear complaints procedures capture areas in need of change. For many applicants, informal interactions through the staff and directors' local community and family connections, daily work in the community, or membership on various other committees are equally important for gathering information on issues and preferences.

eGovernance enhances capacity to communicate with members, clients and stakeholders and facilitates internal relations.

73% of incorporated and 63% of non-incorporated applicants utilise electronic mediums.

1.2.6 eGOVERNANCE

All the applicants are putting considerable creative thought into how new media and technology can support their governance and operations. These include website content (blog, events calendar, annual and financial reports, policies, photos, interviews, videos), email, electronic newsletters, media releases and social media such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

For many applicants, the electronic age helps to enhance their governance strategies. The low cost, convenience and adaptability of electronic communication tools are particularly crucial to the functioning of non-incorporated groups. These media platforms facilitate effective communication with residentially dispersed members, staff operating across varied service areas and with board members in different communities. More and more organisations also present their cultural vision and governance charters up on their websites, as a way of telling the culture story for their governance.

1.2.7 DATA GOVERNANCE

Applicants frequently describe data as critically important in their approach to developing and re-designing programs and services in line with community needs and priorities. Organisations are proactive in seeking feedback from clients and stakeholders via surveys, service provider evaluations and more informal means such as community meetings or social media.

As part of strategic planning, applicants collect information on many facets such as program attendance, participation and outcomes to evaluate impacts and identify areas in need of change. Furthermore, data are presented as evidence to funding bodies in support for program demands and design. Noticeably, less than a quarter of applicants use the financial and performance reports that they prepare for external funding bodies as a tool for their own performance evaluation. This indicates an opportunity for funders to work together with organisations to redesign reporting processes that better align with community, donor and grantee purposes.

Client and stakeholder feedback facilitates organisational effectiveness.

68% of incorporated organisations utilise client and stakeholder feedback to measure their impact.

1.2.8 INVESTMENT IN THEIR PEOPLE

Critically, applicants are highly invested in the governance and professional development of their leaders. Not only do they attend one-off workshops run by external providers, they also take steps to establish internal training and professional development. By offering ongoing training and development activities throughout the year, the governing body members receive sustained mentoring and support. This also allows governance training to be customised around local ways of exercising authority, decision-making and accountability, as well as meeting the specific skills/knowledge needs of current members.

Local investment is a growing priority.

95% of incorporated applicants provide training and development activities for staff members while 29% describe a focused intention to employ, train and develop opportunities for local Indigenous people.

Applicants are also committed to local investment: a targeted investment in the capacity of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community or nation members. Many report the intention to employ, train and develop opportunities for local Indigenous people.

These initiatives include Indigenous employment strategies, transition to work programs, ongoing training and professional development activities and career pathways support. Applicants utilise professional development strategies to identify the specific training and development needs of their staff. They develop tailored plans that consider skill gaps within the organisation as well as the individual's wishes, skill needs, future career direction and potential areas for growth of the individual.

1.2.9 SETTING THE AGENDA

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in leadership and decision-making positions is a central component of self-determination. Many applicants stress that the organisation and its services should be representative of the whole communities they serve: encompassing the philosophy of 'community control'.

They note that community engagement is beneficial in building strong relationships with members, clientele, stakeholders and the wider community, and in turn, their capacity to deliver projects and programs in line with community priorities. Engagement occurs through representation in the organisational structure and selection processes, and through hosting cultural events, programs and community gatherings.

Applicants prioritise independence and ability to set their own agenda, program design and solutions as important conditions of effective governance. Often this is described in contrast to government-supported programs, which are frequently directed by a fluctuating policy agenda.

Overwhelmingly, applicants describe their underlying purpose as provision of holistic, responsive and (most importantly) culturally informed initiatives. They understand their organisation as 'giving a voice' to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities and ways of working. Many describe deliberate strategies of funding diversification to create independence around selection of offerings and delivery mode. Through diversification of income streams, organisations hope to maintain their focus and standards of service without external factors requiring any compromise.

A strong relationship with community and stakeholders is a central component of self-determination.

GIRRINGUN
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

2 Introduction

2.1 INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

Governance refers to the way people choose to collectively organise themselves to manage their own affairs, share power and responsibilities, decide for themselves what kind of society they want for their future, and implement those decisions[6]. It is as much about "people, power and relationships" as it is about legislative requirements or corporate standards[7]. Indigenous governance refers to the role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and philosophical systems, cultural values, traditions, rules and beliefs play in governance processes, structures and institutions.

Indigenous governance is innately interlinked with the concept of self-determination. Self-determination means Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities having meaningful control over their own lives and cultural wellbeing. This includes genuine decision-making power and responsibility about what happens on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' lands, in their affairs, in their governing systems and in their development strategies[8].

In this sense, we can understand Indigenous organisations and initiatives as vehicles of self-determination: they form the structures through which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples manage and exert authority over their own affairs and develop culture-smart solutions to social, economic and political issues.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are best placed to provide effective and culturally informed methods to address local priorities.

> "We ARE our organisation. We know our community. We understand our culture and what is needed for our future. Our vision comes from the people. That's why we are a good corporation. And we fit that vision into the business world in a professional manner."
>
> **Ben Ward, Director, Waringarri Aboriginal Arts**

Mounting evidence demonstrates that self-determined, culture-smart and responsive governance arrangements underpin Indigenous organisations' capacity to successfully achieve their strategic goals and create a positive social impact[9]. Investment in effective governance arrangements, therefore, can be understood as a strategic development priority[10].

At its core, governance building is about setting up structures and processes that are agreed upon, understood, meaningful and also practical. Effective and legitimate governance solutions need to be tailored to suit the local environment. The practices and structures that work will depend on the context, taking into account an organisation's goals, local culture, history, environment and available resources.

Furthermore, governance is not static. To remain effective, governance arrangements need to evolve in line with changes in the organisation's strategic direction, membership and wider environment. This requires a proactive

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6 Indigenous Governance Toolkit Section 1

7 Hunt & Smith, 2006, page 5.

8 Indigenous Governance Toolkit Section 9.1

9 For example, the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Human Rights Commissioner Mick Gooda's Social Justice Report 2012 *Chapter 2: Achieving effective, legitimate and culturally relevant Indigenous governance* and the Social Justice and Native Title Report 2014 *Chapter 5: Nations – Self-determination and a new era of Indigenous governance*; the Productivity Commission's Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage reports 2003 – 2016; and the Indigenous Community Governance Research Project 2004-2008 conducted by Reconciliation Australia and the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Development at The Australian National University.

10 Dodson & Smith, 2003.

commitment to assessing one's arrangements and adapting where required. It is more than a one-off training course – strong governance is an ongoing developmental journey.

When building (or strengthening) governance arrangements it can be helpful to explore others' approaches to guide or inspire one's own solutions. Attendees of the Building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Governance Forum identified the benefits of sharing real world governance stories amongst organisations[11]. Participants wanted the opportunity to discuss their governance experiences and to learn from the successes and challenges that other Indigenous organisations faced.

The Awards provides a fantastic opportunity to share such knowledge. The top-ranked applicants from the 2014 Awards, whose experiences form the base content of this publication, are outstanding examples of what can be achieved with strong governance, and their innovation is sure to provide inspiration to other organisations.

2.2 VOICES OF OUR SUCCESS

This publication provides a platform to canvas Indigenous voices and stories of self-governance. The value of this is manifold. It assists Indigenous communities and organisations to find out what works; it aids government thinking in terms of policy development and practical program support; and it benefits funders and service providers working alongside organisations.

The remainder of this publication outlines the various ways that the 2014 Awards applicants build and sustain strong governance. Insight into applicants' approaches, techniques and strategies are drawn from their detailed responses to the questions on the Awards application form. These questions arose out of years of research that identified critical criteria that underpins strong governance: Indigenous Governance Models, Effectiveness, Innovation, Self-determination and Leadership, Culture, and Resilience[12].

The format of the publication corresponds to the different criteria and questions set out in the application form (with the exception of applicant responses to the Innovation criteria, which are distributed through the report in a segment titled 'Innovative Ideas'). There is also an element of comparative analysis: responses from the 2012 Awards cohort are included (where data are available) which allows us to monitor differences in governance practices over time.

The different criteria should not be considered in isolation: they are conceptually and practically interconnected and cohesively provide the building blocks that form the foundation of Indigenous self-governance. As such, when reading this report it is recommended that caution be exercised when drawing conclusions in isolation of other factors.

The applicants' responses to each question are presented in 3 ways:

1. A figure presenting common responses to the question. The figure will include common responses from 2012 applicants where data are available.
2. A discussion and analysis reflecting on the responses.
3. Quotes from some applicants' responses that highlight innovative ideas and strategies.

The intention of this report is not to compare the benefits of different approaches so as to recommend or endorse one over another, but to provide a broad snapshot of practices so as to inform, and potentially inspire, others engaged in Indigenous governance. We focus on the commonalities – central governance practices, and outline the applicants' various methods of approach and implementation to the practice. Despite the difference in applicants' sector, size, age, location, history and cultural context there are often broadly significant overlap in responses allowing us to categorise. We acknowledge that *effective* governance will be determined by local context and thus varied.

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[11] Bauman et al, 2015.

[12] The Indigenous Community Governance Project http://caepr.anu.edu.au/governance/index.php.

2.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.3.1 METHOD AND DESIGN

To provide a comprehensive snapshot of Indigenous governance practices in 2014 a mixed research methodology was employed. This utilised: quantitative, qualitative and comparative data.

Data type	Use
Mixed methodology	• A unique set of quantitative and qualitative documentation • Utilising quantitative data to draw conclusions and flesh them out more fully with qualitative information • A qualitative overview based on reviewing all applicants at the same time
Quantitative data	• Highlights the strategies most frequently used by, and factors important to, applicants in key areas of governance • Provides a comparison of responses between the 2014 incorporated and non-incorporated applicant cohorts to identify if governance strategies differ in relevance at different stages of organisational development (incorporation)
Qualitative data	• Drawn from the sample, as well as a workshop and interviews conducted with the 2014 Awards finalists • Examples selected to exemplify how the different strategies work in practice and to showcase innovative solutions • Highlights organisations' own perspectives, views and priorities about governance building and provides an Indigenous voice on these elements of governance
Comparative data	• Derived from an unpublished analysis of 2012 Awards applicants undertaken by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare[13] • An equivalent sample size and system of data categorisation was developed in order to offer valid comparisons of the 2012 and 2014 applicant cohorts

2.3.2 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations that applied to the 2014 Awards program formed the research population. Applications were open to incorporated organisations (Category A) and non-incorporated organisations and projects (Category B) that are majority (more than 51%) Indigenous governed and led.

113 application forms were received in total (combined Categories A and B). This population size represents 4% of the total number of Indigenous organisations registered with ORIC as of June 30 2014[14]. Applicants represented a diverse range of Indigenous organisations and initiatives working in multiple industry sectors located in urban, rural and remote settings across Australia (detailed demographic information is available on the sample population in the Profile of Respondents section of this publication).

An expert Review Panel assessed the application forms against set criteria and awarded each applicant a score. To identify a sample population, the applicants were ranked based on cumulative scores given by the expert Review Panel. The 60 top-ranked applicants (53% of the total population) were selected for inclusion in the

[13] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2013.

[14] ORIC's Top 500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations 2013-14 Report identifies a total of 2596 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations registered under the CATSI Act as at 30 June 2014. Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations, 2015, page 3.

sample: 41 from Category A and 19 from Category B. This sample size represents an equivalent percentage to the 2012 comparative data to allow for valid comparison.

Category	Description	Total Application	Sample Size
Category A	Open to Indigenous organisations (incorporated under legislation) operating at a community, regional or national level that are Indigenous controlled and have been in existence for at least 3 years.	84	n = 41
Category B	Open to Indigenous projects or initiatives operating at a community, regional or national level that are indigenous-led and that were not directly incorporated under legislation.	29	n =19
	Total	**113**	**60 (53%)**

2.3.3 DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected from application forms submitted to the 2014 Awards program. The application form featured 6 sections focused on different key governance criteria. Each section contained a series of 2-12 questions enquiring about the applicants' approaches and experiences in relation to the different criterion. Applicants could write open-ended responses (of unlimited length) and were provided opportunity to attach supporting documents. The completed application forms received ranged from 3-25 pages in length.

Some questions in the Category A and Category B forms differed. The forms may be viewed via the Awards website: http://www.reconciliation.org.au/iga/.

	2014 Indigenous Governance Awards application form overview	
	Governance criteria	**Description**
1	Indigenous Governance Model	How the organisation's governance model is designed and structured to reflect the needs of members, adapt to local circumstances and suit the organisational purpose
2	Innovation	How the organisation demonstrates innovation and ingenuity in its governance development and response to local conditions and circumstances
3	Effectiveness	How effectively the organisation's governance can solve problems, deal with disputes and achieve positive and measurable results in addressing a key concern, problem, or challenge facing its community/region
4	Cultural Legitimacy and Relevance	How the organisation operates to reflect and strengthen the community or region's culture
5	Self-determination and Leadership	How the organisation strengthens self-governance and self-determination, decision-making and leadership both internally and externally
6	Sustainability and Governance Resilience	How the organisation's governance can face challenges and adapt to changing circumstances

The responses from the 2014 application forms were coded into two Excel Workbooks. Responses from Category A applicants and Category B applicants were recorded separately.

Workbook 1 recorded quantitative data: for each question, an applicant's response was allocated to a category or multiple categories where relevant. The categories replicated the categorisation method utilised in the 2012 comparative data. Responses that were not applicable to these categories were recorded in an additional space, to be reviewed at the later analysis stage.

Workbook 2 recorded qualitative data: direct quotes from applicant responses. Responses to the Innovation section of the form were only recorded in Workbook 2 qualitative data, as responses were too varied and organisation specific to be categorised effectively.

2.3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative data in Workbook 1 was evaluated. Where possible, additional categories by common themes were created for non-categorised responses. The remaining non-categorised responses were classified in a category titled 'other'. The Workbook underwent a review to ensure that all entries were coded correctly and the number of responses in each category tallied. A figure was developed for each question presenting the range of responses (categories) and the frequency identified (by either number of, or percentage of, organisations). Different cohorts; 2014 incorporated organisations, 2014 non-incorporated organisations and 2012 incorporated organisations were included in each figure depending on the availability of corresponding data.

The qualitative data in Workbook 2 was reviewed. The content that provided supporting examples of the quantitative data and/or highlighted particularly innovative practice were selected. These are presented in the 'Innovative Ideas' sections throughout this publication.

2.3.5 INFORMED CONSENT

As part of the 2014 Awards application form, applicant organisations were asked if they were willing to participate in further reporting by AIGI.

'Last year we compiled information from the applications into a report called Sharing Success: Stories from the Indigenous Governance Awards. This year, the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute (AIGI) would like to gather the information from the application process, report on lessons learned and best practice, as well as incorporating it into the Indigenous Governance Toolkit. Is your organisation willing to participate in this reporting by the AIGI and the Indigenous Governance Toolkit?[15].

Applicants who declined to participate were not included in the data set.

2.3.6 CAVEATS

This publication is the first occasion that analysis across two cohorts of Awards applicants was undertaken. More extensive data collation and analysis was undertaken on the 2014 cohort, than the available 2012 comparative data. This resulted in an imbalance of statistical information, limiting the opportunity for comparison. As such, although we highlight some clear differences between the cohorts, these should be interpreted cautiously. This does however, provide a more robust benchmark for analysis of subsequent Awards. As our data set will continue to grow over the coming years, so too will our capacity to make inferences about the underpinnings of effective governance.

[15] Reconciliation Australia, 2014, page 5.

Key limitations for consideration in application of the findings are:

- Applicants provided open-ended responses of varying length. As such, a governance element, strategy or practice may be present in the organisation that the applicant did not choose to report (and thus is not represented in the Figures). Although not definitive, these responses are revealing as they represent the elements viewed as important to applicants.
- Applicants often identified multiple strategies or practices for each question (and thus a Figure total may exceed 100%).
- Although the report is divided into 5 Criteria, all practices and elements are conceptually and practically interrelated and the findings should be read as such. Whilst clear differences in the data are highlighted in the analysis, it is recommended that caution be exercised when drawing conclusions in isolation of other factor's.
- Some external factors determine governance practices and should be taken into account. For example compliance measures, such as election requirements in organisations registered under ORIC, are mandatory.

3 Criteria 1: Indigenous Governance Models

Legitimate leadership is important for achieving better social, economic and cultural outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. So how can organisations ensure legitimate and workable governance models? Legitimacy is the extent to which the ways you govern (such as how your governance arrangements are created, decisions are made, leaders are chosen and held accountable) are seen as credible by, and acceptable to, the people who are your members, constituents and stakeholders[16]. When governing structures represent the interests of a few, or of one class of residents over others, marginalised community members can quickly withdraw their legitimacy and local mandate[17].

"While trust is not a well discussed governance principle it is our experience that the belief of members and others in their Board to lead and take control when hard times come is very important to survival, sustainability, viability and corporate vitality."

Katungul Aboriginal Corporation

3.1 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

This section outlines demographic information about the 2014 and 2012 applicant cohorts including organisational size, age, location, sector of operations, type of incorporation and funding sources.

3.2 FORMING THE GOVERNING BODY

This section explores how organisations create effective governing body structures that are inclusive and representative. It covers the way directors are selected and the criteria, different skills and characteristics required.

"We are a very committed and motivated Board who all have an interest in 'not just doing things right, but doing the right thing'."

Kirrawe Indigenous Corporation

3.3 STRUCTURE OF THE GOVERNING BODY

This section identifies the common size of governing bodies (i.e. the number of directors), director term lengths and meeting frequency.

3.4 REPORTING

This section identifies the forms of reporting engaged in.

3.5 NON-INCORPORATED MODELS

This section focuses on the governance models of non-incorporated organisations.

Follow this link to view a video clip of The Marruk Project discussing their governance model: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50443I-U50k.

[16] Indigenous Governance Toolkit Glossary

[17] Dodson and Smith, 2003.

3.1 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

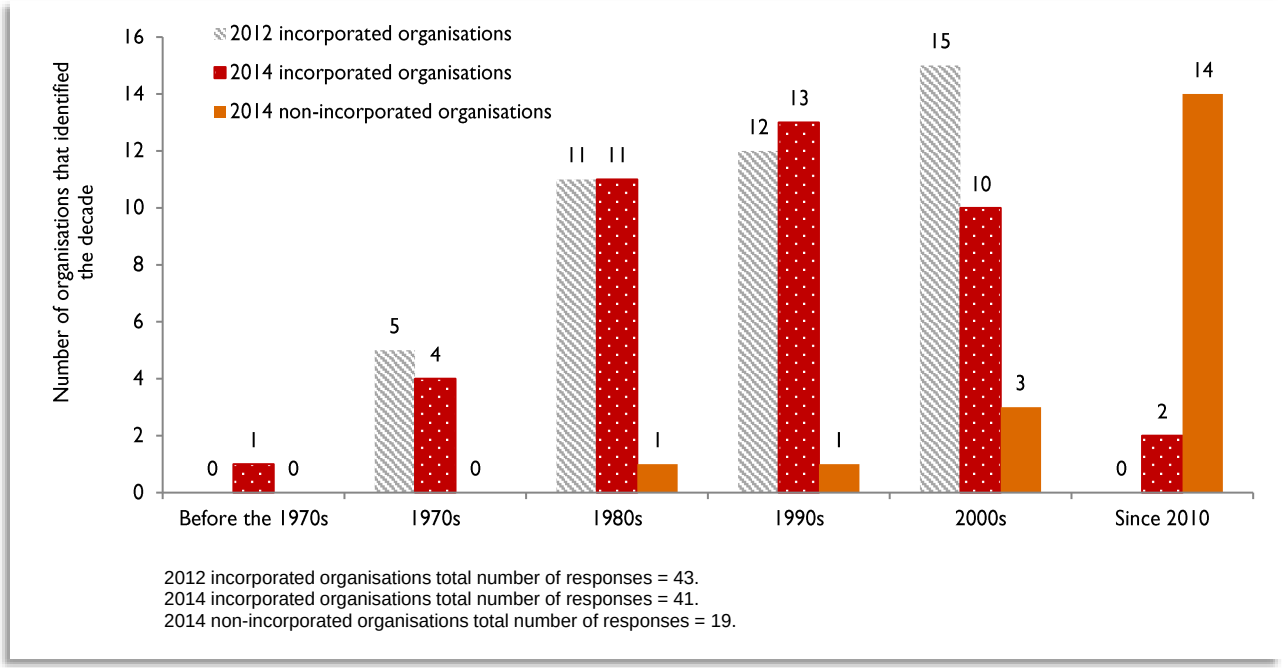
Governance arrangements are most effective when customised to match local circumstances and needs. This includes an organisation's demographic characteristics and operating environment. The organisation's location, size, length of operation, legislative requirements and financial circumstances will impact on which governance models and procedures are adopted.

3.1.1 DECADE OF ESTABLISHMENT

(a) Discussion and analysis

The majority of incorporated applicants were in operation for over a decade. Many were established in the 1970s and 1980s marking 30 years of operation. The majority of non-incorporated applicants were less than 5 years old. They described innovative and unique arrangements regarding governance design and evolution. The predominantly short time of operation alludes that groups formed around specific projects (and ceased upon conclusion) or suggests that groups frequently incorporated at around 5 years of operation. Auspice arrangements were frequently described by those established earlier (i.e. operating as a non-incorporated entity for over 5 years).

Figure 1: Decade of establishment



3.1.2 INDUSTRY SECTOR OF OPERATION

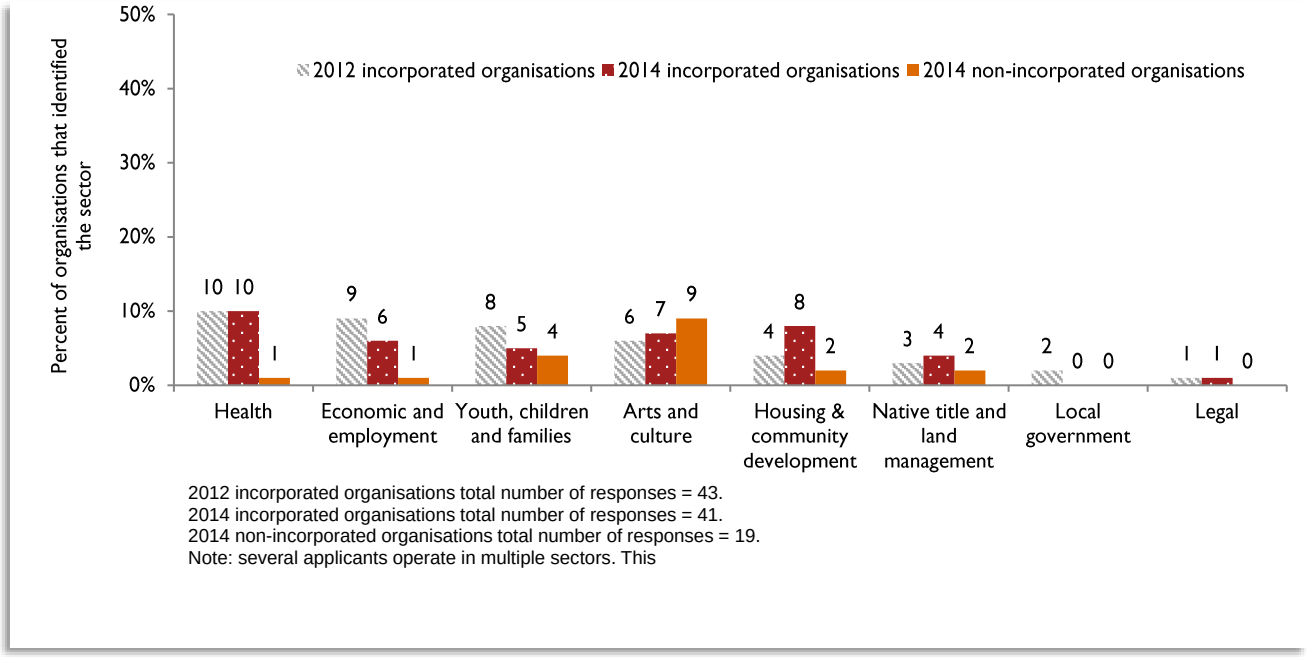
(a) Discussion and analysis

Several applicants provided holistic services and operated across multiple sectors (Figure 2 depicts the sector in which applicants self-described as conducting the majority of their work). This was most evident in the 'community development' sector in which applicants frequently described their purpose as *community services* and went on to outline a wide range of offerings that included all or a combination of the following: cultural preservation, anti-discrimination, sporting and recreational, housing, legal rights, medical services and employment. Across all sectors the inherent focus was on provision of culturally responsive programs, initiatives and services.

The health sector predominantly included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health services, as well as women's services and alcohol and substance services. The economic and employment category encompassed education and training opportunities, employment strategies, social development programs and tourism.

Non-incorporated applicants most frequently conducted arts and cultural initiatives. These ranged across cultural mapping and the teaching and practice of traditional culture and lore, to visual and performing arts initiatives, as well as social media, fashion and religion.

Figure 2: Industry sector of operation

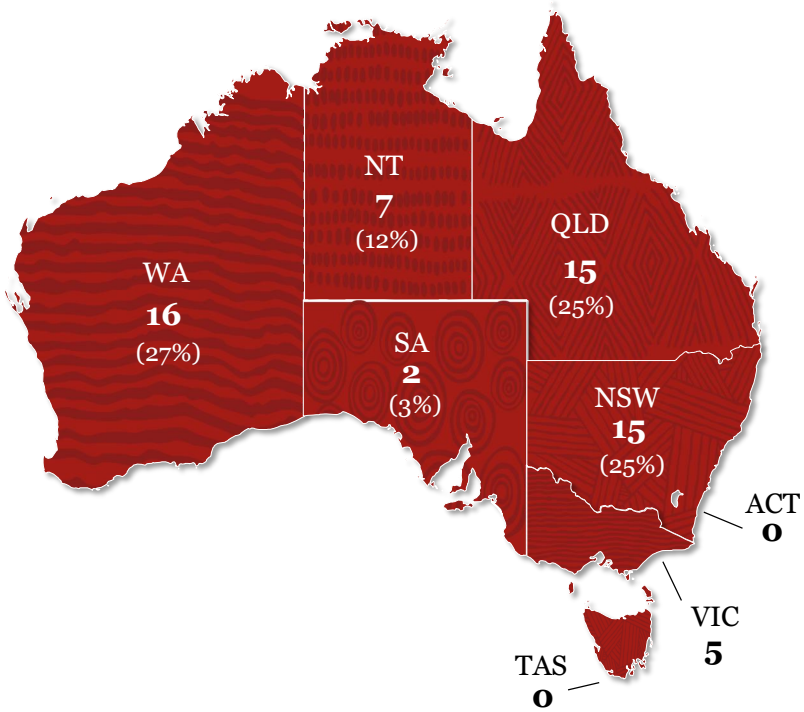


3.1.3 LOCATION BY STATE AND TERRITORY

(a) Discussion and analysis

Applicants represented all states and territories apart from ACT and Tasmania. The sample is not reflective of the proportion of Indigenous organisations in operation around the country. It is unclear why there is under representation in some locations. This may have been influenced by an organisation's level of interest in the Awards, the lack of resources to complete an application, or the Awards advertising campaign.

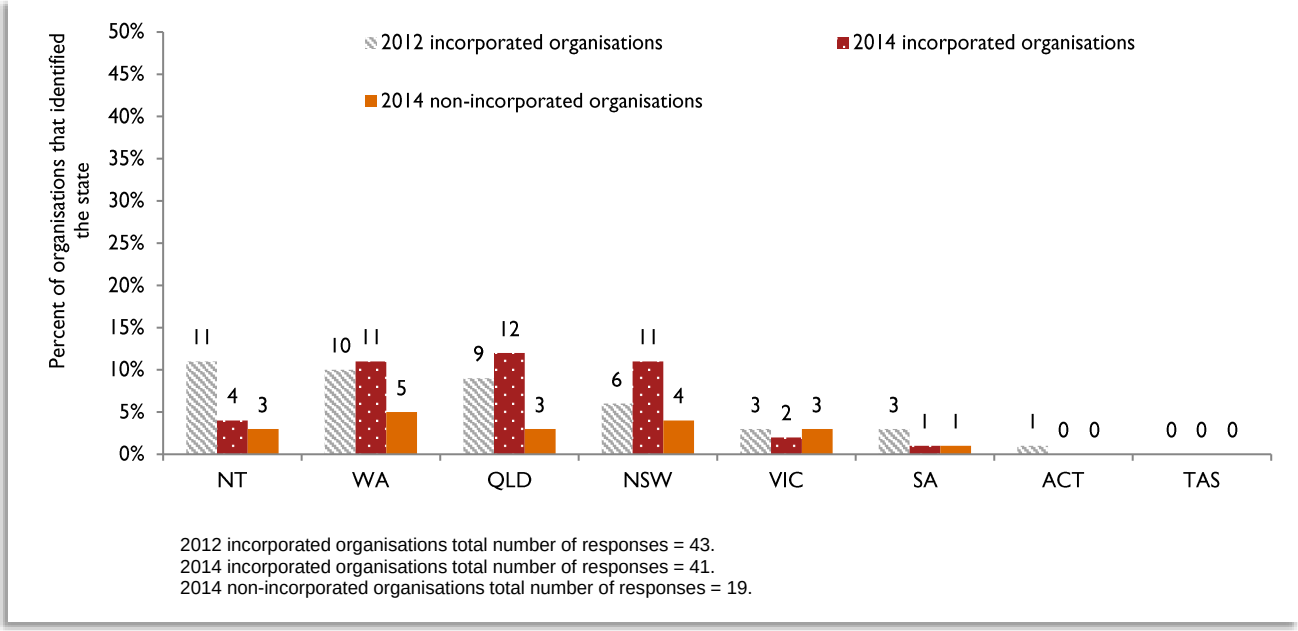
Figure 3: Map of location by state and territory



2014 incorporated organisations total number of responses = 41.

2014 non-incorporated organisations total number of responses = 19.

Figure 4: Location by state and territory

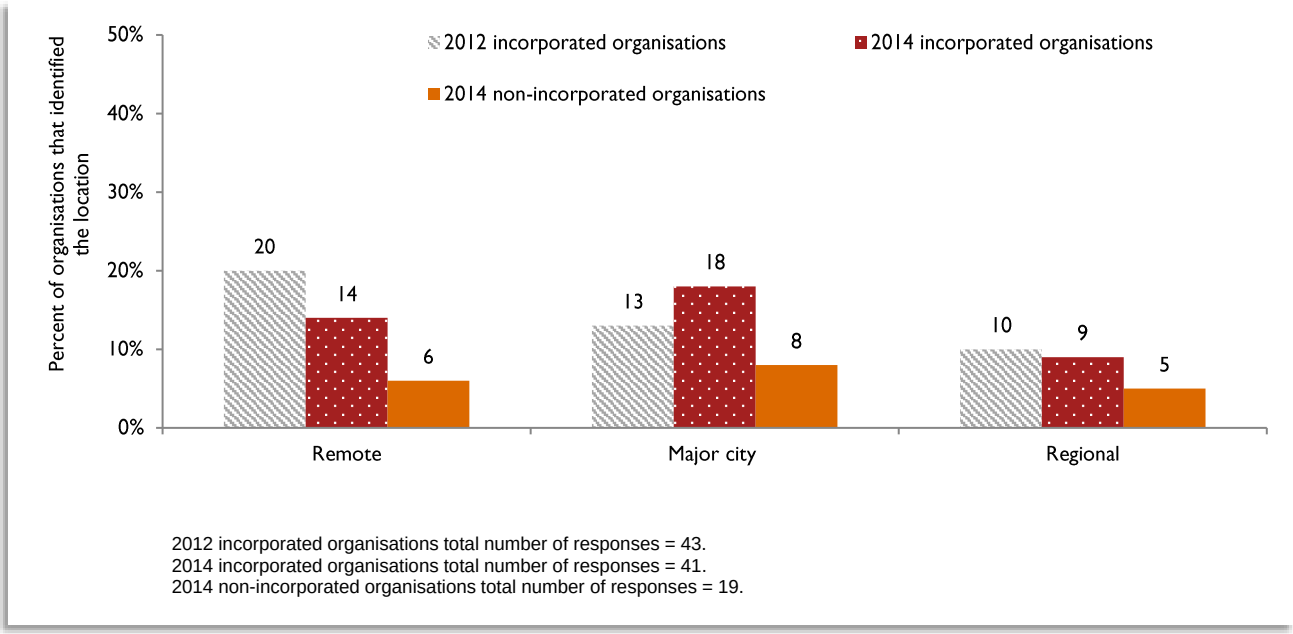


3.1.4 LOCATION BY REMOTENESS

(a) Discussion and analysis

Applicants represented a fairly even spread across urban, rural and remote areas of mainland Australia.

Figure 5: Location by remoteness



3.1.5 SOURCE OF FUNDING

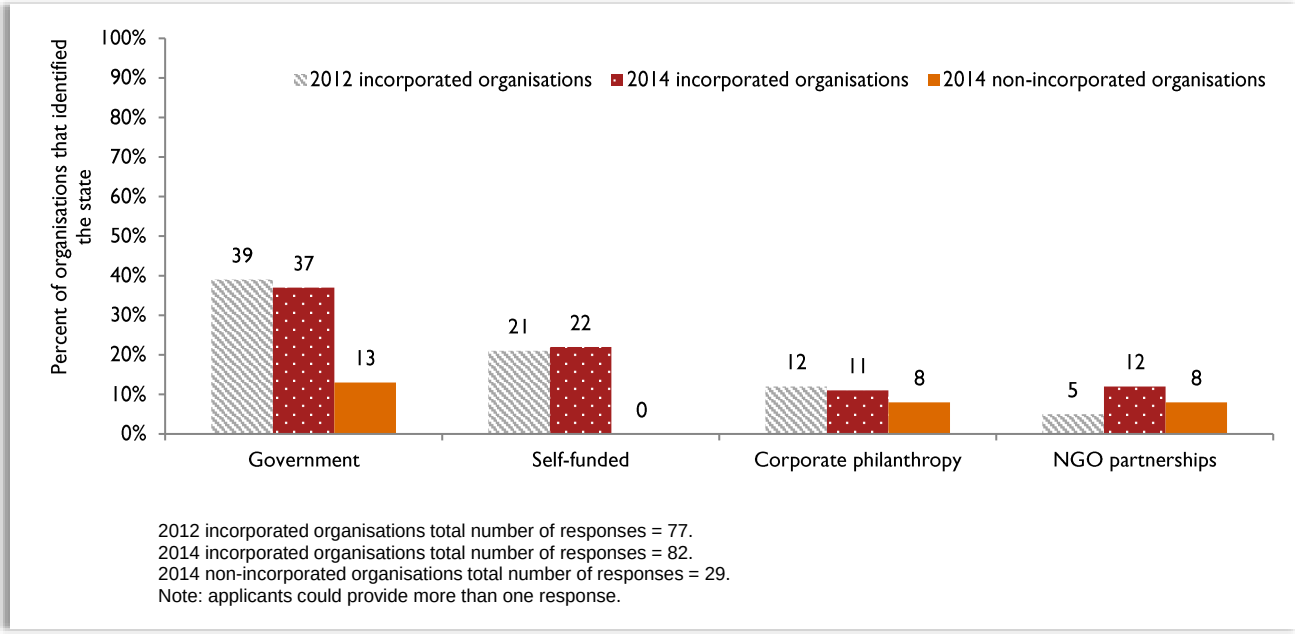
(a) Discussion and analysis

The spread across different sources tells an interesting story about the growing prioritisation of funding diversification. In 2014 71% of incorporated applicants utilised a mixed funding model. Whilst the organisations were still substantially reliant on local, state and federal government funding streams, 54% also generated their own revenue, 30% leveraged partnerships and 27% collaborated with corporate philanthropic organisations.

Many applicants noted financial stress and difficulty securing stable funding as a result of government funding approaches that were short-term, cyclical and based on frequently changing policy priorities. These applicants frequently cited a deliberate plan to expand sources of funding in order to address this challenge.

Our findings mark the beginning of a potential trend and it will be interesting to observe in subsequent Awards if there is reduced reliance on government funding. In fact, this has already been observed in the ORIC Top 500 (2013-14) report that notes, "*the proportion of government funding relative to other sources of income combined has decreased by 7.4% over the past seven financial years*"[18].

Figure 6: Source of funding



3.1.6 INCORPORATION

(a) Discussion and analysis

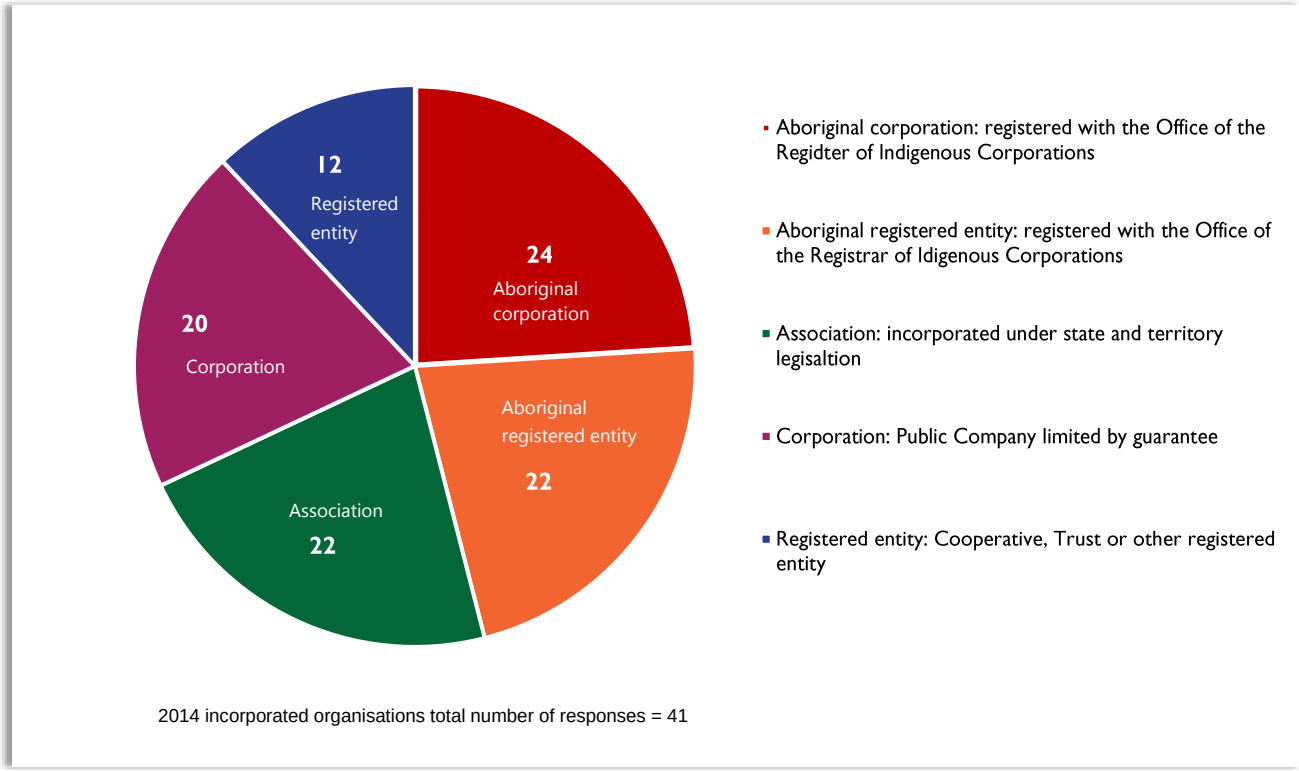
Applicants incorporated under a variety of state and territory, and federal legislation. The various corporate entities included corporations, associations, trusts and cooperatives. The different entities have different reporting obligations and legal responsibilities for the directors. It should be noted that there are also Indigenous organisations that are registered as businesses (e.g. sole trader). These do not come under the legal mechanisms addressed here, nor are they included in this analysis.

[18] Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations, 2015, page 17.

While all the applicants are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led organisations, only 46% are registered as Aboriginal corporations or associations under the CATSI Act[19]. ORIC identifies a total of 2596 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations registered under the CATSI Act as at 30 June 2014[20]. Since approximately half the analysed applicants from the 2014 Awards cohort are not registered with ORIC, this implies that there exists double the number of Indigenous organisations as are registered with ORIC.

This analysis features a small sample size (41). As a step in the next stage, it will be interesting to monitor these incorporation trends, and to evaluate incorporation types by a cross-section of state, as well as by jurisdiction.

Figure 7: Types of corporate entities



3.1.7 NUMBER OF STAFF

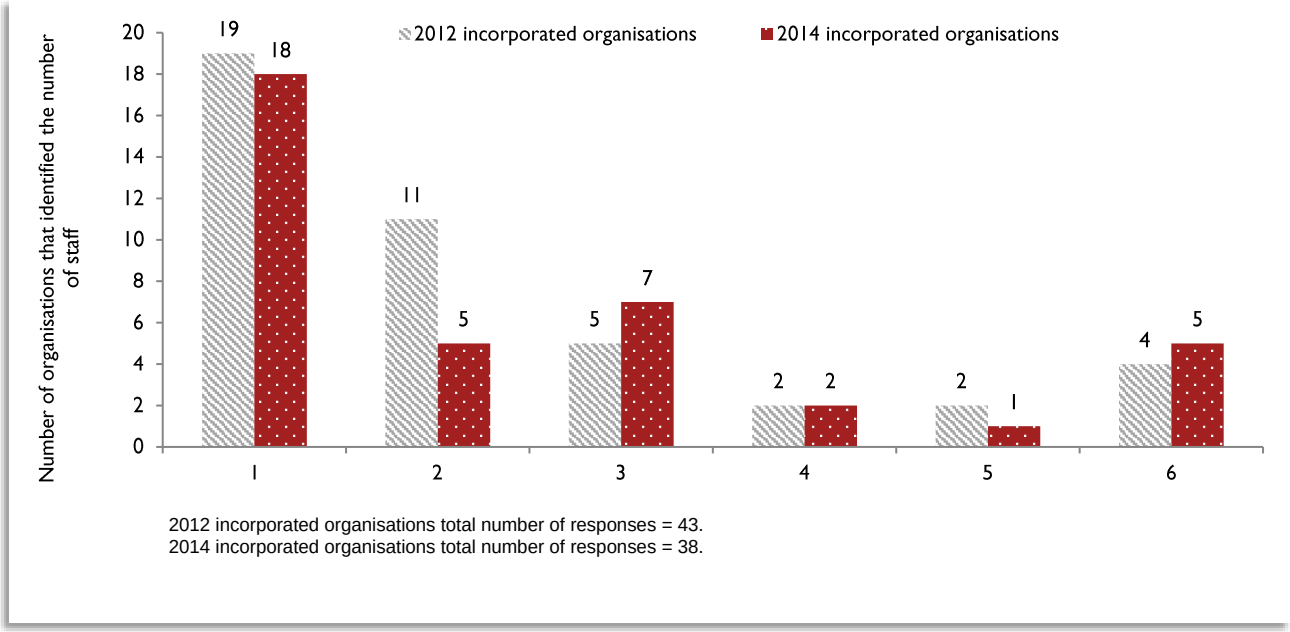
(a) Discussion and analysis

The majority of incorporated applicants reported employing between 1-40 staff members. Non-incorporated applicants were not required to provide the number of staff.

[19] ORIC is responsible for administering the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (CATSI Act), which allows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups to form corporations. ORIC describes the act as "*a legislative mechanism to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people build strong corporations, strong people and strong communities*" that "*delivers modern corporate governance standards—it emphasises the importance of compliance and reporting as a mechanism to improve transparency and accountability*". Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations, 2015, page 1.

[20] Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations, 2015, page 3.

Figure 8: Number of staff

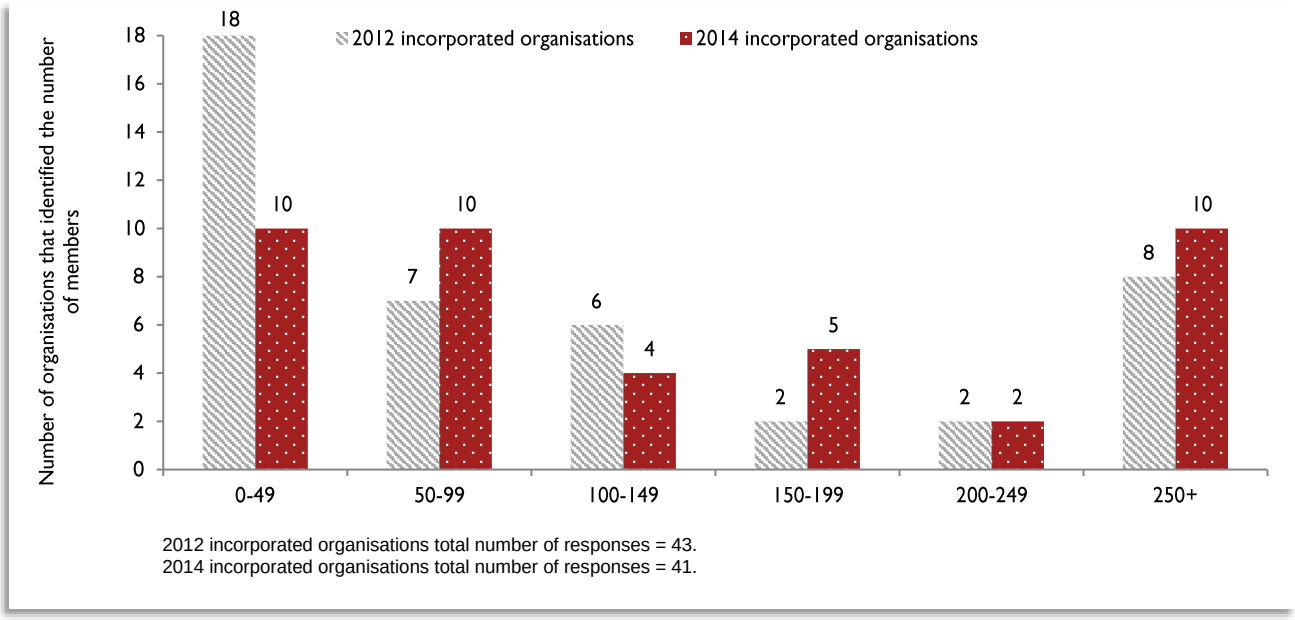


3.1.8 NUMBER OF MEMBERS

(a) Discussion and analysis

The number of members reported by incorporated applicants ranged from 0 to 5,000. Interestingly, the majority of applicants had very large memberships; 51% had over 100 members and 24% within this cohort identified 250+ members. Non-incorporated applicants were not required to identify the number of members.

Figure 9: Number of members



3.2 FORMING THE GOVERNING BODY

A governing body is the group of people given the power and authority to form the policy and steer the overall direction of an organisation. Its members can be elected to a position of power by voting, or selected through nomination by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander decision-making processes. Governing bodies come in all shapes and sizes and have varied functions. For organisations that are incorporated, boards are the most obvious example of a governing body[21]. Stable governance structures improve an organisation's effectiveness by maintaining priorities and direction, and minimising the potential for conflict within both the organisation and the community[22].

3.2.1 GOVERNING BODY SELECTION PROCESS

(a) Discussion and analysis

Governing body members were selected according to a combination of agreed procedures: primarily election, nomination and appointment. Election was the most frequent method of selecting the governing body by incorporated applicants in both 2012 and 2014. However, this wasn't necessarily by the standard majority vote approach. Applicants devised a variety of customised electoral processes in response to local conditions and circumstances addressing the social, cultural and geographic requirements of the community. Some applicants, for example, described election as a mere formality within their culture-smart approach. Instead, these organisations created a governing body structure that reflected traditional family and social structures. The representatives of each group were determined through their own processes, and then formally endorsed by all members at the Annual General Meeting.

Reserved positions were identified by 56% of applicants (2012 and 2014) as an important method of creating equal representation for the different groups within the operational region. To represent means to act as a recognised delegate or spokesperson for somebody else's interests, wishes, rights or welfare.

Geographically based representation was the most commonly reported group (37% in 2012 and 39% in 2014). Geographically based representation referred to positions on the governing body held for either a representative from each of the different culturally defined groups (clan, language, or skin groups) or the different service areas located within the region where the organisation operated. It was identified as extremely important by a number of applicants, as it guaranteed equal representation of different groups across the service area, and also ensured that directors were local community members genuinely invested in the organisation's objectives and outcomes.

Many expressed an intention or policy to maintain a majority Indigenous board. Several applicants explicitly reserved positions on their governing body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In 2014 49% of applicants identified as being 100% Indigenous led.

Positions were also reserved for youth (a representative from the youth group or a young member of the organisation) and women. The number of places for women varied, for example, one organisation specified there be one female and one male representative from each family, and in other organisations all the directors were female.

Applicants identified specialist appointments as an effective way to balance community control and business expertise. External stakeholder appointments were reported by 17% of 2014 applicants, which reflected a 12% increase from 2012. Positions were reserved for representatives from key stakeholder or partner organisations, or, a limited number of positions were held for independent or non-member directors with specialist skills and knowledge in fields related to operations (e.g. law, arts, finance or risk management).

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[21] Indigenous Governance Toolkit Section 5.1

[22] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2013.

Applicants utilised staggered succession, electing positions on the governing body at different times, to prevent all the directors (and their knowledge) from leaving at once. Generally, half of the directors were elected annually. Other organisations elected different directors for 1, 2 or 3 year terms. This process allowed new members to be mentored and a smooth transition for incoming directors and ongoing operations.

Some applicants formed Elders Advisory Groups; separate to the governing body, whose counsel was sought on key issues or decisions.

Figure 10: Processes involved in selecting the governing body

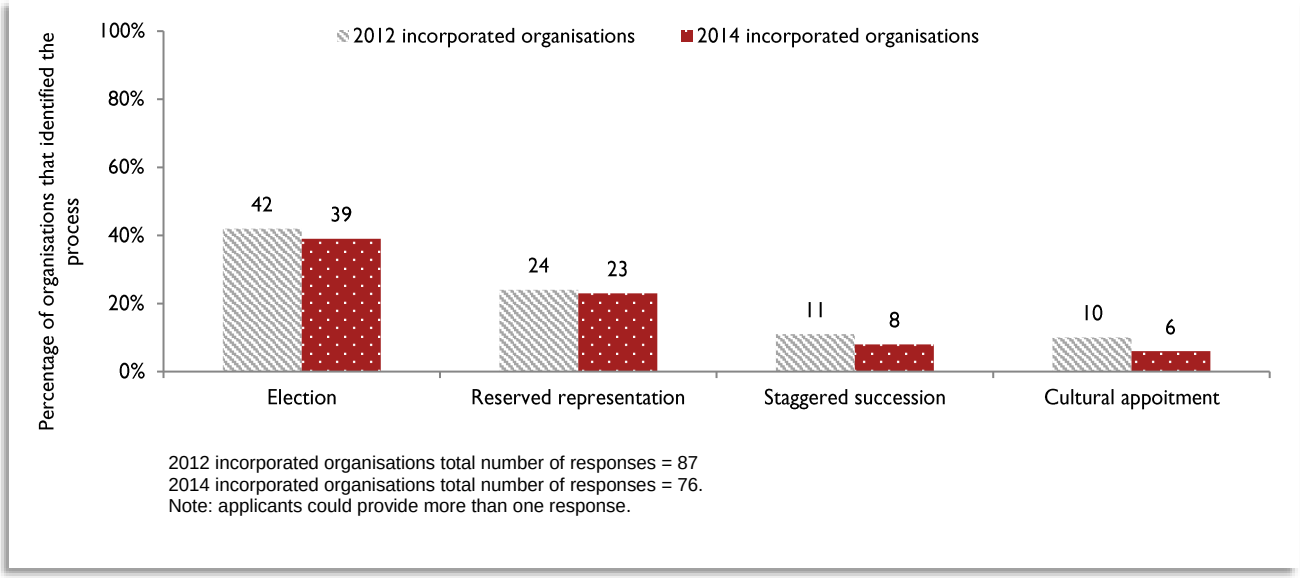
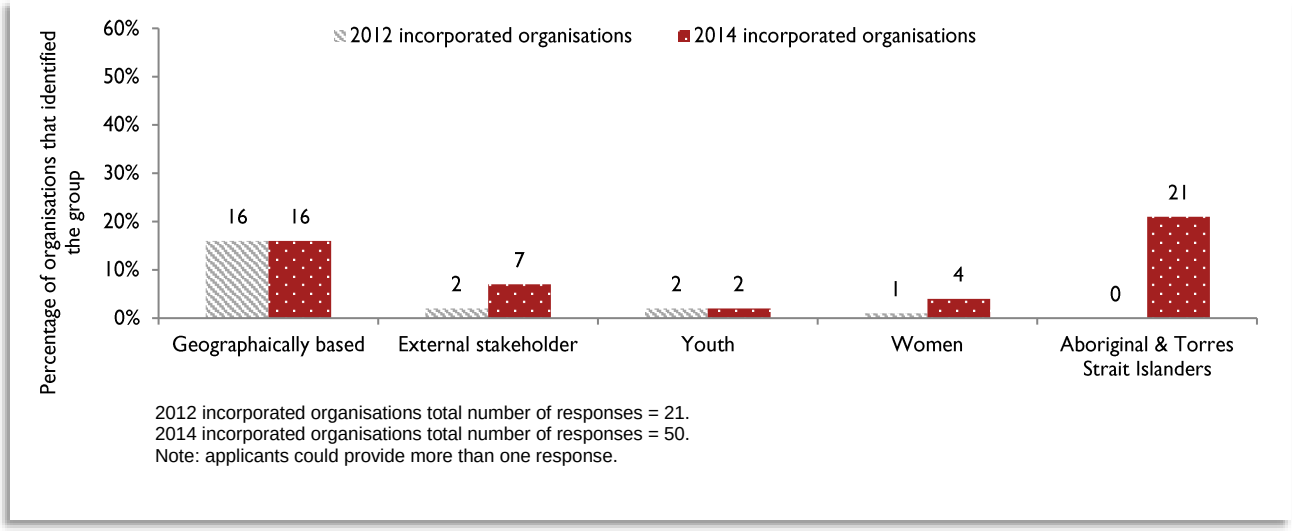


Figure 11: Reserved representation groups



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service (AADS)

"Six months leading up to the AGM there was a very public and transparent promotion of the service, its objectives and its imminent board election. This led to a big increase in membership and an informed voting population. AADS is proud to have the confidence, support and endorsement of the Aboriginal community in this way."

Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (CLCAC)

"The CLCAC is a grass-roots organisation that had its humble beginnings in a tiny remote town in North West Queensland. It was formed by a group of Traditional Owners who saw the need for the establishment of a small member-based organisation to assist them to protect the rights and interests of the Traditional Owners that make up the nine Language Groups in the lower Gulf of Carpentaria. Membership eligibility is dependent upon having a primary affiliation with one of the nine Language Groups and the CLCAC's board has equal representation from each of the Language Groups. To hold a position on the board the board member must reside in the area of representation. This allows for easy access to a board member at all times by the members of the organisation and ensures the board members are well connected to the community. The CLCAC's ability to consult with members of the community is made easier due to the strong relationships that have been developed over time."

Girringun Aboriginal Corporation

"Each of the 9 member Traditional Owner groups select their respective Traditional Owner Director and Elder Director nominees prior to the AGM through group-based processes conducted according to Aboriginal traditional custom and practice. At the AGM the Girringun membership present ratify these individual tribal nominations to the 9 member Girringun Board by majority vote. The constitutionally required office-bearing positions include the Chairperson, deputy Chair and Treasurer, who are confirmed by majority vote of the elected Directors at the inaugural Board meeting held immediately after each AGM. Directors are generally appointed on the basis of tribal confirmation, skills and experience. Additionally, 9 reserve delegates are confirmed and endorsed at the AGM who act as stand-ins/reserves when principal Board Directors are unavailable. These delegates also act as confirmed tribal representatives in terms of Girringun's governance and business dealings. From time to time the Board may determine specific portfolios for its elected members at the inaugural meeting following each AGM. These generally reflect the skills, interests and expertise of particular Board members."

Institute for Urban and Indigenous Health (IUIH)

"The IUIH Board consists of eight Director positions. Four of these constitute nominee positions. These are drawn from the IUIH membership. This promotes representation of members and their respective service catchment, enabling a voice for both SEQ AICCHS and the respective communities that they service. Complimenting these nominee positions are four independent skills-based Director appointments. The appointments span four identified areas of expertise. Appointed skills-based Directors constitute leaders in their field. The sectors represented include: medical, community health, Indigenous health and academic and financial management. Board terms are one year in duration."

Kura Yerlo Inc.

"Board Members nominate in preparation for the AGM (we also accept nominations at the AGM) and it then goes to a vote with members. They are required to provide us with a brief (like a Skills Matrix) on what skills they have and what they can contribute to the Board and to the organisation. Members, who nominate at the AGM, must be prepared to introduce themselves and tell us a little bit about themselves. We make every effort for these processes to friendly, warm and relaxed whilst ensuring we are complying with our Incorporated and Constitutional requirements."

Pormpur Paanthu Aboriginal Corporation

"The Board was originally made up of local women only and could have as many as 11 members. In 2012 non-member directors were included to mentor, and support local women building governance skills and corporate governance knowledge. This was a compliance measure to effect and reflect the government's decision to improve the Corporation's Governance and Financial Management. For many years women dedicated themselves to Board functions but prerequisites such as skills or expertise did not factor into the election as primarily they relied on the Director. In 2013, the Constitution was changed to give voting rights to those non-member directors who could be from any field of expertise, and meant that males could also bring knowledge and expertise to what was a women's organisation. It included local men on the Board for the first time since 1991. Current non expert members are leading researchers and health practitioners; financial controller; Lawyer and Management backgrounds."

3.2.2 DIRECTORS' REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

(a) Discussion and analysis

Most applicants (54%) identified between 2-4 required skills that they looked for when selecting their directors. Choosing directors with relevant skill sets facilitated sound decision-making and enhanced the legitimacy of the governing body in the eyes of members and stakeholders. The combination of required skill sets differed for each applicant depending on organisational context and priorities.

The most commonly sought after skill set in 2014 (51%) was an understanding of the local culture and community. Applicants sought directors that were connected to (and understood) the local community and had a sound knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. Applicants described these directors as representatives of the membership with cultural authority who resided or actively participated in the local community and were of strong standing and well respected.

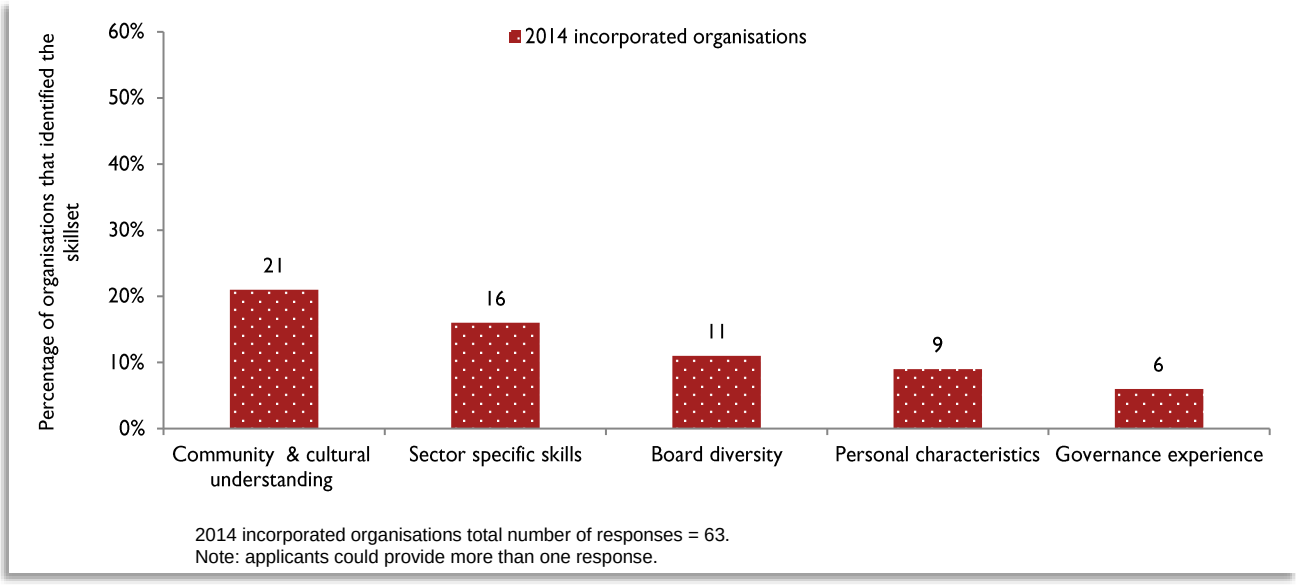
Governance experience was highly valued with directors expected to have prior experience at a board level, have completed certified governance training or be willing to participate in further governance training and mentoring activities during their term.

Directors were also selected for their professional expertise and sector relevant experience. The preferred personal characteristics were demonstration of leadership skills, being of good character and personal beliefs and behaviours that aligned with the organisational philosophy.

27% of applicants noted diversity to be an important factor in establishing a board as it facilitated an appropriate mix of skillsets, experience and perspectives to meet the responsibilities of the governing body and satisfy the overall objectives of the organisation. Applicants sought to create a governing body that represented the range of ages, gender, backgrounds and family groups that were present within the community. The professional skills and experience required in relation to the organisation's area of operations were also considered.

Some applicants implemented director eligibility criteria, which facilitated selection in line with governance priorities and best practice. Examples included director participation in the organisation for a minimum of 6 months or only one member of a family permitted on the board at a time.

Figure 12: Directors' required knowledge and skills



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service (AADS)

"AADS is governed by a Board of Management consisting of nine Aboriginal members who are elected by the association members at an Annual General Meeting (AGM). Only full members (Aboriginal persons who are in agreement with the aims and ideals of the organisation and not an employee of the organisation) have voting rights and are eligible for election onto the board: ensuring a 100% Aboriginal Board of Management."

Arwarbukarl Cultural Resource Association (ACRA)

"The Management Committee have developed a strong governance model through their mutual respect and acknowledgement of each individual's unique skills and capabilities. Strength is further reinforced by the committee's standards of codes of conduct and behaviour. All members of the Management Committee are required to represent the overall consensus of what is best for the organisation and not individuals.

Every member of the committee is committed to the empowerment of Aboriginal people from both a personal and professional perspective i.e. driven by their own cultural identity, links and heritage; as well as each member working professionally for organisations committed to the betterment of outcomes for Aboriginal people."

"AIME's Directors are accessible and provide guidance and advice to the CEO and the management team on a broad range of topics and issues. The level of Board engagement is very high. Directors are involved in many aspects of the organisation, for example, through their contribution to events, speaking engagements, staff learning and development, fundraising activities and mentoring of staff, as well as strategic development and planning, and oversight of budgets and audits. Since AIME became incorporated in 2008 the Board has guided the team on financial issues, budget preparation, accounting processes and audits, along with policy development and where their area of expertise has been relevant, on the development of internal operating systems.

Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience Indigenous Corporation (AIME)

The AIME team have an open, honest and respectful relationship with the Directors and Members, which is strengthened by the Board's unfailing belief in and support for the work the staff are doing on the ground with the program. The Directors are also active in the promotion of AIME amongst their personal and professional networks and have been instrumental in the establishment of various corporate and other partnerships for AIME. Another area where the Board has provided much needed advice and support is in navigating the communications with federal and state governments and providing introductions to ministers and their teams. While the Board is actively engaged in many aspects of the business, as outlined above, one of the greatest strengths of the relationship between the AIME team and the Directors is that they give the staff the space to do what they do best - deliver the AIME program."

Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH)

"The IUIH and its members acknowledge that historically, there have been issues associated with the governance of some Indigenous organisations, which have created risk to the agency. Issues such as one faction of the community's dominance over governance and management have represented challenges to AICCHS governance in some instances. Learning from past issues provided a basis for design, development and activation of new policies and procedures geared toward bolstering governance structures within SEQ. For example, the IUIH have now developed measures specific to mitigation of the former risks, which span to include such items as:

- Family members cannot share Director positions on the Board.
- Former staff of the IUIH who have left the organisation within a three year period are ineligible to be on the Board.
- Those who hold a position with a respective IUIH funds holder must not hold a position on the Board."

Koobara Aboriginal and Islander Family Resource Centre Inc.

"When calling for nominations for the board, a notice is sent to the community advising the process, dates and criteria. A criterion for being on the Board is that members must have had financial membership for 6 months and have been involved in the community for at least 6 months. This process prevents uninterested and unrelated people turning up on the night of the meeting and voting to support one view."

PRK Radio

"Overall governance of our organisation is well balanced with age, gender, background and region. Main groups in Halls Creek are the Jaru and the Gidja mob. That is well balanced within our governing system as the directors are a rich blend of tribes. This is important as this offers a clearer guide to cultural appropriateness in the community. The wealth of knowledge we have is enormous and with this we are steering the organisation to the highest levels ever seen in many years.

We also recently elected a new director with the aim of mentorship for succession. Most of the directors are quite old and there is general concern to ensure continuity with new and younger directors coming on board."

"All Directors must be appointed from remote communities. She must be a permanent resident – a minimum of five years – in the community, and have contributed significantly to the community, and be recognised for her leadership, either paid or voluntary in the community. Waltja sends an AGM invitation to the community and this is returned with the names of three or four women who meet these criteria. Waltja expects that a consultation will take place in the community to identify and nominate community representatives. This will usually include the current Waltja Director and nominees for the Board."

Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation

3.3 STRUCTURE OF THE GOVERNING BODY

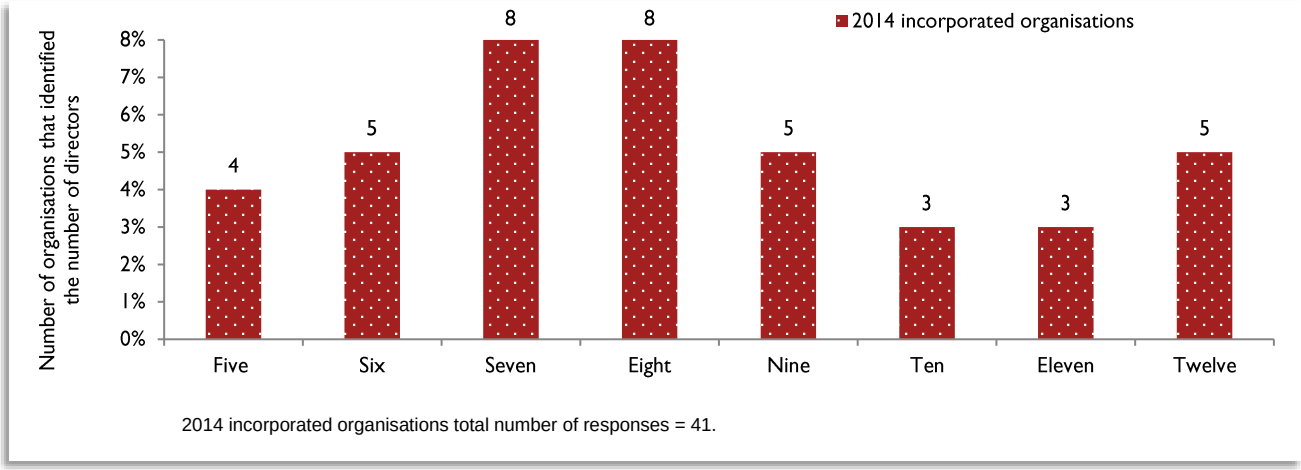
Choosing an appropriate governing body structure, in terms of size, frequency of term and frequency of meeting, requires organisations to carefully balance priorities and resources. Large boards that meet too frequently, potentially waste both time and money, prohibit participation from remote areas and may become ineffective due to their size. Conversely, boards that are too small and meet infrequently risk being both unrepresentative and lacking in the necessary capabilities to run an effective organisation[23].

3.3.1 NUMBER OF DIRECTORS ON THE GOVERNING BODY

(a) Discussion and analysis

In 2014 100% of applicants had 12 or fewer directors in their governing body. The average number of directors was 8. In 2012 88% of applicants had 12 directors in their governing body, with the number of directors ranging 5-42[24].

Figure 13: Number of directors on the governing body



[23] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2013.

[24] Currently under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (Cth) s 243.5, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation must not have more than 12 directors (unless the Corporation applies for an exemption under s 310-5).

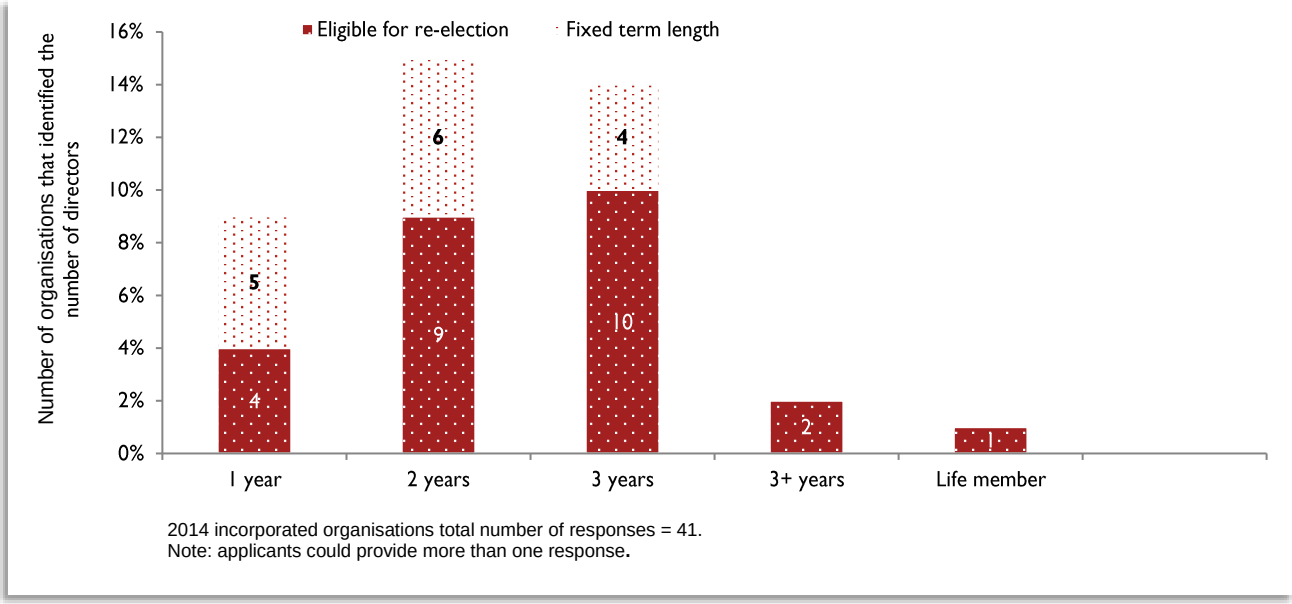
3.3.2 DIRECTOR TERM LENGTHS

(a) Discussion and analysis

In 2014 the majority of applicants (71%) had governing body terms of 2-3 years. This is equivalent to the 70% reported in 2012. 34% of applicants identified processes that allowed directors to be re-elected once they had served their fixed term. The term length and potential for re-appointment often differed between directors elected from the membership and independent appointments. A range of different arrangements were described, such as:

- Delegate directors 2 years, Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer 3 years; or
- 2 years for independent directors (renewable by the board) and 4 years for Indigenous members; or
- The president can be re-elected after a 3 year term; or
- A maximum of two 3 year terms before retiring for a minimum period of 1 year.

Figure 14: Director term lengths



3.3.3 FREQUENCY OF GOVERNING BODY MEETINGS

(a) Discussion and analysis

In 2014 49% of applicants held a meeting of the governing body every 4-6 weeks, and 98% met at least every quarter. This mirrors the frequency of 2012, which reported 58% and 95% respectively. Additionally, 27% mentioned they met as often as their individual circumstances required. Some applicants created sub-committees focused on specific aspects of corporate governance. These committees drew on the expertise of relevant directors and met outside of scheduled governing body meetings.

Figure 15: Frequency of governing body meetings

3.4 REPORTING

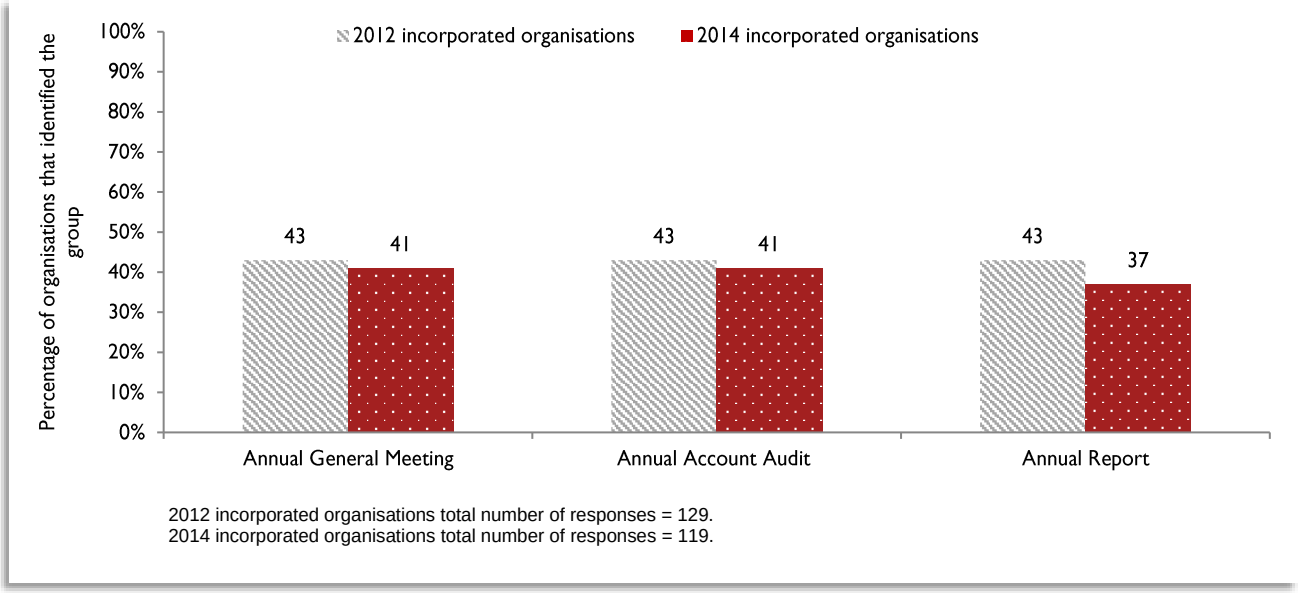
Annual meetings, reports and audits provide an opportunity to update on key happenings and achievements as well as outline the current operational, financial and strategic situation with stakeholders and the wider community. Engaging in these types of reporting creates trust as it furthers members' understanding of where the organisation is at, and where it is heading.

3.4.1 MEETING REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

(a) Discussion and analysis

In 2012 and 2014 100% of applicants held an Annual General Meeting (or equivalent) and conducted an Account Audit. In 2012 100% and in 2014 90% of applicants produced an Annual Report. Of the 4 who didn't produce Annual Reports, 2 identified that the following year would be their first.

Figure 16: Types of annual reporting



3.5 NON-INCORPORATED MODELS

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander models of governance are often based on sophisticated networks. These can be made up of interconnected layers of extended families, clans and leaders, and their land-ownership rights and interests.

These cultural networks form the foundations for a wide variety of different governing structures, depending on what suits the particular nation, community or group. Sometimes these structures are legally incorporated; sometimes they remain informal and flexible[25].

3.5.1 NON-INCORPORATED MODELS

(a) Discussion and analysis

Non-incorporated applicants' governance models did not form part of the 2014 quantitative analysis. As illustrated in the innovative ideas section below, non-incorporated applicants developed creative and practically workable governance arrangements that considered group priorities, available resources, local customs and ways of working. Future Awards analyses will investigate non-incorporated governance models in greater detail.

(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Muntjiltjarra Wurrgumu Group (MWG)

"In July 2012 the Wiluna RPA started talking to Aboriginal people about how they could be more actively involved in the RPA. There were lots of talks with everyone in the community to look at the best way our people could come together and be an effective part of the RPA. We wanted to have a seat at the table of the RPA and be part of making decisions about us. We formed the Muntjiltjarra Wurrgumu Group (MWG) - meaning the working group of our local people.

Our first job was to do a survey with our people. We wanted to find out the reason why hardly anybody is employed out of the Aboriginal community in the Wiluna area. We wanted to find out what people think themselves so we could share the story with the RPA and others. We knew this was the best way to make the work of the RPA real and relevant.

Our project is controlled 100% by Aboriginal people. We have set up our MWG group to be representative of all the major family groups in our region - Wiluna, Bondinni, Windidda, Kukabubba and Ngurra Yuuldoo. All of the decisions are made by the MWG Aboriginal members. We do not have a chairperson, but rather we work as a collective to make our decisions as a group.

Our MWG group is part of the Wiluna Regional Partnership Agreement which is made up of the mining industry, 3 levels of government, local community agencies and ourselves. The RPA was formed and is funded under a memorandum of understanding between the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) and the Australian Government.

Wiluna, sits in the remote Northern Goldfields of Western Australia surrounded by lots of mines and experiences much Indigenous disadvantage. The Memorandum of Understanding is trying to close the gap on this disadvantage.

[25] Indigenous Governance Toolkit Section 1.2.2

One of our members, Regina Newland designed a new logo for our RPA to show how we can all come together. This was the first time that Martu people were recognised as equals in the partnership. As well as our MWG we now have 2 of our members sitting on the RPA steering committee to represent the views of the MWG.

It was mainly the industry partners who funded our survey - Newmont, BHP Billiton, Nickel West, Golden West and Rosslyn Hill plus the Central Desert Native Title Service. This paid for us to be researchers on the project and they were also able to bring in-kind support through airfares, fuel, food for our meetings and staff to help us out.

We have a budget for our RPA and funds are especially earmarked to enable us to participate in our MWG meetings and activities. We have a coordinator who assists us with managing the funds that are administered through the MCA."

The Marruk Project

"The Marruk Project began in 2009 and many of the artists and participants have worked together creating new theatre works for community development outcomes since that time. A project of the Mallee District Aboriginal Services; 'The Marruk Project' was initiated by Uncle Bruce Baxter, a Waradjuri man who lived in the Wamba Wamba country of Swan Hill since he was a child.

The project participant group is made up of children (5 - 11 year olds), youth (12 - 25 year olds) and cultural leaders (Adults and Elders), 10 core ensemble members and 10 production mentees, together making the Youth Advisory Committee, that have participated across previous Marruk Projects. Since the Project's conception in 2009, an Elders Advisory Council and Youth Advisory Group have been established to guide the process of exploring cultural stories, and a steering committee comprised of representatives of local project partner organisations. Approximately 180 local community members are now involved as participants, paid project workers or supporters from across many diverse cultural backgrounds.

The Elders Advisory Council (EAC): The EAC is made up of Aboriginal members of the community, who meet fortnightly to keep the project on track in terms of use of traditional culture. Part of their role is to ensure the Creation story is provided to the wider Swan Hill community in an open, generous and trusting way.

Youth Advisory Group (YAG): Have been working with the lead artists and Elders, since 2009 on annual projects. The YAG will continue to expand their responsibilities and inform story development, building new youth audiences, marketing, share information regarding youth cultural issues and mentored in a range of project skills such as cultural and artistic leadership, theatre design, production and stage management.

The Steering Committee (SC): The SC is made up of project partner representatives from Swan Hill Rural City Council, Swan Hill Aboriginal Family Services, Mallee Family Care, The Harmony Day Committee, Swan Hill Police, Filipino and Sudanese Associations, Punjabi Miracles, Vic Health, The Fairfax Festival, the EAC, cultural leaders, the YAG and project artists. Fortnightly meetings will define intentions and evaluation frameworks, including timing, design, and tools to make sure we are being culturally appropriate in way we collect evidence.

Members of each cultural group are represented on the committee and they will continue to devise strategies on how to powerfully demonstrate the value of diverse culture through the creation of the theatre event. This will include the work done directly with participants, the promotion of the project to the wider community as well as support and participation in the performance outcome. The partnerships are of high value to each other as all have common aims and objectives in bringing about greater intercultural understanding and demonstrating a strong message of unity across the town.

Project Partners are also supporting the development of skills across Project Management, Marketing and Evaluation, through working with the EAC to support its governance structure. The primary project partners

will share knowledge and skills through cross training for the project partners and the project team.

Each year of the project has seen an extraordinary fundraising effort and generous in kind support from Community Partners. Funds are managed by the Mallee District Aboriginal Services. The solid working partnership between the Mallee District Aboriginal Services, developed over the past 5 years has been nurtured through effective and clear dialogue and reporting from the EAC and YAG. This has ensured transparency, and thorough and diligent project planning and consultation."

Deadly Choices
IUIH
THE PEARL

4 Criteria 2: Effectiveness

"The management and governance system works well because it means that no one individual dominates but the voice of the collective group is always maintained. This also contributes to an environment of fresh ideas and open, transparent communication."

Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation

"The group works well because all members are active, responsive, connected and communicate with each other. All members are equal and respect each others' opinions and feelings. Members share and support each other in the work and projects they are involved in."

Yuendumu Early Childhood Reference

Follow this link to view a video clip of the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health discussing what makes their governance effective:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUJF3vUT0oU.

How do successful organisations deal with challenges and disputes to stay on course through the inevitable storms? How does an organisation ensure it is performing its functions well and producing the desired outcomes of the group? A fair and balanced dispute resolution process is extremely important for the effective operation of organisations and communities and is a *fundamental* part of effective governance. Organisations that continually seek feedback on programs and review their governance structures and operational processes are able to ensure their mission and goals are being achieved.

4.1 SOLVING DISPUTES

This section highlights the ways that organisations address internal and external disputes.

4.2 OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

This section outlines common challenges experienced by organisations and innovative strategies for managing them.

4.3 POSITIVE AND MEASURABLE RESULTS

This section outlines how organisations measure the impact and effectiveness of their projects and programs. It also identifies organisations biggest successes and how they got there.

4.1 SOLVING DISPUTES

There is always potential for conflict in communities or organisations. Unresolved disagreements can lead to irreconcilable disputes. This can undermine an organisation's operation and performance, and can have adverse ramifications in terms of securing partnerships and funding. Thus, organisations need to be able to address and resolve disputes respectfully. Dispute resolution processes allow organisations to tackle conflicts of interest effectively, respond to complaints from stakeholders and staff, and arbitrate in disagreements between members. Clearly defined structures ensure these processes take place in a consistent and fair manner, and minimise the potential for conflict by clearly establishing individual roles and responsibilities[26].

4.1.1 INTERNAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION

(a) Discussion and analysis

All applicants outlined at least 1 mechanism for resolving internal disputes. In 2012 95% and in 2014 93% of applicants reported a dispute resolution procedure documented in at least one formal policy, either: a Code of Conduct, an Operational Policy or Managerial Guideline. These documents outlined a multi-stage process where disputes were escalated to higher levels of authority as required.

Informal processes were described by 39% of 2014 applicants, a 20% increase from 2012. Unlike applicants in 2012, informal resolution processes did not seek to reflect community opinion but were centred on addressing conflicts on a case-by-case basis, acknowledging its own unique context. For many in 2014, the preferred first step in addressing an issue was to initiate a meeting or discussion with the parties involved.

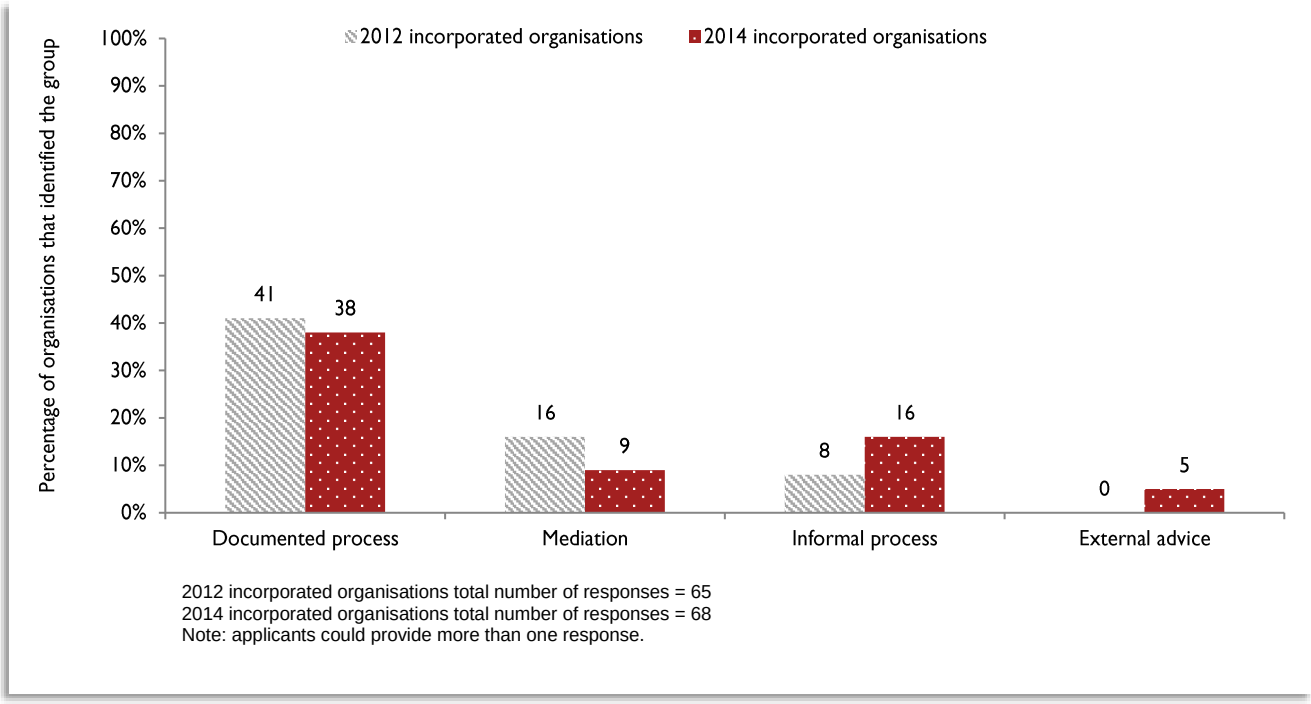
Applicants frequently employed traditional law/lore, codes of conduct and cultural practices in their resolution processes. For example, one applicant stated that, if the directors were unable to resolve a dispute within 20 business days, it may be referred to the Elders in council.

In 2014 26% of applicants cited mediation as a successful strategy to resolve internal disputes. External mediation and arbitration was referred to if informal mediation and discussion proved unsuccessful. With the exception of 1 organisation, mediation did not stand alone, but was a step within the other formal mechanisms.

A few applicants described engagement with other external consultants, such as a counselling service or independent body like the NSW Ombudsman, at their discretion.

[26] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2013.

Figure 17: Internal dispute resolution procedures



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service (AADS)

"[A] process also highlighted that staff wanted more direct access to the CEO when it came to grievances (as he attends many meetings and is not always immediately accessible). In order to ensure that future grievances were aired before things escalated, and that staff had an additional avenue for raising grievances in a confidential way directly with the CEO, a 'have your say' button was included on the intranet. It says:

'Is there something you would like to discuss with our CEO? Perhaps you have tried talking to your supervisor or manager and still feel you would like to be heard by the CEO on a particular matter. If so, you can have direct access to Daniel by clicking here to email details about the matter you wish to discuss. Although Daniel has an open door policy, his busy schedule means that he is not always available to be seen immediately and this email provides another confidential avenue for starting the conversation. Please include what you would like to have happen as a result of the discussion. For example, you may have a solution in mind. Once receiving the email Daniel will schedule a time for an informal chat as a first step to addressing the matter you have raised and the solution you have suggested'."

Waminda South Coast Women's Health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation

"Waminda's Policy states that problems should first try to be resolved between the concerning parties, and if no resolve can be reached, then the problem can be taken to your supervisor, your mentor or both. If an agreeable outcome still cannot be reached, the problem can be brought forward to the CEO or raised with the Board of Management or a preferred third party.

We also have a number of mechanisms in place that assist in communication and hence conflict resolution, these include monthly staff workshops, staff meetings, team and program meetings, house meetings, organisational and clinical supervision as well as peer and program debriefing sessions and case review processes."

4.1.2 EXTERNAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION

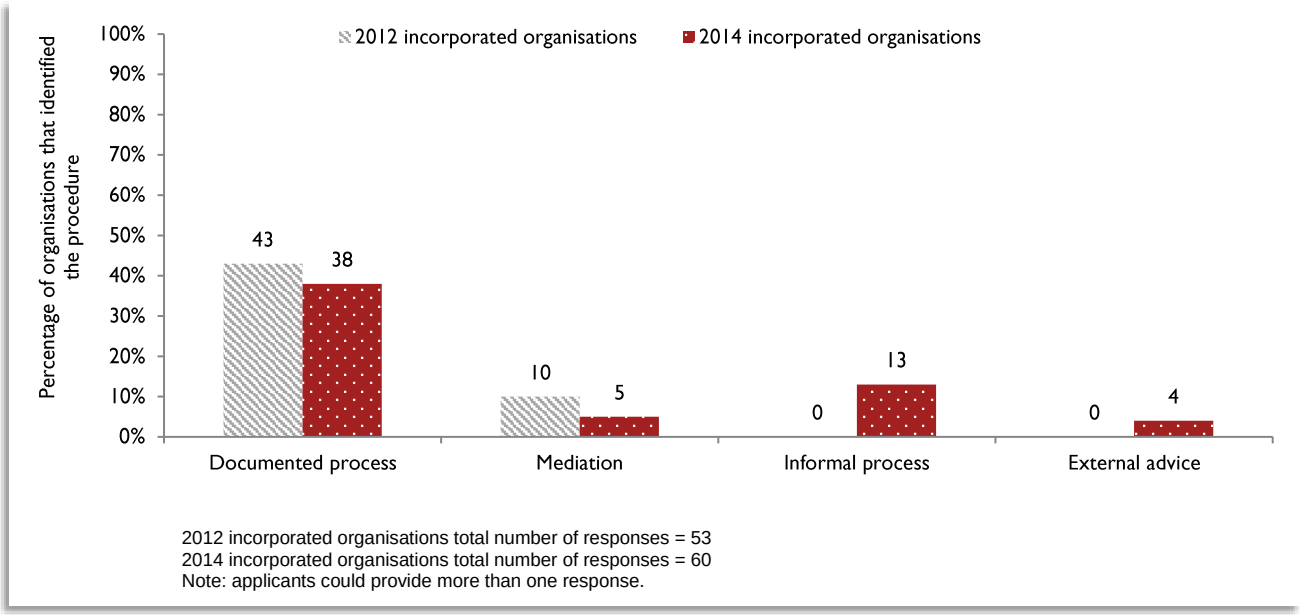
(a) Discussion and analysis

In 2012 100% and in 2014 93% of applicants reported documented formal processes and managerial procedures in place for resolving external complaints. Commonly outlined in a Complaints and Appeals Policy, these documents set out a tiered approach that applied different processes at different stages throughout the resolution procedure.

Unlike in 2012, the 2014 applicants adopted a variety of informal processes into the procedure. Often, the senior staff spoke directly with the individual to try and resolve the complaint in person before the dispute resolution process was escalated. Other processes included risk management committees, public community information sessions and specialty internal meetings. Culture-smart approaches were also practiced, for example, seeking advice from community Elders.

More applicants identified mediation as part of the external dispute resolution process in 2012 than 2014. In most cases, external arbitration or mediation was moved to as a final stage of the resolution process. 10% of the 2014 applicants referred complaints to a relevant independent regulatory authority such as ORIC, Industrial Relations Commission, NSW Ombudsman or Health Care Complaints Commission.

Figure 18: External dispute resolution procedures



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

KARI Aboriginal Resources Inc.

"At KARI, we understand the importance of having a thorough, effective and documented complaints procedure for our staff, volunteers, clients and community stakeholders. When we address complaints in a fair and systematic way, we can identify and respond to any issues or problems with our decision-making processes. We can also be more responsive to the needs of all our stakeholders and adapt our practices and services to meet their changing individual and collective needs. By making sure that all our stakeholders are aware of their right to make a complaint or to appeal a decision made through a complaints process, we can encourage transparent communication and find out about practices that need to be reviewed or updated."

Parnngurr Aboriginal Corporation

"External disputes are initially managed by the Community Coordinator with advice from Elders and Directors. Where the matter requires action that is more than the day-to-day administration the matter is listed as an agenda item for the next community meeting. The Martu residents of Parnngurr rely on accurate and comprehensive dissemination of information relating to external matters to be passed through the Community Coordinator and community office staff as many do not read and/or are not fluent in English. The Community Coordinator ensures that Directors with the highest proficiency in English have correspondence explained to them in language that they will understand. During meetings where the matter is of high concern the Coordinator brings in an independent non-Martu person, often a teacher, ranger or the community nurse to ensure that the content of the correspondence is being explained correctly. This process gives the community greater confidence that the correspondence or information being relayed or explained is interpreted correctly."

4.2 OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

When change occurs in an organisation and creates uncertainty, a solid foundation of governance and strong policies and procedures to rely on helps organisations to stay on track. Every organisation faces difficulties and organisational leaders need to be courageous to address challenges head on.

4.2.1 COMMON CHALLENGES

(a) Discussion and analysis

Applicants experienced a range of challenges that could be broadly categorised into 4 main themes: financial, organisational model, staffing and other challenges. Financial challenges were discussed significantly more in 2014 than 2012 (38% increase), staffing and organisational model slightly less and others were on par.

Financial and funding-related difficulties were the most commonly identified challenge in 2014 (66% incorporated and 47%| non-incorporated). Applicants reported challenges arising from a lack of funding, an unstable funding environment, financial mismanagement and the wider economic climate. A key issue reported from both incorporated and non-incorporated applicants was the lack of funding and consequently the inability to meet increased community demand for services.

In 2014 27% of incorporated and 26% of non-incorporated applicants that reported financial challenges highlighted that erratic and unstable funding majorly impacted on the longevity of programs and their capacity to plan beyond current funding arrangements. Many applicants lacked secure and ongoing funding. One way that applicants overcame funding and financial challenges was the diversification of income streams. Through diversification applicants reduced their reliance on grant funding and explored innovative ways to fund organisation-specific programs.

Four incorporated applicants described their journeys of rebuilding trust after the mismanagement of funds by previous administrations. Policy regulation, training for relevant staff and directors, increased levels of transparency and community engagement initiatives facilitated this process.

Organisational challenges were reported slightly less frequently in 2014 than 2012. Management of rapid expansion and growth to meet community demand was the most commonly described challenge by incorporated applicants in relation to their organisational structure or business model. Issues arose from an organisational structure that could not support the new size and complexity of offerings, maintaining strategic focus and purpose in the face of increased opportunities, attracting and retaining Indigenous staff, and the process of organisational restructure and reform.

To overcome these challenges, applicants established strong relationships and partnerships with fellow Indigenous organisations; created new roles to specifically manage growth; re-developed the overall

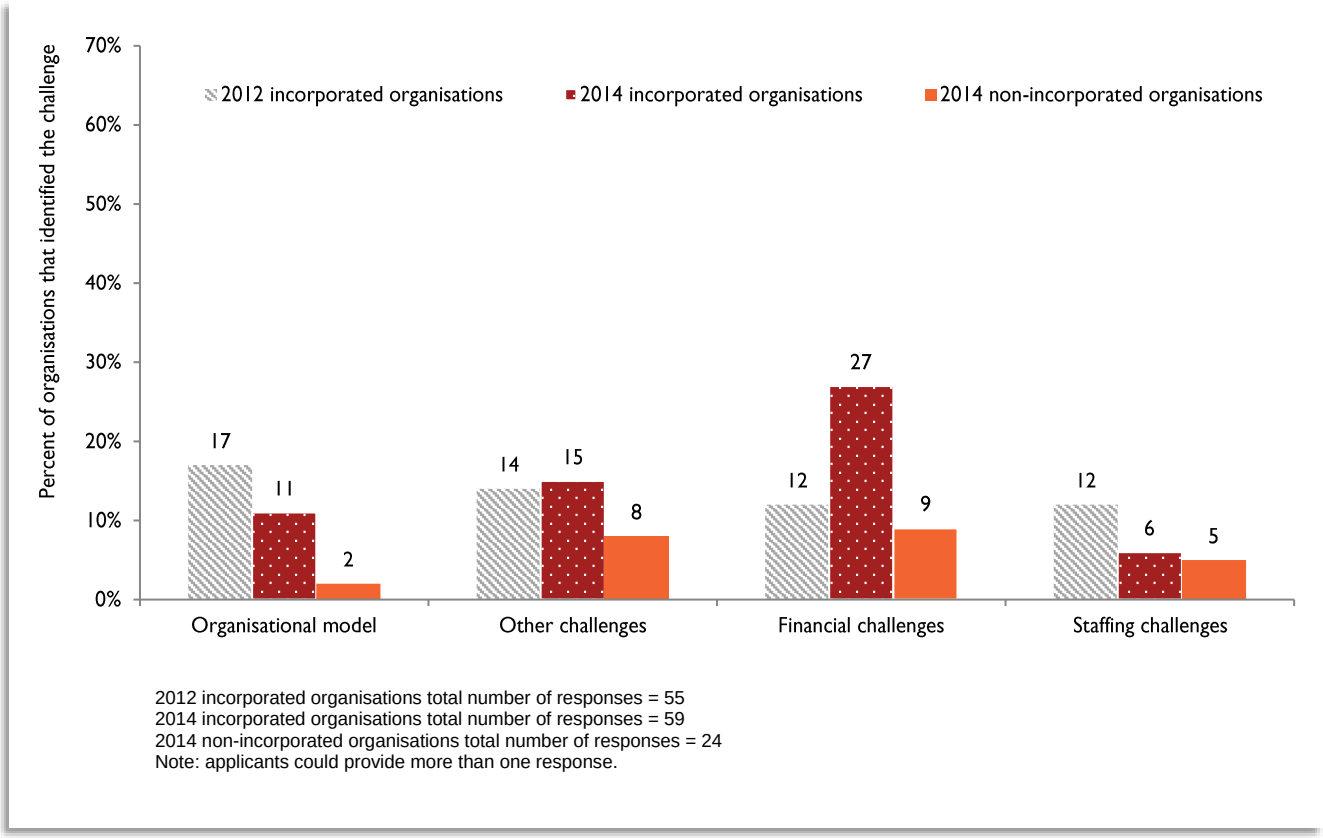
organisational structure to fit the new circumstances; provided training programs for staff to undertake their new roles and developed policies to support their staff, services and programs as they evolved.

Staff-related challenges were reported infrequently in 2014. Some applicants discussed challenges around the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff in senior management positions and the need to develop plans to support directors and staff in building skills. One applicant discussed difficulties recruiting and retaining qualified staff as a result of funding instability. In turn, this created difficulties for the organisation to maintain continuity of organisational knowledge.

In contrast to 2012, only one non-incorporated applicant mentioned challenges from working with volunteers. This was in relation to volunteer inexperience. Other staff-related challenges experienced by non-incorporated applicants included: building governance structures from scratch, managing their expectations around the project outcomes and retaining staff members over the duration of the project.

The majority of other challenges were project specific and arose from the context, industry or particular project run by the organisation. The challenges from operating in a remote location: isolation, weather and transport issues and a limited regional economy, were commonly identified. Interestingly, 'two-way governance' (balancing Indigenous and Western modes of governance) was not discussed as a challenge by incorporated applicants in 2014, as compared to 9% in 2012, nor was a lack of internal consensus identified as a challenge. Some noted of difficulties around government policies and procedures, for example the highly complex and changeable nature of native title law, or funding guidelines developed without community consultation.

Figure 19: Common challenges



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service (AADS)

"With the appointment of a new CEO, the organisation was undergoing a "shake-up". There was enormous and rapid growth with new services being funded and delivered; old partnerships being rekindled and new partnerships developed. Funding almost doubled in 12 months and 11 new staff were needed to deliver the expanded services. Staff were hired and trained without any additional management or recruiting process capacity. It soon became apparent that the organisational structure could not support the new size and complexity of the organisation.

AADS engaged consultants to undertake an organisational review. The review involved consultation with stakeholders and staff and resulted in recommendations for an organisational restructure. The restructure recommendations were implemented over a 6-month period that coincided with the organisation's membership drive and promotion leading up to the 2011 Board of Management election. During this time, as recommended by the review, a Business Services Manager and Program Delivery Manager positions were created and appointed; our membership doubled; and the new Board of Management was announced. The Board of Management immediately committed to supporting the new structure and requested a review of the Strategic Plan to ensure a shared vision, and understanding of how to achieve it, across the organisation. They also set about making decisions regarding delegations of power based on the new structure and ensuring the development and maintenance of suitable job descriptions including for the CEO whose title and level of responsibility had changed as part of the restructure."

Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience Indigenous Corporation (AIME)

"Adapting to the needs arising from growth has been key to the development of AIME's governance. This development process has included:

- use of external strategic planning assistance
- internal Board development workshops
- the introduction of the Audit and Risk Committee
- flexibility in Board attendance and participation through the provision of teleconferencing
- attendance of the senior management team at Board meetings
- involvement of AIME staff through a Board elective and attendance at meetings
- mentoring of management and Directors
- Director presentations to staff at AIME Institutes

On a bi-annual basis the Board and the senior management team participate in a survey to review governance matters, such as the role and composition of the Board and Board procedures and practices. Results from the surveys determine the topics for Board development workshops, mentioned above, which are held once each year."

Katungul Aboriginal Corporation

"Regrettably Katungul experienced a time of low governance that enabled the previous CEO to misuse funding targeted for Aboriginal health programs. However, this was exposed due to effective governance and ethical community leadership, resulting in the new administration seizing upon an opportunity to redirect and strengthen the corporate structure, enabling us to move to a skills-based board with particular focus on financial management via an audit committee who advise the board.

The previous board consisted of member representatives from the 10 major community centres within the Katungul footprint. The restructure reduced the board to 6 member/community representatives, 3 from each of the Local Government Areas (Eurobodalla and Bega) and introduced the two non-member positions that must bring a specialised skill to enhance the board's business and governance capacity.

Through this change we can effectively control the risk of nepotism and risk of 'capture' via ensuring family or other interest groups cannot gain an upper hand and the focus remains firmly on the operation of a premier service for all."

Kura Yerlo Inc.

"The biggest challenge is to remain strong (culturally, financially and operationally) and to effectively grow and respond to the evolving needs of our community within the constant backdrop of tough economics and highly complex social and welfare issues. We continue to deal with this through being purposeful in our directions, having an effective Board, having strong leadership and hardworking employees although we are stretched. We have entered into formal partnership agreements with other organisations to ensure we can effectively respond to the needs of our community members and we have examined our resources and finances and made some difficult yet necessary reforms. We are exploring other ways to generate more of our own independent income that we can invest back into the organisation and become less dependent on grants that never are guaranteed. We are working to pursue our DGR status so that we can attract corporate donations. We can't say that we have dealt with it as we don't wish to imply these challenges are resolved, but rather that we are dealing with it."

Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre (MWRC)

"MWRC's greatest challenge has been its rapid expansion in recent years. The inclusion of important units and programmes aimed to meet its strategic goals has meant that staff numbers have more than doubled. The organisation was seeing an increase in the number of non-Indigenous staff it was employing. A new cultural terrain had to be negotiated around the collaboration of Indigenous and non-Indigenous working and governance structures. Additional staff brought with them varying expectations and demands, in particular increased pressure on securing staff housing.

As MWRC has always utilised a responsive and flexible governance approach to the development of the organisation, it was quickly identified that until its Human Resources improved, the organisation would collapse under the management and demands of so many additional employees. A Policy and Human Resource Development Manager was hired to put in place the organisation's official policies and procedures.

Since then over 100 policies and procedures have been developed across the entire organisation that have all been reviewed and ratified by the Board. Additionally, given the number of new non-local staff working in an unfamiliar community it was decided to formalise the organisational philosophy of respecting and honouring the Traditional Owners of the land that we work and live on, along with their wealth of knowledge about the surrounding environment, cultural practices and deep history.

With the formalisation of the organisational philosophy it has been decided that operational and strategic plans need to integrate the philosophy into all work, goals and future commitments. This will ensure that all future programmes and units will be structured according to how best both worlds can come together and work in a new way."

Pormpur Paanthu Aboriginal Corporation

"The lack of funding [has been the organisation's biggest challenge]. It has decreased by 4 times in 3-4 years due to inexperience around reporting compliances and budget management. The workload is as much as a multi-million dollar Organisation, especially regarding accreditation. The lack of funding and lack of an operational budget means there are key positions not funded. The staff just work harder and longer and currently have a great deal of passion for the work they do. The Board and CEO lobby government as best we can as a collective group, meeting and lobbying government Ministers. It is great to have a genuine

working relationship with the Local Council who actively lobby for us, or with us. The Corporation is always included in the government/s Ministerial visits."

The Indigenous Runway Project

"At first we took in all volunteers to assist us to deliver workshops and prepare for up and coming runway events. We had not realised that some volunteers just weren't appropriate, nor suitable for various volunteer positions. We had trusted the faith of people's word in terms of experience and professionalism and learnt valuable lessons. Since then we have implemented processes in where volunteers are screened prior to any involvement, providing The Indigenous Runway Project copies of their CV, references and participating in interviews by our selection panel. By implementing these processes our team of volunteers have excelled enabling us to meet our objectives and deliverables on time."

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)

"VACCA has also grown rapidly in the last ten years and our biggest challenge now is to retain and increase the number of Aboriginal staff working in the organisation and senior management positions.

As an Aboriginal controlled organisation it is important for our identity and in our community relations that VACCA maintains its Aboriginality through recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff. We recognise that our Aboriginal staff are our greatest asset. The skills and cultural connectedness that our Aboriginal staff bring to their roles, their ability to relate to clients and their in depth understanding are vital to the way in which we deliver our services.

We recognise however that strong governance and infrastructure to support staff, and a commitment to their development, is necessary. The organisation is approaching these challenges through the implementation of a Workforce Strategy with a plan to address areas such as recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff, professional development and training, leadership and support of emerging Aboriginal leaders, and middle management."

Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation

"The biggest challenge for Waltja has been to survive and thrive as an independent organisation, financed through successfully securing competitive tenders, generating its own income through fundraising, and securing grants which fit with Waltja's priorities and goals during significant changes in policy, programs and services to remote Australia at the Commonwealth, Territory and regional levels.

In 2013, Waltja's Executive managed a major organisational restructure, in response to significant uncertainties in Government funding, and the reduced opportunities to apply for funds to address community needs in remote Central Australia. The Exec's concern was to ensure Waltja had an employment structure that was sustainable – funded through program areas and through Waltja's own investment funds – and also that all staff and trainees employed by Waltja would be available to travel out bush, to be able to spend time in communities with Directors, as needed. This was considered very important, so that all staff in Waltja have their own community connections and understanding of remote community people's lives and experience."

Wunan Foundation

"Poor Governance is a common feature of Aboriginal organisations in remote Australia, largely due to the lack of understanding of Board Members of their responsibilities. This leaves the organisation exposed to financial mismanagement and prey to unethical practices of those they engage with. Wunan has approached this in a number of ways:

i. Board Members' education. Those lacking experience as Board Members are provided with formal training.
ii. Independent Directors, with extensive experience in the corporate sector, provide advice to local Members.
iii. Key Management positions are filled by people with extensive experience of operating in organisations at a senior level.
iv. External specialists are employed to review the Governance framework of the organisation from time to time. This has included mentoring of Management and Board Members, and specific areas of focus, such as financial controls & reporting, HR compliance, investment strategy, record keeping, and legal review of the constitution."

4.3 POSITIVE AND MEASURABLE RESULTS

Evaluation refers to the systematic collection and analysis of different kinds of information about a process, organisation, project or event, over a particular timeframe, which enables people to better understand and objectively assess its worth, performance, relevance, sustainability and success. Evaluation enables people to then decide what may need to be changed and to make decisions about its future. When you evaluate something, you can assess its accountability, cultural legitimacy, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, outcomes and sustainability[27].

4.3.1 MEASURING IMPACT TO ENSURE EFFECTIVENESS

(a) Discussion and analysis

Applicants described a multitude of ways that they measured impact to ensure organisational effectiveness. The number of measures identified by each organisation ranged from 1 to 5, with an average of 2.

Client and stakeholder feedback was most regularly relied upon to gauge project and program impact by both incorporated and non-incorporated applicants. Feedback from clients and stakeholders was collected through both formal and informal means.

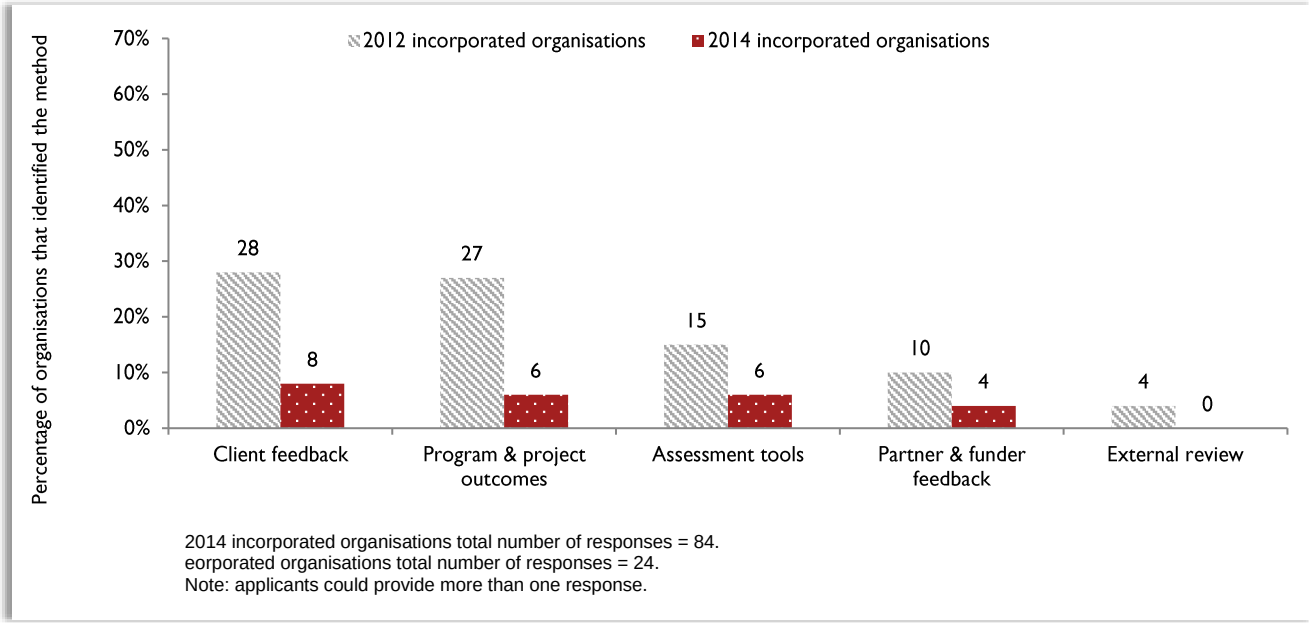
Formal measures included client surveys and service provider evaluations; informal means included anecdotal written feedback, community meetings and via social media.

Many applicants exemplified a continuous quality improvement framework. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation, assessment tools such as SWOT analysis (strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats) and internal reporting methods such as KPIs (key performance indicators) were commonly applied in this process.

An important facet of all review processes was data collection. Data was collected in many ways, from various sources, and then used to monitor, evaluate and implement future strategy. Several applicants created evaluative frameworks and collected empirical data to measure social impact as a way to demonstrate return on investment.

[27] Indigenous Governance Toolkit Section 1.1

Figure 20: Ways of measuring impact



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH)

"All of the organisation's activities are underwritten by access to accurate and critical data to ensure that our deliverables are targeting the needs and priorities of our client populations. The IUIH is continuously reviewing and evaluating outcomes to determine the impact and outcomes of activities. Outcomes of review processes are also used toward program/activity refinement to support continuous quality improvement and advancement and the best outcomes for our people possible."

Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre (MWRC)

"MWRC has also developed a strong evidence base through reviews from the alcohol restrictions, the Liliwan research results and a population survey run by ANU [The Australian National University] and assisted by MWRC. The organisation is coming to understand its community through a body of empirical evidence. However, the centre knows that to utilise this data effectively it has to develop evaluative frameworks so it can measure its social impacts over time and ensure that it is responsive to altering programmes that are not producing outcomes. Over recent months new staff have been employed under the corporate wing of the organisation to research different community development models and evaluation frameworks which fit with MWRC's philosophy of collaboration and flexibility, but still measure the effectiveness of the organisation and the best ways to achieve results. The organisation is currently embarking on a collective impact approach results based accountability framework."

Pormpur Paanthu Aboriginal Corporation

"This Organisation has a community survey that is undertaken by local people, and through door knocks; and the results allows the community to shape the Organisation so the Government must accept the evidence and trends that emerge; and the Organisation can identify the needs through the survey data when applying for funding. The survey content has allowed the Organisation to develop its Strategic Plan. The government/s know what the people want, versus driven by the government agenda."

Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation

"Waltja learns what is happening in the community from the Directors. Directors talk to Exec. Exec talks with workers. Waltja workers are invited by the Directors to come to the community. They stay; they meet the Directors and their families. They make friends. They become family. They listen to all people in the community with the Directors, young and old, men and women. We work together Anangu/Yapa and Kardiya, workers and Directors and community. It gives Waltja a better understanding of community and what people need, and gives us a strong voice with communities and with government. We make family from far and near. That's why we called the organisation Waltja – family."

Waminda South Coast Women's Health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation

"Waminda collects data from every program and every service provided, which is collated, analysed and compared with other months, programs and services. We then use this data to evaluate what we need to change or adapt. We gain feedback from community days and listen to our clients' suggestions, taking note and reporting and following up with them. In 2011, our research department began conducting interviews with Aboriginal clients and staff to evaluate Waminda programs and gain knowledge of their opinions and views on important issues in the community. The information uncovered has been used to inform our practices and to better deliver targeted services to the women."

4.3.2 BIGGEST SUCCESSES

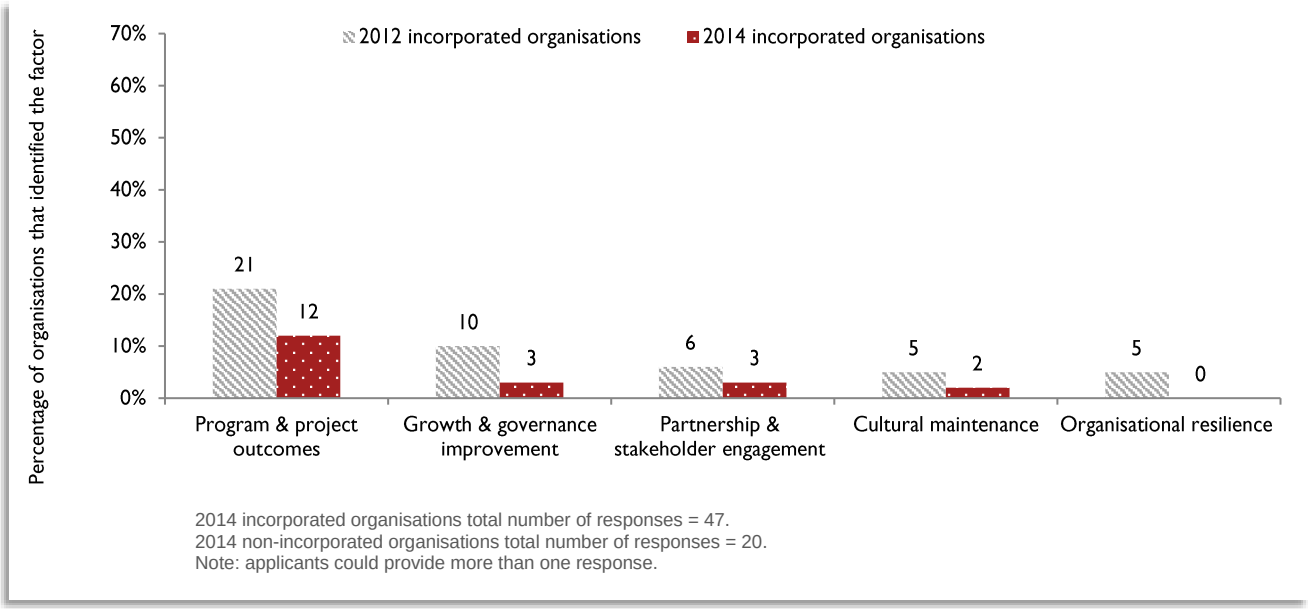
(a) Discussion and analysis

Overall, the establishment of new programs and projects, and achievement of effective outcomes were the most frequently reported triumphs (63% of non-incorporated and 51% incorporated applicants). Applicants described a host of outcomes they were proud of, from increased client engagement and enhanced accessibility to essential services, to the successful rallying for legislative change and facilitated access to traditional lands.

Organisational growth and governance improvement were the second most frequently reported triumphs. Applicants outlined their investment in governance development, provision of training and staff capacity building opportunities, updated internal policies and the creation of focused business and economic development units as examples of their successes. This investment is interesting to note, as a significant number of applicants (66% incorporated and 47% non-incorporated) reported funding was a challenge.

Non-incorporated applicants did not focus on organisational resilience when outlining their successes. This is perhaps due to the short-term nature of unincorporated projects.

Figure 21: Biggest successes



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Cultural Mapping and Community Governance (CAN WA)

"Initially, the Gnaala Karla Booja (GKB) Working Party were the primary decision makers. As the project evolved, the GKB community formed a reference group of Elders/ Leaders. This group provided guidance, cultural approval and direction on the cultural priorities they wanted to address. CAN WA's role was to facilitate the community dialogue using art and cultural methods. CAN WA also played the role of 'neutral partner' to the Reference Group and Working Party. At points of familial or personal contestation or conflict, CAN WA was not aligned to a particular part of GKB.

The benefits of having an external group facilitate and coordinate this project has been, we believe, critical to the success. Community engagement and producing art with community is our expertise for over 25 years. We can bring something to the GKB Noongar community - well founded experience in community arts and cultural development, established trust and relationships in the Noongar community and integrity given our own direct employment of Aboriginal people; and finally organisational infrastructure - we can manage complex financial arrangements, acquittals and human resource needs. We also acted as a neutral point within the community if conflict or contestations arose.

It is obvious to say that without GKB, this project would not be successful; however, it would be fair to say vice versa. The two organisations walking side by side in a reciprocal relationship is a key success factor to this project. In June 2014, CAN WA is conducting a public forum titled: 'Building Trust: Developing Solidarity on Noongar Boodja - the art of building relationships in contested places'. This will be a forum for GKB and CAN WA to discuss the importance of community governance and to collectively share the journey and the lessons learnt. This forum aims to share the learnings from all sides of the partnership about why community governance is critical to the conversation."

Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS)

"MDAS has committed itself to consulting, informing and communicating to a much greater degree. In 2013 MDAS upgraded the website, launched a newsletter and developed a strategy to raise the organisation's profile in mainstream media. This has delivered excellent results not only in improving awareness of MDAS and its roles, but in building pride and understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in our community."

Ngnowar Aerwah Aboriginal Corporation (NAAC)

"In the past 12 months, NAAC has undertaken a comprehensive review of its internal policies and either completed or commenced measures to improve or replace them. This was considered a priority for the organisation to ensure it fulfilled its legal, financial and social obligations. It now has a comprehensive and up-to-date Policy and Procedures Manual, which the Board formally endorsed in December 2013.

The Manual includes the following policies:

- Governance and Leadership Policy (including Rights and Responsibilities, Delegations, Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest, Staff Relationships, and Training)
- Financial Management Policy
- Physical Resources Policy
- Anti-Fraud and Risk Management Policy
- Human Resources Policy (including Discrimination and Harassment)
- Administration Policy
- Occupational Health and Safety

During the same time, NAAC launched a new three-year Strategic Plan which led to the development of meaningful Operational Plans for each of its key service areas: 7 Mile Rehabilitation Centre, Sobering Up Shelter & Night Patrol, Safe House, and the Community Centre. The Operational Plans provide Managers with a clear purpose and direction, which in turn has had significant benefits for staff morale, confidence and resilience."

Parnngurr Aboriginal Corporation

"The organisation's greatest success has been to turn around the financial situation of the Corporation. The community have for a number of years been slowly depreciating in terms of assets and cash at hand. The results of this financial year audit it is hoped will confirm that the community is regaining control of and increasing their financial capacity. This turn around was brought about by:

- passing a resolution at community meeting to cancel all forms of store book-up or credit;
- consolidating community assets and repairing those damaged or selling those assets which were unneeded or beyond repair;
- ensuring the community shop was being run profitably through re-evaluation of stock control, stocktaking and pricing;
- assessing suppliers and service providers and looking for less expensive options;
- ensuring all outstanding debts were paid;
- following up on all debtors and requesting payment;
- sending invoices out in a timely manner with follow-up on overdue accounts;
- ensuring that all community members are paying the appropriate rent and power to the community;
- applying for grants and government funding for community projects including a salary component that provides for in-community employment to deliver on projects; and
- developing relationships with adjacent communities which encourage mutual support through shared suppliers and service providers (saving on mileage and decreasing travel costs)."

The Marruk Project

"The greatest success of the Marruk Project is how it has successfully housed the sharing of culture within the Aboriginal community, in a way that was empowering and allowed for the development of ongoing, meaningful relationships between the participants, between Elders and young people, between emerging and established artists and cultural leaders. Through the sharing of cultural knowledge sitting at the core of the project, a generous, trusting and inclusive environment was created, within which there was an acknowledgement of the value of culture for everyone."

Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation

"The creation of a vibrant business model, that allows for flexible and creative growth [is the organisation's greatest success]. This has enabled Ungooroo AC to expand the number and diversity of its services that bring direct benefits to the community, which means that our core business, the community has remained our priority. This was achieved in two ways:

The creation of complementary business arms that provide commercial opportunities and income streams that support the long term sustainability and viability of Ungooroo AC without compromising the traditional culture and values of our members and community. Our unique culture is the thread that weaves its way through our entire operation and keeps us focused on our core values."

1. A strong community-focused board of directors and staff that have implemented an excellent governance model that is not only recorded and documented in our business plan and subsequent policies and procedures, but evident in the day to day operations of the organisation. Governance is an Aboriginal tradition that Ungooroo and its board and staff have kept alive by combining cultural values, social values, entrepreneurship and modern legislative requirements.
2. The creation of complementary business arms that provide commercial opportunities and income streams that support the long term sustainability and viability of Ungooroo AC without compromising the traditional culture and values of our members and community. Our unique culture is the thread that weaves its way through our entire operation and keeps us focused on our core values."

Waminda South Coast Women's Health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation

"A great success of the organisation is its ongoing existence – we are 30 years strong this year. In times of financial turmoil due to cuts in funding, the organisation pulled together and worked tirelessly to overcome the issues faced and do what was necessary to deliver services to the community at the most professional level even in the hardest times. Now, Waminda is operating stronger than ever and has the greatest number of staff to implement the wide range of holistic, culturally appropriate and community controlled programs Waminda has ever offered."

5 Criteria 3: Self-determination and Leadership

Self-determination is the right of all peoples to 'freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development'[28]. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination refers to genuine decision-making power and responsibility about what happens on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' lands, in their affairs, in their governing systems and in their development strategies. In essence it means Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples having meaningful control over their own lives and cultural wellbeing[29].

In this sense, we can understand Indigenous organisations and initiatives as vehicles of self-determination: they form the structures through which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples manage and exert authority over their own affairs and develop culture-smart solutions to social, economic and political issues.

5.1 UNDERSTANDING SELF-DETERMINATION

This section explores how organisations understand and demonstrate self-determination.

5.2 INVESTING IN CURRENT AND FUTURE LEADERS

This section outlines organisational approaches to board and staff training and leadership development. It provides examples of ways to build the capabilities of Indigenous directors, staff and youth.

5.3 INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

This section identifies the many ways organisations communicate with their members, clients, stakeholders and the wider community.

5.4 RESPECTFUL DECISION-MAKING

This section explores the processes organisations use to make and implement decisions, how they approach the situation if tasks are not followed through and how their decision makers gain legitimacy in the eyes of stakeholders.

5.5 EFFECTIVE POLICY DEVELOPMENT

This section investigates how organisations approach policy development.

"We wanted to have a voice and be part of the decision-making of our community and not be told what will be done to us. We want to tell government and employers what we want to do and how. We especially want people to respect us and how we live and our cultural backgrounds and ways. Martu did not have proper leverage on the RPA Steering Committee but now with the new RPA we have a proper and stronger voice and we are together as one working together."

Muntjiltjarra Wurrgumu Group (MWG)

Follow this link to view a video clip of the Muntjiltjarra Wurrgumu Group outlining how they demonstrate self-determination and strong leadership: https://youtu.be/gWORXPdyh1I.

"We govern using traditional ways of knowing. We bring some concepts from a Western governance, however we have no formal board or body, instead using traditional way – that is, we have an Elders Advisory Group that guides us and keeps us in check. This is governance our way – our work needs to go back to the Elders for their approval and support."

Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness

Follow this link to view a video clip of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency outlining how they demonstrate self-determination and strong leadership: https://youtu.be/xon1f1rDFI0.

[28] Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

[29] Indigenous Governance Toolkit Glossary

5.1 UNDERSTANDING SELF-DETERMINATION

The long-term goals of self-determination and self-governance are powerful catalysts for building the experience and skills of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to govern, manage and staff their own organisations. Some organisations are fully staffed by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Others have an Indigenous governing body, but mainly non-Indigenous staff. Most have a mix of both. With high rates of unemployment it makes sense to provide local work to local people, and many organisations now recognise this in their objectives and policies. This means organisations have to make an investment in training and mentoring support for local people. While there might be an initial cost involved, in the long term it contributes to building the overall capacity of the nation or community. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are developing many innovative ways to attract, train and retain their own local members[30].

5.1.1 DEMONSTRATING SELF-DETERMINATION AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

(a) Discussion and analysis

The 2014 applicants' responses encompassed multiple themes of self-determination: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in leadership positions, engagement with and investment in the local community, respect for and reflection of cultural practices, authority to set the organisational agenda and effective governance practice. The majority of incorporated applicants (73%) described 2-4 factors, which were frequently interrelated. For example, one applicant outlined that they had, "*work[ed] with Traditional Owners to empower them to achieve cultural, environmental and social changes that they want to seek happen on their own Country and within their community*".

A strong relationship with community and stakeholders was a central component of self-determination for 66% of incorporated applicants. Community engagement occurred through representation in the organisational structure and through hosting cultural events, programs and community gatherings. Applicants noted that community engagement benefited their capacity to build strong relationships with members, clientele, stakeholders and the wider community, and in turn, their capacity to deliver projects and programs designed around community need. Many encompassed the philosophy of 'community control' and stressed that the organisation and its services were designed to be representative of the communities it served.

Applicants understood self-determination and effective leadership as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being in decision-making positions. 68% of non-incorporated and 41% of incorporated applicants referred to their Indigenous governing body and staff members as demonstrations of self-determination. The organisations' leaders were described as prominent, powerful, respected, professional, skilled, of high standing and viewed as role models in the membership and community. Several noted that their directors also participated in other leadership roles within the community, such as Aboriginal Land Councils. The Awards entry criteria required organisations to be majority (over 51%) governed and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 49% of incorporated applicants self-described as 100% Indigenous led.

Many applicants described the incorporation of cultural values and practices into their governance and operational processes as examples of self-determination in action. Engagement with Indigenous Elders and Advisory Groups to guide initiatives, the provision of culturally informed programs and services and the promotion of culture in the wider, non-Indigenous community were common examples.

Applicants' ability to independently set their organisation's agenda, programs and solutions was frequently discussed as highly important. Often this was described in contrast to government-funded programs, which were dictated by policy agenda. Applicants described partnerships they developed or negotiated with other organisations (including mainstream services), which resulted in the provision of holistic and culturally informed services.

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[30] Indigenous Governance Toolkit Section 4.1

Local investment referred to the applicants' employment strategies and capacity building opportunities for local Indigenous Australians. The most commonly reported were targeted recruitment practices, ongoing training opportunities and career pathways support.

Governance practices that supported effective leadership included representation of members and community on the governing body, recurrent reviews of the governing body to ensure currency of skills, inclusive methods of planning and problem solving, transparent decision-making processes to promote director accountability, and ongoing governance training to support directors drawn from the community without prior experience in director positions.

Figure 22: Ways of demonstrating self-determination and effective leadership

(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service (AADS)

"AADS' initiation and leadership of the Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations Alliance (ACCOA) is another example of an innovative response to local issues and conditions. The ACCOA, a coordinated partnership of approximately 18 metropolitan agencies, aims to increase collaboration between the services and to develop a collective voice and approach to advocate for change. To achieve this, the ACCOA, led by AADS, has undertaken a mapping and scoping exercise to identify the governance and practice strengths, and issues and priorities of the participating organisations, in order to be able to prepare a collective response to the local context."

Aboriginal Community Engagement Group Port Augusta (ACEG)

"ACEG have conducted a series of Community Forums in various forms including Community meetings, open days and Service Provider forums held under the individual building blocks identified in the Local Action Agreement. Community Forums have been an integral part of the entire project, creating an avenue for broader community conversation and opportunities to engage with service providers, government and non-government organisations. This form of community consultation and engagement will continue to play an important role into the future work of ACEG. Most Service Providers have been keen to work with ACEG and to take on advice and implement actions identified. However, this has not

gone without challenges and some services have been reluctant and more challenging to work with than others."

Cultural Mapping and Community Governance (CAN WA)

"For the Elders this [cultural mapping] project enabled their voices to be heard. Then steps (and spaces) were developed to follow through with the opportunities for a workshop with their young people. And through workshops, when the young people sat with the Elders and heard their concerns and shared their knowledge and their culture – a transformation of understanding of relationships, of generations began. A conversation was started because of the desire for the Elders to connect with their young people. This is a really powerful example of self-efficacy (the ability for one to achieve a desired outcome through their own actions and contributions) and is critical for self-belief, empowerment and cultural honour."

Djilpin Arts Aboriginal Corporation

"Community ownership is central to the ethos of Djilpin Arts. Their programs provide and promote an environment in which the complex patterns of Aboriginal knowledge are adhered to, valued and respected. They have at their core, a community engagement principle, which revolves around skills development and cultural expression and transmission. The community is also committed to ensuring that its culture reaches and is understood by non-Indigenous audiences, seeing this understanding as essential to its being valued and surviving".

Girringun Aboriginal Corporation

"The development of Girringun's governance model has been directed by Traditional Owner priorities, aspirations and cultural needs as they relate to Tribal land and sea areas. This led to the establishment of a community-based organisation to represent Traditional Owner interests and provide a network of social, cultural, environmental and economic support services for Girringun Members and the Aboriginal community within the region."

KARI Aboriginal Resources Inc.

"The KARI Board is committed to maintaining 80% Aboriginal composition in its membership. This is very important for the ongoing integration of cultural values and priorities into our organisation, services and programs."

Kirrawe Indigenous Corporation

"At the time of incorporation, there was no Indigenous organisation providing 'grassroots' support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on the Northern end of the Gold Coast. Elders were receiving phone calls from community members who needed assistance and families were losing their children to both the care and protection and juvenile justice systems. A meeting was held at Labrador to discuss all these issues and a decision was made to elect an interim Board and begin the process of incorporation so these problems could be dealt with by a legal body."

"The Leadership tier (Program Managers, Coordinators and Child Care Director) are predominately Aboriginal people. This connects with the organisation's target of increasing meaningful leadership and

employment opportunities for Aboriginal community members. This has been expressed as important to our members, that there are 'Aboriginal faces when we walk in the door'.

Kura Yerlo Inc.

Having an organisational Strategic Review Planning Day with the Board, employees and other volunteers' works well as it has enabled everyone in the Kura Yerlo space to have voice and be a part of creating and sharing the Vision, Values and Strategic Directions."

Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS)

"In October 2013, MDAS launched an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy which has been developed with significant consultation with staff and community. Some of the initiatives include:

- Build staff capacity so there is a choice to progress at MDAS or enter mainstream organisations;
- Schedule study days for staff enrolled in further education; and
- Develop a study support policy for MDAS with additional support measures for Aboriginal employees.

To support this, MDAS has increased the people and culture team from a staff of two to a staff of five, including a Senior Human Resource Consultant with expertise in learning and development strategies and techniques.

Current systems such as a regular supervision model between staff and their direct manager is in place to support staff within their current role and through the process of change as these roles develop in line with the changing needs of the organisation.

These systems have been further enhanced during 2013, with the introduction of a performance appraisal system for all staff. The performance appraisal system will focus on current and cultural skill requirements of each staff member to support them in achieving their career and development goals and in turn support the organisation in achieving its workforce planning milestones as set by the Executive Management Team and Board of Directors."

Parnngurr Aboriginal Corporation

"The guiding principle that works best for Parnngurr Community is that the corporation is governed by the whole community. All members have the opportunity to make informed decisions at open forum Community meetings. To ensure that 'right way' governance is maintained, Elders, Community Directors and the Community Coordinator meet regularly and use the following process when discussing and deciding on community matters of interest:

1. Elders are consulted and have priority of speech.
2. Community Members speak regarding the agenda items discussed.
3. Directors decide on the outcome and resolutions are moved, seconded and added to meeting minutes.
4. Community Coordinator provides input regarding the decision that has been made and takes minutes.

This structure has been working well because it is based on traditional principles that are familiar to the traditional Martu style of governance. As a result, Community Members are more willing to become involved in the decision-making for the Community."

Muntjiltjarra Wurrgumu Group (MWG)

"We all came together as the MWG and made a decision to do the attitudinal survey so it was something we could do for our community. We wanted Martus to be the ones to run it and not ask outside people, for example from a university to come in and do it. We wanted to do it ourselves, as we know it is easier for Martus to speak to us because we are family. People feel more comfortable doing these kind of things with their own mob. Most people won't talk openly and honestly to outside people like government or researchers and will just tell them things they want to hear. We wanted to do it from scratch – design it and word it in our way of speaking, not in a high education way so that our Elders and people who have had little schooling can understand it better."

5.2 INVESTING IN CURRENT AND FUTURE LEADERS

Building the capabilities of Indigenous directors, staff and youth are practical ways of supporting people to feel skilled and confident in taking up decision-making roles. Building capabilities is a continuous process and many Indigenous organisations have ongoing training for governing bodies and long-term career development programs for staff. Because members of a governing body often have different levels of skills, experience and confidence, it is important they have regular access to a variety of governance training, updates, orientations and inductions[31].

An important component of capacity strengthening is leadership development. To meet contemporary governance challenges, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations and groups need to be able to grow their own young talented leaders, managers, negotiators and politicians, and give them real support and real roles. The leaders of today need to mentor and develop the leaders of tomorrow. This idea of 'succession planning' has been part of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies for a long time. There have always been rules and processes for educating the next generation of leaders by passing on the knowledge, practical skills and experience they need to progressively take on leadership roles[32].

5.2.1 INVESTING IN THE GOVERNING BODY: TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

(a) Discussion and analysis

Applicants demonstrated a clear commitment to support and develop the capacity of their governing bodies. 90% of applicants provided at least one form of training or support for directors.

Governance and professional skills training and development activities were the overwhelming priority (76%). Directors participated in workshops, seminars, certificate level courses, conferences, professional networks and community events related to governance and the organisation's area of operation. These opportunities were offered to all directors to strengthen the overall skillset of the governing body as a whole.

There was a strong focus on the need for the directors of the governing body to undertake governance training. Applicants utilised a variety of training providers which included: Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations, Australian Institute of Company Directors, Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre, federal and various state governments. Most frequently cited was through the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations.

Many applicants offered continuous board development opportunities – training 2-3 times throughout the year or at monthly meetings – to ensure currency of skills and knowledge was maintained. Some noted difficulty providing ongoing training on-site in the community due to remoteness and cost.

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[31] Indigenous Governance Toolkit Section 5.1

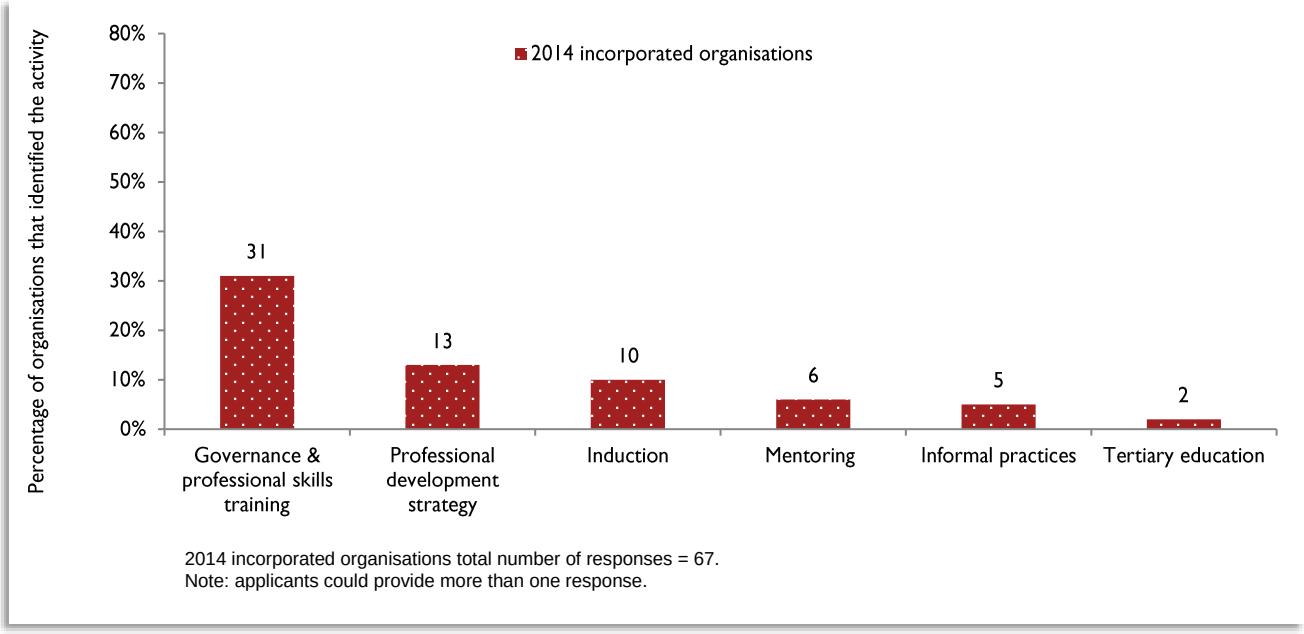
[32] Indigenous Governance Toolkit Section 4.4

Over a quarter of applicants (34%) described tailored professional development strategies for their directors. The directors were offered personal development programs and targeted capacity building support through skill appraisals, identified professional development opportunities and additional training.

24% of applicants described a formal induction process for their new governing body members. Induction generally included a tour and orientation of facilities, introduction to relevant staff, copies of a governance manual and the organisational policies, a Board of Management Kit and internal training.

Some applicants discussed the important role of informal practices, such as peer-to-peer mentoring (the newer members of the governing body being coached and supported by experienced directors so that they understand their roles and responsibilities) or 'on the job' training, learning by doing and informal sharing of information. Applicants described succession plans that re-elected half of the board at a time to allow for the mentoring of new board members.

Figure 23: Governing body training and development activities



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service (AADS)

"Each member of the Board of Management undertakes an in-house induction supported with an Induction Pack. The Induction includes 3 sessions covering corporate governance, corporate and organisational information and accreditation. The induction is supported by a Board of Management (BoM) Governance Manual which each Board Member gets a copy of as well as copies of the AADS Constitution, 5 Year Strategic Plan, latest Annual Report and the Organisational Structure and access to all the organisational policies and procedures. It should be noted that the Board chose to develop a governance manual as an added resource, even though they already had clear policies and processes documented. Although they didn't have to create it, the benefit of the manual has been that it tells the story of decisions that have been made around some of the common issues that come up for the community; and hence will avoid having to reinvent the wheel each time the issue/s resurface. Instead it gives the history of what has been decided previously and that can then be built on as required."

KARI Aboriginal Resources Inc.

"There has always been a very clear delineation of responsibilities between Board members and operational staff, creating strong relationships and effective practices throughout our organisation. The KARI Board chairman attends monthly staff meetings, the chair and CEO meet weekly and all sections make a presentation to the Board on an annual basis. Each new Board member meets with all KARI section managers to learn about our services and programs. These practices and effective communication channels between Board and operational staff have supported KARI through times of rapid growth and change."

Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation

"Waltja has consistently committed funds and in-kind support for Directors' professional development since incorporation. At least one Waltja Directors meeting per year involves helping Directors to identify their training needs and mapping training/professional development that they have been involved with. Waltja's CEO and project workers then seek to find relevant training programs/workshops.

Most of Waltja's professional development for Directors is to increase their knowledge of Waltja program areas, and their competence and confidence as community leaders and as organisational leaders. The professional development Waltja has provided in the past for Directors includes governance training, financial governance (with Waltja's independent auditor and our external book-keeper), Diploma of Community Services Coordination and Advanced Diploma in Community Sector Management, planning for community services, mediation training, and Money Management. Professional development for individual Directors also includes the creation and maintenance of their personal and professional profile.

Waltja also supports Directors to participate in professional networks and advisory bodies and supports Directors to attend conferences and workshops in Alice Springs, Darwin and interstate, usually accompanied by a staff member. Waltja supports young women from remote communities to accompany Directors to Directors Meetings, to learn more about the governance of Waltja, 'the Waltja way' of working, and planning, developing, implementing and reviewing programs and services."

5.2.2 INVESTING IN STAFF: TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

(a) Discussion and analysis

95% of applicants provided training and development activities for their staff members. Each applicant identified an average of three training/development activities in place and three applicants identified six different ways they built staff capacity. Activities ranged from a thorough induction and orientation process, to cultural awareness and local language maintenance programs, to support for staff to undertake related study at university or TAFE and mentoring.

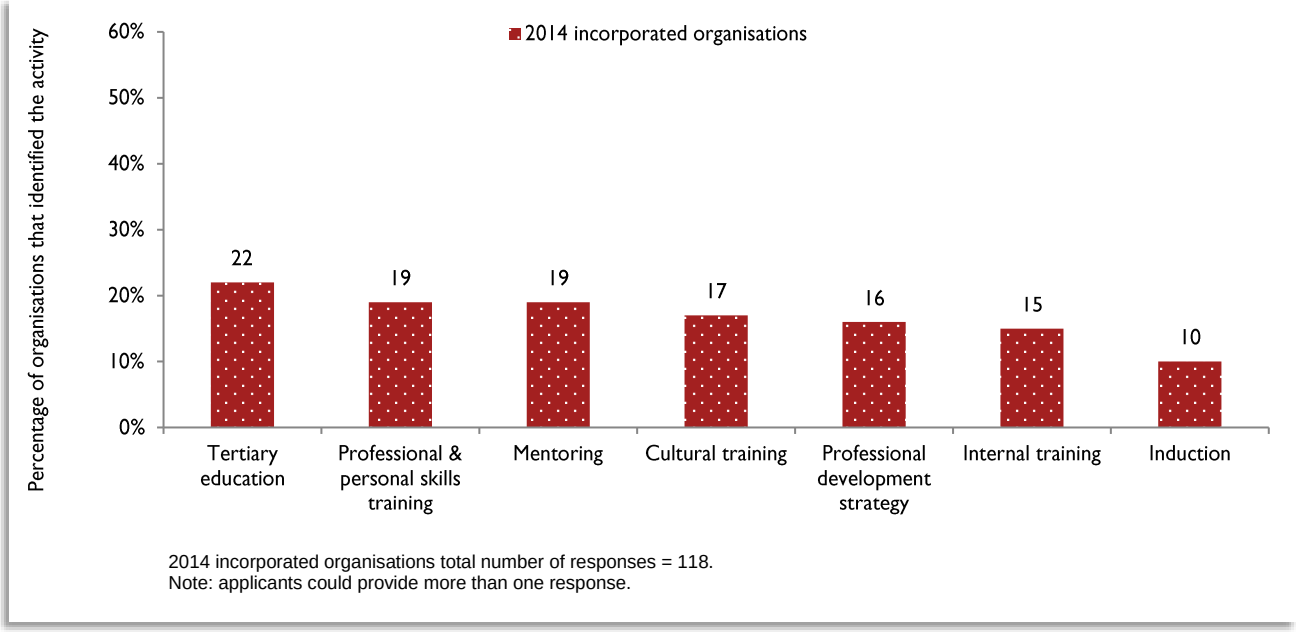
Staff members were provided with a variety of opportunities to build personal and professional skills. These included drivers' licencing, work experience in a senior role or related area of the organisation, management and leadership training, support to attain accreditation related to their area of work and participation at conferences to develop leadership, networking and communication skills.

Over half of the applicants supported their staff to attend university or TAFE to gain a qualification relevant to their position and increase capacity in their area of work. Applicants provided study leave, covered the financial costs of courses and provided quiet space to study. One applicant described a salary incentive aimed at encouraging existing staff to work towards university qualifications.

Many applicants (39%) utilised tailored professional development strategies to identify the training and development needs of their staff. These involved annual performance appraisals, competency reviews, training needs assessment tools and career pathways programs. The plans considered any skills gaps within the organisation as well as the wishes, skills needs, future career direction and potential areas for growth of the individual.

Staff members were provided mentoring opportunities that involved both internal and external pairings. Generally staff were matched to a senior staff member or with external experts in the community. One applicant described their CEO participating in a peer mentor group with other CEOs/managers who provided face-to-face, email and phone support to each other.

Figure 24: Staff training and development activities



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience Indigenous Corporation (AIME)

"For 14 days spread across each year AIME staff attend Learning and Development workshops at the AIME Institute, which is held in Sydney. Sessions include presentations and workshops, which are run by some of AIME's partners, such as Google and Lend Lease, as well as members of the team.

AIME staff have access each year to study and development leave for pursuit of external opportunities to develop their personal and professional skills, through, for example, attendance at short courses, work experience at another organisation or creating new research.

Staff are also able to access cultural leave to expand their knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, to strengthen their connection to the work AIME does."

Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (CLCAC)

"In order for the CLCAC to achieve its objective of promoting education and training, training matrices have been developed for each employee of the organisation. The CLCAC training matrix includes; the skills that are required in order to fulfill job requirements (which are outlined within the employee's position description); an agreed time frame for achieving the skills, the training to be undertaken, delivery method of the training required (e.g. in-house training or external training), the details (when, how and how much) of the time that will need to be allocated outside normal work hours if for off the job training; who is responsible for the delivery and/or assessment of each competency, all assessment details (so it can monitored), details of any recognised prior learning and any other requirements needed in order for the

training matrix to be completed.

The CLCAC uses the training matrix to identify what new skills each employee requires by targeting skills that will meet the needs of the Organisation for now and for the future. The CLCAC recognises that training can result in better communication, better safety practices, and productivity improvements. The training matrix identifies a clear career plan, with real internal prospects and better pay. Once CLCAC employees are trained in the areas identified, they can be up skilled to do new and different tasks, which assists with keeping employees motivated and ideas fresh. It also increases employees' self-esteem."

Inala Wangarra Inc.

"Inala Wangarra employs the following strategies to support the development of staff:

- Performance Development Reviews (PDRs) are completed with all staff on a 6 monthly basis. The PDRs offer opportunities to highlight the strengths of individuals and identify learning and skills development.
- Each month, staff undertake a day of internal development training that focuses on soft skills, Inala Wangarra's strategic direction, planning and evaluation.
- Other community workers are invited to the internal staff development training to build relationships and strengthen our community services.
- Staff and Board are encouraged and supported to undertake external training that pertains to their role.
- Staff are often referred to other experts within the community to be coached and mentored."

Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS)

"With the expansion to the People and Culture team, MDAS has made a commitment to increasing the focus on up-skilling existing staff and providing sustainable entry-level employment opportunities for our future workforce. To achieve this, and as part of the MDAS Indigenous Employment Strategy, we have committed to:

- Scheduling study days for staff who are enrolled in further education
- Providing a [quiet] study facility with modern technology (e.g. laptops)
- Providing mentors so study is a positive, productive and successful experience for staff
- Implement study support measures for Aboriginal staff.
- MDAS has a long-term plan and commitment to increasing the number of Aboriginal employees achieving a university qualification. In June 2013 MDAS implemented an Indigenous Traineeship Program. Through the delivery of this program MDAS aims to:
- Match the trainee with an appropriate mentor who has a wealth of knowledge and experience to share with the trainee and the capacity to support the trainees as they establish their career with Mallee District Aboriginal Services, and within the Community Services Sector.
- Ensure all trainees are provided with opportunities to develop and grow with the changing needs of MDAS and including identifying their strengths and development opportunities.
- Expose all trainees to a variety of divisions and roles, which may assist them to identify their career direction. All trainees will be given the opportunity to:
  - Spend a day with someone from another team;
  - Attend a team meeting other than their own team; and
  - Attend organised program events outside their general work area."

5.2.3 INVESTING IN FUTURE LEADERS

(a) Discussion and analysis

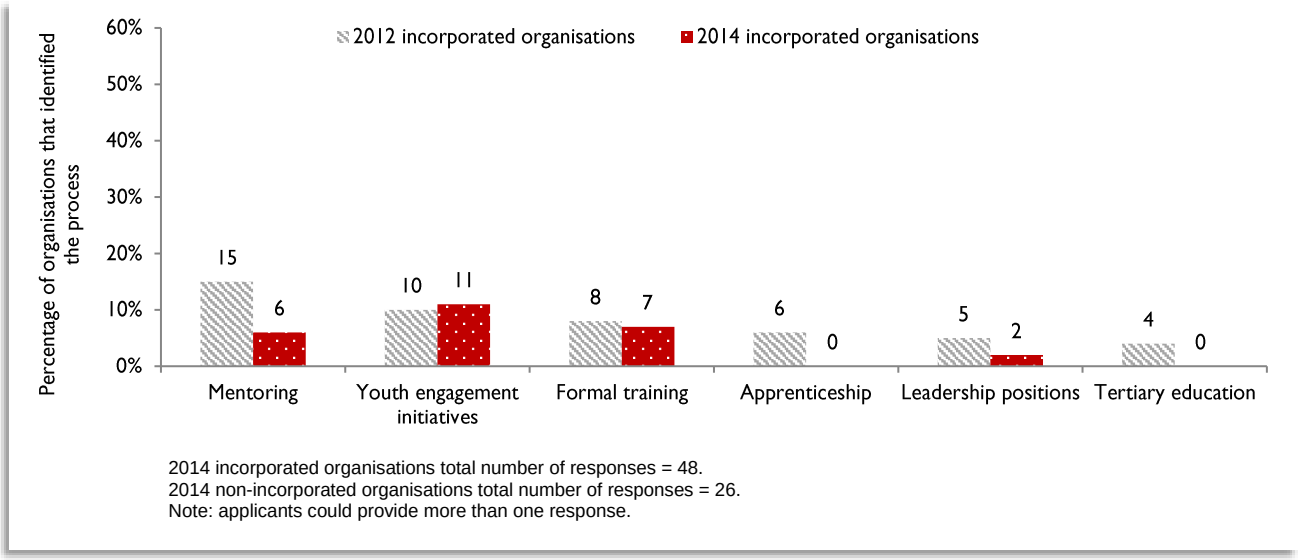
In 2012 84% and in 2014 71% of incorporated applicants described a deliberate, planned approach to youth potential and leadership development. Mentoring was the most common activity to encourage future leaders to flourish. Youth mentorship programs matched participating individuals with senior staff, industry experts, prominent community members, Indigenous leaders or Elders. Youth appointments, such as organisational leadership positions, youth committees or appointments on the governing body, provided mentoring and ongoing support from other directors.

Other initiatives included school engagement programs, youth delegate forums, appointment of youth engagement officers, national youth networks, local action agreements and allocation of resources for school groups, TAFE/university students and community groups to visit the organisation. Applicants also noted provision of youth conferences and scholarships.

Formal training referred to skills development programs and often focused on leadership development. A few incorporated applicants provided support for young staff and trainees to attain tertiary education qualifications. Others provided apprenticeship options, such as school-based apprenticeships, traineeships, work experience, after school programs, or entry-level positions. Applicants noted youth apprenticeships as a strategy to address skill shortages in the industry.

For non-incorporated applicants in 2014 youth capacity building was very organisation specific. The majority of mechanisms (74%) related to youth engagement programs and initiatives run as part of the organisation's main operations. Applicants described various programs intended to inspire confidence in Indigenous youth, encourage emerging leaders and build youth capacity.

Figure 25: Future leaders capacity development activities



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH)

"The IUIH has a particularly strong workforce development program, which seeks to support the growth and development of future leaders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health via a range of avenues. In particular, there are three main example of how the IUIH is working to advance the development of young Indigenous leaders in our community, including:

- Identifying and actively promoting and supporting strategic undergraduate and post-graduate placements for medical, nursing, allied health, business, administrative and other trainees through formal partnerships with academic and training institutions, including the University of Queensland, GP training providers and others.
- Through the IUIH's partnership arrangement with the University of Queensland, a leadership program was able to be run with the UQ Business School. The week long Indigenous Future Leaders Program, which was part of UQ Business School's Executive Education offering, was attended by fourteen participants with backgrounds ranging from medicine, social work, nursing and professional sport. The course was delivered by Kenneth Wiltshire, the JD Story Professor of Public Administration at the UQ Business School and Director of the IUIH, who explored such themes as leadership styles, the journey from traditional not-for-profit to social enterprise, engagement with media, financial models and the future challenges facing the Indigenous health sector.

Actively promoting and supporting opportunities for employment, training and career development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with an emphasis on using a structured traineeship and mentoring program that incorporates pastoral care and support to ensure a holistic and comprehensive approach to Indigenous young people's personal and professional development."

Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre (MWRC)

"MWRC employs a permanent organisational mentor. She works across the whole organisation and is assisting all staff, primarily youth, in a variety of activities such as CV and letter writing etc. It is important that youth are confident with all demands of working life so as to build confidence and not feel disenfranchised due to not being able to complete certain office requirements. No staff member is made to feel like they cannot do or achieve something. The purpose of the mentor, along with the entire organisational ethos, is to promote self-worth and confidence to build empowerment over time. Staff are provided with training and mentoring so over time they feel ready to take on any leadership role."

The Marruk Project

"The Marruk Elders Advisory Council and project team have shared their skills with participants in targeted mentorships, to nurture community capacity and build real skills to enable the creation of ongoing arts and cultural work into the future.

Future leaders have been nurtured through the Youth Advisory Group structure. Participating Young people were given the responsibility to work alongside the Elders Advisory Council to explore the contemporary context of the Dreamtime stories selected. This was a responsibility entrusted to the young people, and they accepted the responsibility with pride, to investigate how these stories could be opened up and shared in a way that was current and relevant to the young people of Swan Hill.

The governance structure allows for emerging leaders to be supported to have a voice and carry out important cultural responsibilities."

Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation

"In planning for the long-term sustainability of Waltja, Directors bring young women to the Directors meetings. This is important so that the young women learn about Waltja's governance, can listen to the senior women and learn from them and in the future take up leadership roles themselves – succession planning. Also it is helping the young women to build their confidence to speak up about their ideas and the issues that concern them."

Yuku-Baja-Muliku Landowner & Reserves Ltd (YBM)

"YBM supports the local schools with opportunities for school-based apprenticeships, work experience and after school programs to help youth get an understanding of what we do and what they can aspire to do. The Yuku Baja Muliku people have developed a junior ranger program to ensure that young people on country can learn from their Elders. It also provides an opportunity for non-Indigenous people to learn more about the country. The Yuku Baja Muliku rangers have assisted with school excursions to teach students about sick and injured marine life and introduce students to turtles in care. The rangers have also hosted school camps. Activities included: knot tying techniques, orienteering, sustainability discussions, spear making and other bush craft. Yuku Baja Muliku has also hosted camps and out of school activities for displaced students from Mareeba, Cooktown and Hopevale. This gives the students an opportunity to see what we do, and for them to have positive role models within the community. During these activities we provide mentoring, hands on activities and training. We have had a number of students and other community members seek employment and training with us."

5.3 INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

Effective communication methods are vital to an organisation's successful operation. Honest, regular and useful communication between a governing body, and its managers, members and stakeholders is essential for achieving an organisation's goals. It is also important for staying legitimate and accountable[33].

(a) Discussion and analysis

Applicants presented thoughtful, targeted strategies to engage with their members, clients and stakeholders. The varied range and multiple types of communication methods employed by applicants demonstrated a strong commitment to engagement.

Formal processes, local meetings, print and electronic media were the most commonly utilised methods of communication (reported by a combined average of 71% of incorporated applicants across 2012 and 2014). Electronic media, such as emails, website, Facebook and Twitter were the most frequent methods of communicating with stakeholders for non-incorporated applicants (63%).

Formal processes referred to meetings; Annual General Meetings, network and partnership meetings, and/or organisational reports; annual reports, site and partner reports and reporting to funding bodies. Several applicants posted or emailed their annual report to members and key stakeholders. Some also invited funding bodies or key stakeholders to meetings of the governing body, and held community strategic planning days with members and partners. For non-incorporated applicants, formal processes consisted of regular open meetings, however, only 1 group noted producing an annual report.

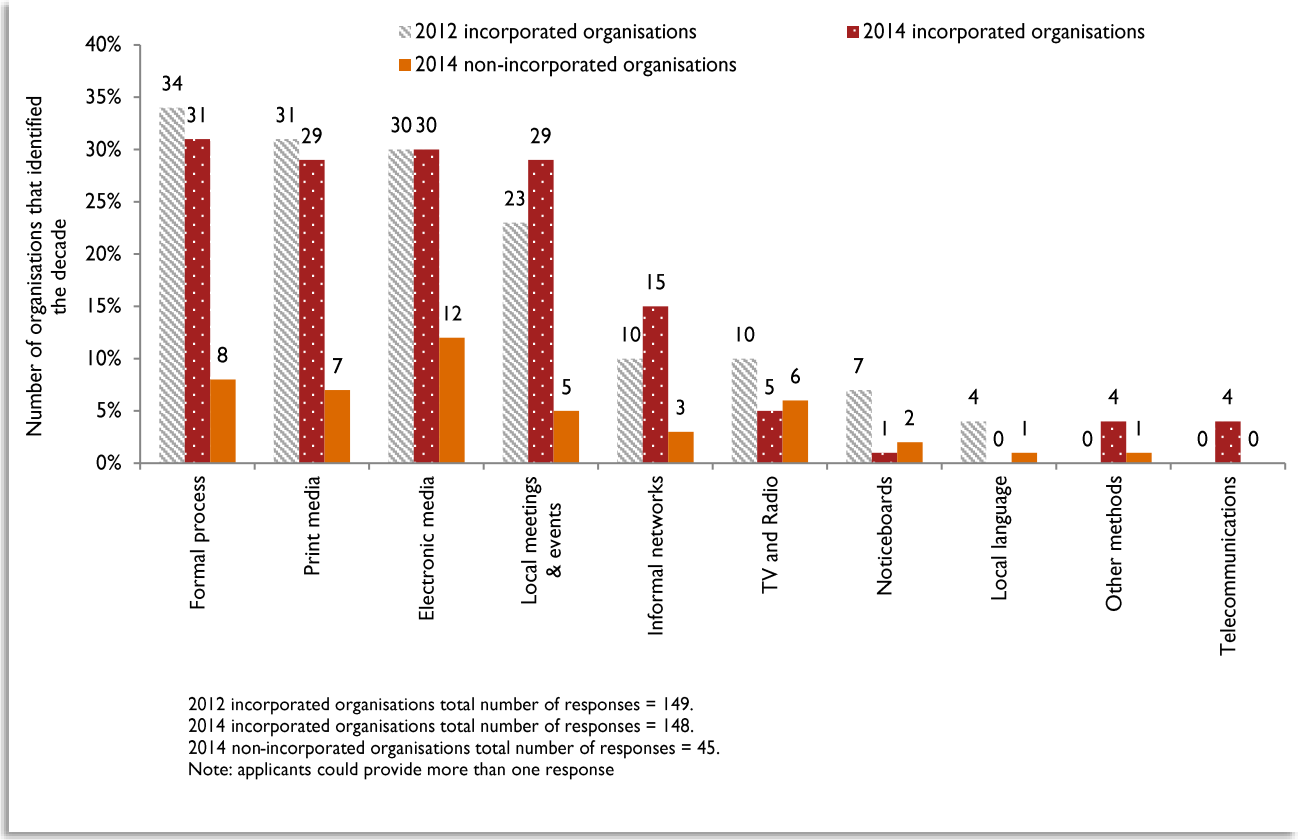
Incorporated applicants mentioned local events and informal networks as methods of inclusive communication slightly more in 2014 than in 2012. Local events included: community days, cultural performances, outreach

[33] Indigenous Governance Toolkit Section 5.5

programs, NAIDOC week and Sorry Day events, annual open days, fundraising and facilitated conferences. Informal networks arose through staff and directors' local community and family connections, daily work in the community and participation in other committees, boards or professional memberships.

New methods of communication described in 2014 included: members and stakeholders contacted via phone calls and SMS updates, branding as a method to identify and promote work, and the creation of community liaison positions in the organisational structure. One applicant, for example described their Community Engagement Manager who was a respected senior Indigenous person who could gauge community reaction to change and listen to complaints.

Figure 26: Methods of communication



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service (AADS)

"Board of management meetings are open to members, however, most of the consultation with the community and relevant stakeholders occurs outside of this forum, in the community, and is overseen by the Chair. Usually the Chair delegates conversations that need to be had. We don't rely solely on reported research, we back this up by our own community research, we ask our people, our families, our communities. Our explorations may include review of available evidence-based research and the Board of Management members and CEO discuss and consider the options at length with a range of stakeholders within the community. These are usually informal one-to-one or small group discussions which are reported back to the Board of Management. A big advantage for AADS is that we come from the community, from family; and we personally experience the impact of alcohol and other drugs, and related issues, on family and the community."

Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation

"Another important feature of Maari Ma's communication and consultation with our members, clients and communities is our Manager Community Engagement position. This is a respected senior Indigenous person with excellent communication skills which has proved to be very important in gauging community reactions to changes and new programs and helping to listen to complaints and diffuse issues which may otherwise become heightened."

Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre (MWRC)

"MWRC views its work as not only supporting the community's development, but also as a celebration of the past and present strengths of the region. MWRC ensures that at all community gatherings food is provided, there is time for informal conversations and all new staff members are formally introduced to community members. MWRC presents all its work over the previous year. All work is presented in a clear format, often visually depicted with simple annotations for many of our members who are second or third English language speakers. There are also verbal translations in Kriol, a language shared by all across the Kimberley."

Ngnowar Aerwah Aboriginal Corporation (NAAC)

"Fortnightly staff meetings, led by the Centre Managers, are held at each of the service sites, which are located in different parts of Wyndham. Centre Managers then meet with the Service Manager who reports to the Chief Executive Officer who then reports to the Board. This process is an effective way to maintain timely communication across multiple sites without causing unnecessary duplication of meetings.

During the last 12 months, NAAC has drastically improved how and when its shares information with the general public and stakeholders. It has initiated regular media activities by writing and distributing media releases to local, state and national media outlets. In the past six months alone, NAAC has distributed nine media releases and achieved more than 10 separate media results.

This year NAAC released a suite of information brochures to increase awareness and understanding about the services available to the community. The brochures are also available to allied service providers to use as an information resource for themselves and their clients.

NAAC understands that it is important to be open, transparent and approachable and therefore has launched the Ngnowar Aerwah Aboriginal Corporation Facebook page. The page has been operational for only five weeks and has already attracted 119 Likes and regular page traffic. The page is a useful channel for sharing information and engaging with people from within the local community and further afield."

Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation

"The hosting of a range of cultural events and active participation in activities within the community has enabled Ungooroo AC to sustain and strengthen [their] relationships and increase their connections within the community. It is a regular occurrence for Elders within the community to attend the morning tea hosted by UAC at their office location. These are informal gatherings that respect culture and heritage whilst facilitating an open and safe environment for all mobs/clans in the Upper Hunter to come together for open dialogue about issues affecting the Aboriginal community and youth. These gatherings are tangible evidence of capacity for true conciliation to occur as they:

- Bring the community together;
- Create an atmosphere for community members to yarn;
- Provide guest speakers from essential service providers and NGOs to consult regarding service provision in the Upper Hunter;
- Provide a Culturally safe environment for consultation purposes with local community Elders; and
- Enable community members to discuss local community issues and opportunities."

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)

"VACCA has a range of feedback processes which include:

- A hyperlink on VACCA's public website that takes people to an electronic survey, and VACCA's Feedback and email address. This allows clients, community members and stakeholders to take advantage of providing feedback electronically. Where clients do not have Internet access, they can utilise VACCA's Internet Café for computer access. Feedback opportunities are also promoted via VACCA's Facebook account.
- A feedback and complaints brochure that is provided to all new clients in their Welcome Pack and is available in reception at every VACCA office. This is a prepaid, self-adhesive brochure that allows clients to provide confidential written feedback at any time and through no expense to them.
- Specially designed surveys are mailed out to clients with a pre-paid envelope. This includes a letter and an option for them to request a phone call to provide feedback.
- Our website, Facebook page, e-staff bulletin and VACCANET emails are our primary electronic means of communicating with staff. We also have regular staff in-services and conferences.

VACCA's annual report is sent out to key stakeholders and partners every year and available on our website."

5.4 RESPECTFUL DECISION-MAKING

An informed decision is one that is transparent, considered, consistent and actioned. To gain a wider legitimacy that takes hold amongst group members, a governing body needs to consult widely prior to and after making its decisions. Once decisions have been made, it is typically the job of the management and administration to implement them. This process should include feedback on the decision to community members and key stakeholders. It is critical that the governing body stays on top of monitoring the implementation of decisions. The organisation should develop processes to support monitoring and provision of regular 'action updates' to the governing body from senior management and staff[34].

5.4.1 DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

(a) Discussion and analysis

In 2014 the large majority of applicants (85% incorporated and 74% non-incorporated) drew on established managerial structures and documented organisational procedures for making decisions, a significant increase from 33% in 2012. Over half (56%) of incorporated applicants utilised multiple (2-3) processes, consistent with 2012 findings that different strategies were employed based on the type of decision being made.

Incorporated applicants frequently described documents that guided their decision-making process. The Organisational Structure, Delegations Policy (matrix) or the Constitution were referred to in order to identify who had the authority to make specific decisions. Strategic plans and Action Items from Meeting Minutes were referenced to ensure that decisions reflected the organisational agenda. The Directors Code of Conduct Policy set appropriate behaviour during board meetings to facilitate robust and respectful discussion.

Non-incorporated applicants agreed upon set processes to make decisions, however, these were not necessarily formally documented. Directors and committee members either made decisions at regular scheduled planning meetings or delegated project responsibility to members with specific expertise. Some applicants also described the need for additional consultations with their Elders Advisory Councils to advise on specific decisions.

Consultation, voting and consensus processes were outlined less often in 2014 compared to 2012. When incorporated applicants discussed voting, they noted that a quorum (minimum number of directors) was

[34] Indigenous Governance Toolkit Section 5.3.2

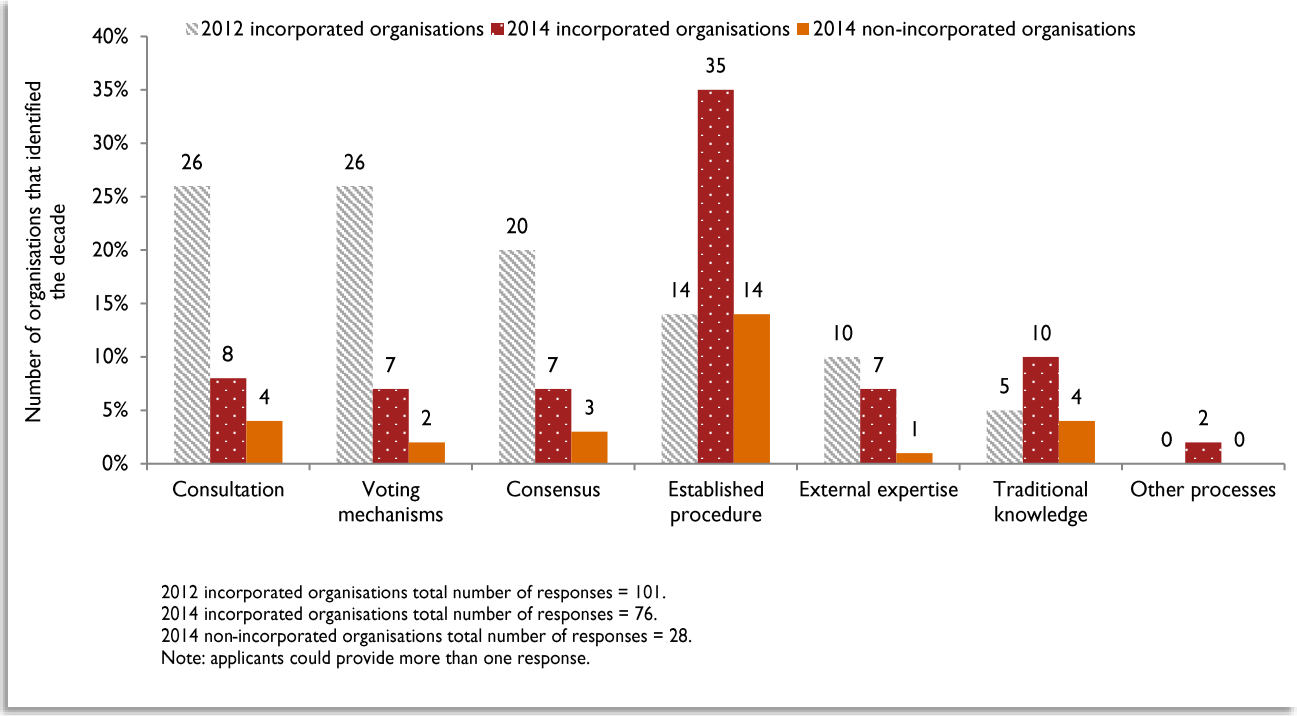
required to hold a vote and if a clear majority wasn't reached, the Chair or President had the 'captain's call' or casting vote. Some applicants explained that voting was only turned to as an option if a consensus could not first be reached.

Consultation processes included a variety of parties, such as meetings with relevant staff and stakeholders, liaising with representatives from partner agencies, engagement with members at the Annual General Meeting or Members Planning Day and hosting 'whole-of-community' events to provide the wider community with opportunities for input on decisions.

Incorporated applicants were more likely to engage external expertise to provide specialist legal, financial, scientific or business advice to inform management and decision-making than non-incorporated groups.

Observance of local cultural and traditional values and seeking advice from Elders on major decisions was reported slightly more frequently in 2014 than 2012. Some other factors that informed decision-making identified in 2014 were: critical thinking, good business practice, cultural concerns and capacity to deliver.

Figure 27: Decision-making processes



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Girringun Aboriginal Corporation

"Being an Aboriginal Corporation operating in a mainstream urban context, Girringun has adapted and developed a unique blended style of governance. Decision-making is based on traditional Aboriginal processes and consensus seeking, in line with clear reference to the organisation's accredited rules. The Board confirms and ratifies all major strategic, financial and operational decisions including grant funding proposals, consultancies and employment contracts. Decisions are made by the Board on the basis of consensus wherever possible, however each Director holds a vote, with the Chairperson also holding a casting vote. The Executive Officer (who is not a Board Director) and senior staff including the Finance Manager provide administrative, HR, strategic and project-related advice to the Board to support effective decision-making. Day-to-day operational decision-making is managed by the Executive Officer in close consultation with the

Chairperson and Senior Staff, particularly when matters of importance are to be determined."

"All Directors are encouraged by the Chairperson to have input and decisions are made by consensus. The Board of Directors has their own code of conduct, as drawn up by the Directors, regarding meeting protocols and these are adhered to. Directors are treated with respect at all times."

Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation

Waminda South Coast Women's Health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation

"We make decisions in a collaborative way – we want to ensure people have a say, feel that they are heard, feel that their ideas are validated and important. This is very important to Waminda as we don't operate in a strictly hierarchical fashion – we reflect family and community decision-making processes."

5.4.2 HOW DECISIONS ARE CARRIED OUT

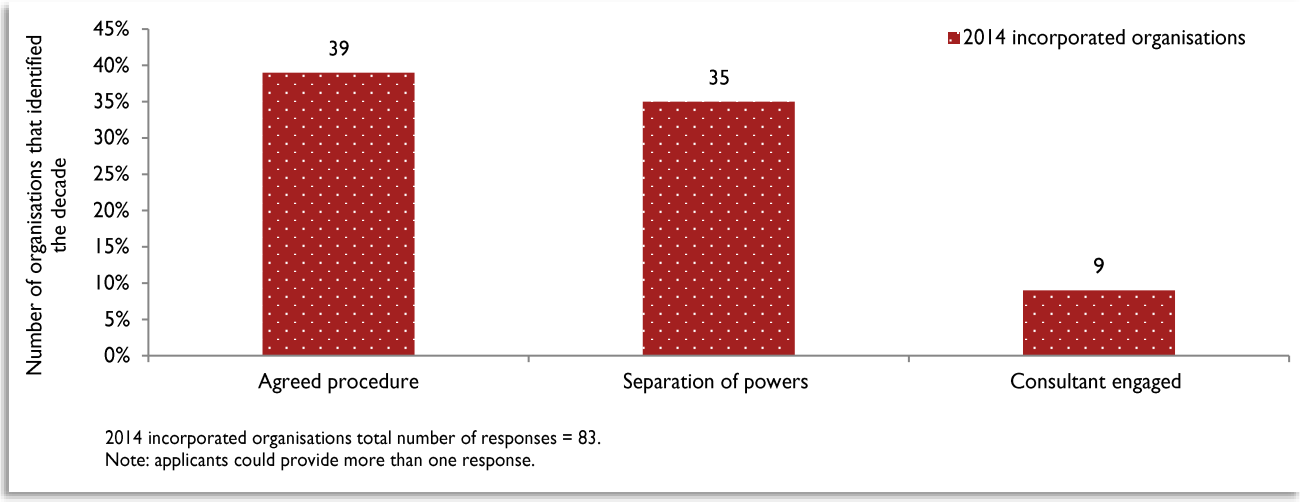
(a) Discussion and analysis

Nearly every applicant (95%) described the existence of an agreed procedure for allocating task responsibility. Most utilised formal documents such as a Delegation Policy or matrix, Position Description or Operational Structure to guide allocation. The Meeting Minutes were also commonly referred to as a method of identifying tasks and assigning responsibility.

The majority of applicants (85%) referred to separate roles of the governing body and senior management in decision implementation: whereby the directors were responsible for strategic direction and the CEO or senior staff responsible for enacting decisions at an operational level. In these cases, the CEO was expected to delegate tasks to appropriate staff and ensure completion.

Some applicants engaged consultants to complete tasks or projects if resources or expertise required for delivery was unavailable within the organisation at that point in time.

Figure 28: Methods of carrying out decisions



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH)

"The IUIH has a 'Delegation of Authority Policy' that enables the board to delegate their authority under the constitution to appropriate staff, the CEO and senior management positions, for day to day operations of the organisation. The policy outlines what the board has responsibility for (i.e. making decisions around strategic planning, the purchase and sale of real estate, purchase and sale of intellectual property, financing etc.), as well as including a very detailed table of authorisations that sets out who has delegated authority for what items, with specific limits and restrictions on the level of authority to be applied. This provides a set framework for internal control, whilst still enabling the organisation to operate efficiently and effectively."

Kura Yerlo Inc.

"Generally, decisions made by the Board would be communicated by the CEO to the appropriate personnel and/or the whole of the organisation (dependent on what the decision related to) and where relevant, the community. Such decisions are provided both verbally and in writing (email, letter, internal memo and newsletter). We have found it to be advantageous to have both the CEO and the Chairperson co-sign as it further strengthens the importance of the decision, shows a collaborative unified effort ensuring no undermining occurs and that the decision has been carefully considered by Management and the Board."

Marr Mooditj Training Inc. (MMT)

"MMT's Management Committee provides strategic direction and support to the organisation, and exercises decision-making in areas that are beyond the scope of the Director. The Management Committee's decisions are recorded in the Management Committee's minutes, and disseminated to staff by the Director during weekly staff meetings. Where Management Committee decisions have operational implications, the relevant managers are tasked with putting in place action plans, in collaboration with their staff, to address the required outcomes. Where in-house capacity is not adequate to carry out the Committee's decisions, a brief is developed for the project, and a suitably experienced and qualified consultant sourced. The Director provides the selected consultant with a brief, and project manages the delivery of the required outcomes."

5.4.3 HOW DECISION MAKERS DERIVE AUTHORITY AND LEGITIMACY IN THE EYES OF STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNITY

(a) Discussion and analysis

Applicants provided a multitude of reasons to explain why their stakeholders and the wider community respected the authority of their leaders. These ranged from institutional capacity to personal connection with, and the reputation of, individual leaders. Trust in the legitimacy of an organisation's leadership stemmed from many interrelating factors. All applicants outlined at least one factor, on average two to three factors were given.

Professional expertise was rated highly by all applicants. Their stakeholders prioritised leaders who were knowledgeable and well experienced in sectors related to the organisation's mission, goals and activities; had extensive networks and had undertaken governance training. Incorporated applicants valued CEOs that were well experienced in building and maintaining relationships and possessed highly developed human resource management skills.

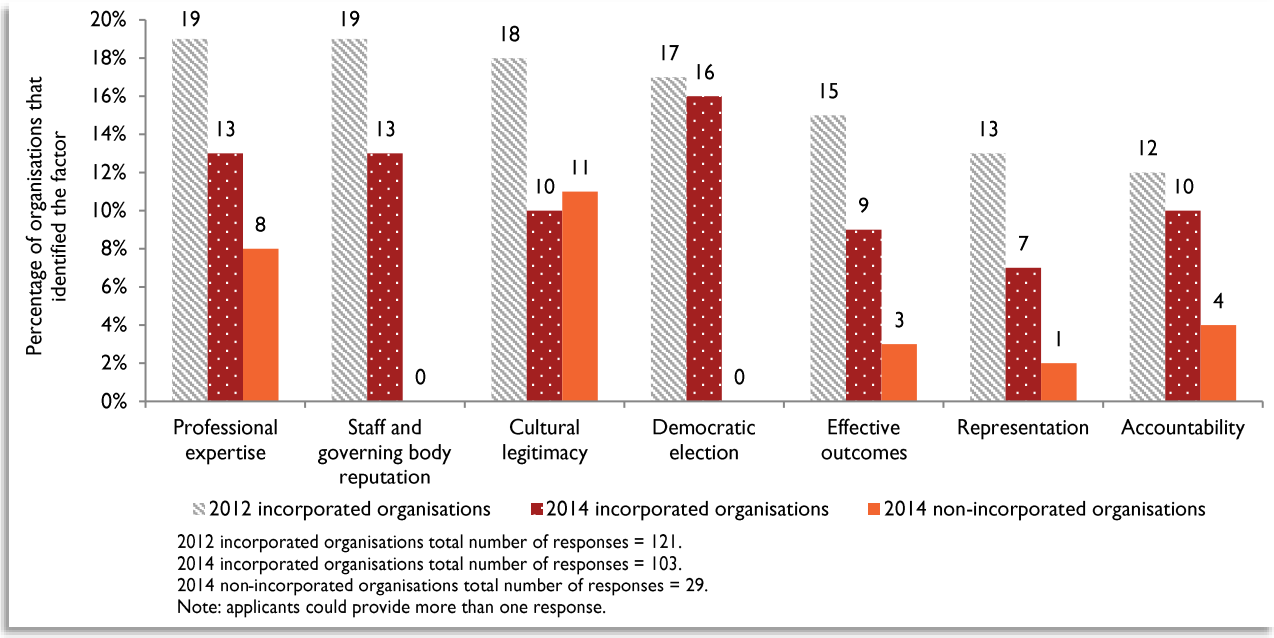
Cultural legitimacy was the most frequently reported factor (58%) by non-incorporated applicants in 2014. Cultural legitimacy involved the use of traditional governance structures, employment of traditional knowledge

holders, and/or encouraging Elders to participate in the organisation. Often the governing body were members of the community, or had knowledge of and a connection to the community, and therefore understood the local cultural groupings and traditional values. This factor overlapped with concepts of 'representation'; the governance structure facilitated representation of the different stakeholders, language groups or service areas that were within the region where the organisation operated. As one applicant explained, *"the group has cultural legitimacy as the community picked who the representatives should be. All the major groups and families are represented."*

Across 2012 and 2014 democratic election – defined by CEO appointment and governing body election through open and transparent processes – remained a key factor for incorporated applicants. Community consultation was described more frequently in 2014 (34%) than 2012 (19%). Consultation occurred through directors' active participation in their respective communities, their accessibility to members by attendance at community events, consultative meetings and cultural events and their links with other committees (which resulted in knowledge about wider community concerns and issues).

Institutional capacity was described by 2014 incorporated applicants, and not identified as a factor in 2012. Institutional capacity referred to increased legitimacy in directors' decision-making authority through use of operational policies, such as, Directors Code of Conduct, Delegation and Decision-making Policies, Succession Plans, staff position descriptions and the Constitution. The non-incorporated applicants did not refer to institutional capacity, nor democratic election processes or staff and governing body reputation as factors.

Figure 29: Ways that decision makers derive authority and legitimacy in the eyes of stakeholders and community



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service (AADS)

"We straddle two worlds (Aboriginal governance and mainstream governance) and operate legitimately within both domains as demonstrated by the backing, support and authority afforded to us by the Aboriginal community and our government funders. The diversity of the community is matched by the diversity (ages, genders, family links and regions) of the Board of

Management…. They have strong connections and networks and diverse skills; and there is respect for each other's perspectives, experience and position in the community. All these characteristics work together to create robust, respectful and considered yarning and dealing with governance issues."

"We know our community, we know our people, their history and actions are known, and therefore our Board having integrity and good standing in the community are respected and trusted, so their decisions are supported."

Gallang Place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation

Girringun Aboriginal Corporation

"Girringun's governing structure ensures that all Traditional Owner groups are equally represented, and the knowledge and wisdom of the Elders about traditional law is incorporated into decision-making processes and protocols. External stakeholders acknowledge, respect and value the ability of Girringun to facilitate integrated, culturally appropriate and direct access to those who speak for country within its operational area."

"Inala Wangarra's governance is extremely reputable within Brisbane due to the following reasons:

Inala Wangarra Inc.

- All Board members either work or live within the community, which assists with responding to community needs in a timely manner.
- Well-developed policies and procedures to maintain process driven outcomes.
- No two family members can hold tenure on the Board at the same time to ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of the community.
- The Board is a representation of family groups from the community which provides greater influence in the community services we deliver.
- All Board members and staff must undergo yearly criminal checks to maintain the organisation's integrity.
- All Board members represent a diverse range of gender, [ages] and are employed in prominent and varied streams which are reflective of the diversity in our community.
- The Finance officer who undertakes payroll and payments is managed by a Finance Sub-Committee that meets monthly. The Finance Sub-Committee embraces the strengths of Board members and is made up of the CEO, Treasurer, Finance Officer and Senior Auditor from KPMG. An external accounting service is employed to review all accounts in conjunction with the Finance Officer which encourages transparency and accountability.
- All recruitment processes include 3 panel members with a balanced age, gender and experience and an external person. This procedure maintains a high standard of integrity and transparency.
- All staff are Indigenous and live or have lived within the community to [maintain] a strong connection to Inala and help drive self-determination.
- Stringent financial processes are maintained with all payments entered by project officers, reviewed by the Finance Officer, endorsed by the CEO and approved by two signatories of the Board.
- The Board has remained stable since incorporation with less than 25% turnover and four original founding members are still in tenure. This demonstrates the quality of the organisation."

Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation Ranger Program

"Decisions that affect land or culture are discussed with the Circle of Elders who provide cultural governance. The Circle of Elders provide cultural governance and in many cases have a final say. They have traditional knowledge which allows them to make decisions according to traditional lore and custom."

"QYAC follows traditional decision-making processes and has an obligation to facilitate its members' informed engagement in that process. This commitment to manage business in traditional ways protects the cultural legitimacy of QYAC's governance."

Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC)

Waminda South Coast Women's Health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation

"Our Board members are valued and respected members of the community, some of whom have been Aboriginal Elders who are widely known and highly respected. Their wisdom and experience, teamed with their strength and cultural pride, cause the community to look up to them and respect their knowledge and ideas. All of the Board members have the blessing and support of their particular communities."

"Nearly all Wunan programs are formed in partnership with others. This has been essential from a financial perspective but also in practical terms, to ensure appropriate stakeholders are engaged and outcomes are clearly directed. The ability to build partnerships reflects the authority and legitimacy of our leadership: that they are viewed as credible and reliable partners, who deliver what they say they will and operate in a transparent and effective way."

Wunan Foundation

Yuendumu Early Childhood Reference Group (YECRG)

"The Group is local, Indigenous and representative of the community. They include senior cultural Elders as well as young women. In the eyes of the stakeholders they are a strong and representative community voice. They have a clear statement of who they are and what they do – this gives them legitimacy and authority."

"YBM Executive and trust body are made up of traditional custodians who are representing their families within our region. We are chosen as the appropriate people to speak for our families and are recognised as the people with authority to make decisions for our corporation."

Yuku-Baja-Muliku Landowner & Reserves Ltd (YBM)

5.4.4 PROCEDURE IF A DECISION IS NOT IMPLEMENTED

(a) Discussion and analysis

Over half of the applicants (both incorporated and non-incorporated) described ways of implementing decisions to prevent non-compliance from occurring. The most frequently cited method was monitoring progress. Regular group or staff meetings were held as a forum to raise issues arising, or any potential problems with workload. Incorporated applicants also referred to the minutes of board meetings as a constructive way to consistently monitor progress. This process included checking off a list of decided actions against whom they were allocated to, to be reviewed at subsequent meetings.

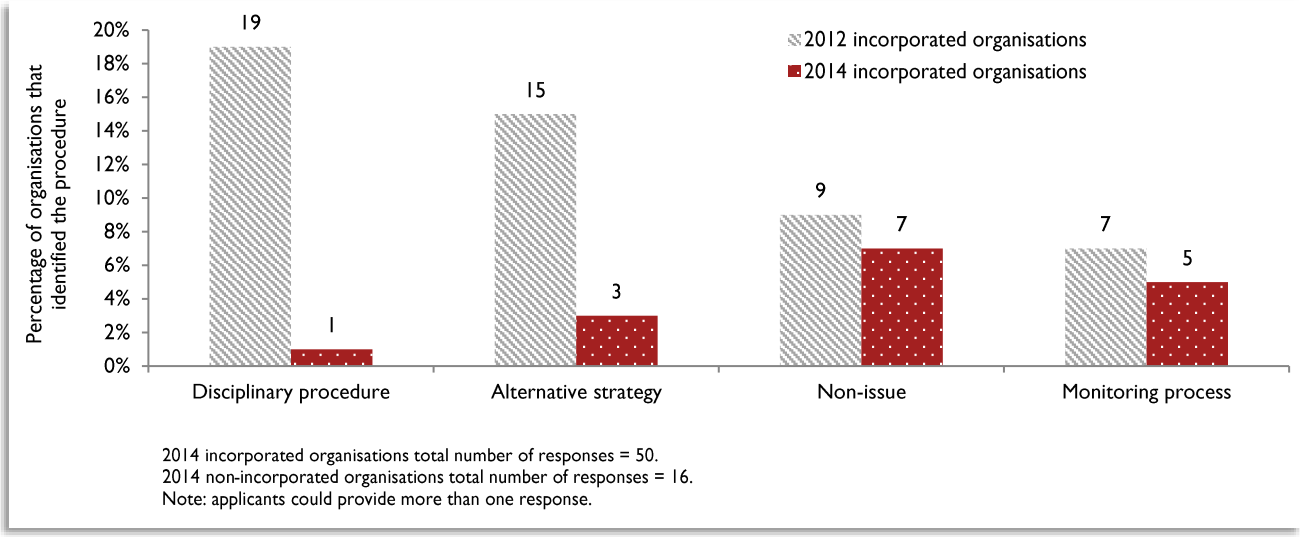
37% of incorporated applicants undertook a reassessment when a task wasn't on track for implementation, or when a staff or group member was experiencing difficulties in completing the task. This resulted in provision of further training or mentoring support for staff, delegation of task to another staff member or development of an alternative implementation strategy.

45% of incorporated applicants identified a range of disciplinary measures that could be used to address situations where the delegated individual did not complete an allocated task. These were outlined in Grievance Policy & Procedure manuals, the Constitution, Complaints Policy, Performance Management Policy, funding

agreements and staff performance review processes. Applicants highlighted that reassessment and monitoring were the first and preferred course of action. Only one non-incorporated applicant referred to use of disciplinary measures – engaging in a performance review.

Some applicants noted that non-compliance was not an issue. They attributed this to collective agreement through inclusive decision-making processes, a high level of respect for the decision makers and/or a strong sense of accountability to the community. Others referred to re-prioritisation where a decision might not be carried out, not because of obstinacy, but if it is no longer deemed relevant, or if it is de-prioritised to be completed at a later date at the discretion of the governing body.

Figure 30: Procedures if a decision is not implemented



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Gallang Place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation

"Our Board, Management and staff share common links with our communities and accept the responsibility that brings with it, combined with a traditional respect for leaders and Elders means that when governance or management decisions are made they are implemented without dissent as they form a natural part of a collaborative management process. We take our community responsibilities very seriously."

Girringun Aboriginal Corporation

"Regular staff meetings are held on a weekly basis to provide a forum for all staff to raise issues arising or any potential problems with workload delivery or project milestone completion. This practice assists in the early identification of any potential issues and in the timely development of strategies to address and resolve those issues. Senior Staff and Program Coordinators attend fortnightly Program Team Leadership meetings to ensure ongoing communication and resolution of internal or program issues."

KARI Aboriginal Resources Inc.

"Decisions made by the KARI Board are communicated to the CEO through our annual business planning process and Dash Board reporting required for each quarterly Board meeting. The CEO then communicates these decisions to all senior managers through regular Executive Committee meetings. Senior managers then delegate decisions and responsibilities for carrying out these decisions to managers and other staff using written action plans. Every KARI staff member has their own action plan and their progress towards goals and outcomes will be monitored at regular team meetings, as well as monthly meetings held for all staff. The KARI CEO and Chairman both attend these monthly staff meetings."

Marr Mooditj Training Inc. (MMT)

"Where action items are not completed by the agreed deadlines, the relevant manager and staff members meet to review the activity, identify barriers, issues and opportunities for improvement, and discuss further action. Further actions may include review of supervision and resource allocation; review of actions, goals and KPIs; training, coaching and/or professional development of relevant staff."

5.5 EFFECTIVE POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Policies are the big-picture guidelines that set out, in clear language, what an organisation wants to achieve (such as its long-term vision and goals) and the performance standards and outcomes expected. This helps to ensure consistency and accountability. As communities and organisations often change, the governance policies and other rules will need to be assessed, evaluated and changed to make sure they continue to be relevant. Governing bodies should discuss the policy implications of their decisions at their meetings, and periodically review their written policies. This allows policies to stay current and adapt to changes within the wider community and organisation[35].

POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

(a) Discussion and analysis

Almost every applicant (98%) reported a set procedure to develop new policy or refresh existing organisational policies. Policies were updated for a number of reasons: to reflect changes in the operating environment; in line with a change in strategic direction; to support internal restructuring; or to meet cultural and legal responsibilities.

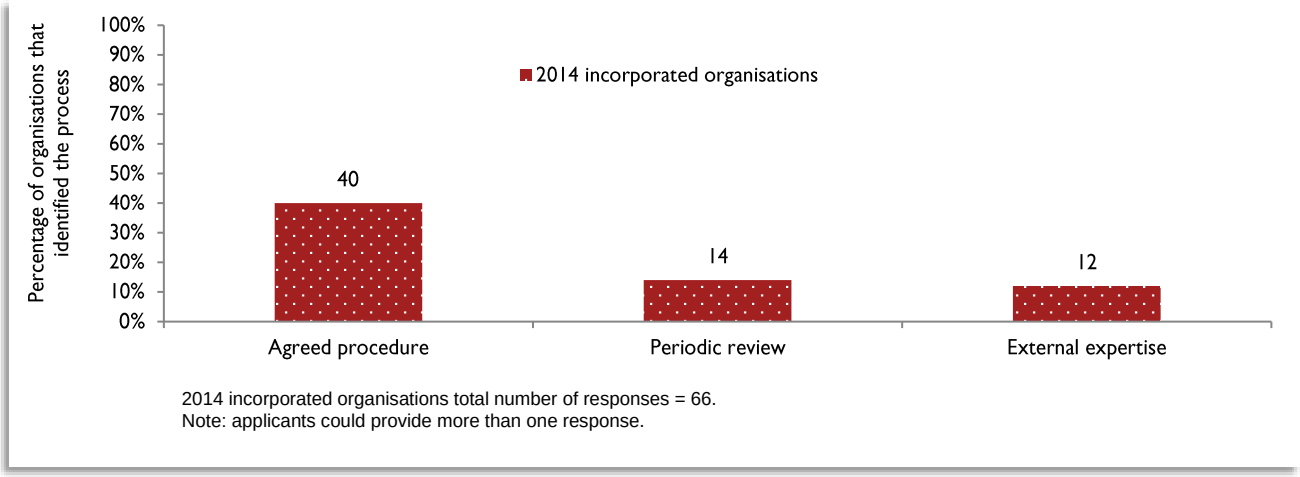
The policy development process involved multiple stages, with tasks at different stages allocated to different levels of authority. Generally there was a clear delineation of roles: the governing body responsible for policy approval and the CEO/senior management responsible for implementation (ensuring the staff, members and stakeholders understood and applied the new policy).

Applicants understood policy development as an ongoing process that required continual revision to adapt to organisational, environmental and legislative change. 35% of applicants committed to a process of periodic review and allocated a specific committee or staff member the responsibility to review and identify policy in need of updating. Others cited specific incidents that occurred, to which policy was created or amended to prevent future incidence.

[35] Indigenous Governance Toolkit Section 6.4

During the policy development and review processes consultation was frequently undertaken with staff, members, Elders or stakeholders who may be affected. 29% of applicants engaged external consultants with expertise in law, human resources or policy development to assist in drafting, implementation or communication of policy.

Figure 31: Policy development processes



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Arwarbukarl Cultural Resource Association (ACRA)

"The following steps outline the organisation's process for policy development:

- Identify the need or gap,
- Identify stakeholders,
- Conduct research and gather information,
- Prepare a draft paper policy,
- Conduct consultation with appropriate stakeholders,
- Present final draft to Management Committee for approval,
- Education and implementation,
- Ongoing monitoring and assessment."

Katungul Aboriginal Corporation

"Policy is the domain of the board and the board has instigated a review regime of all Policies where they review two policies at each board meeting to ensure they are relevant, up to date with legislation and accreditation requirements, the organisation's aims and objectives and that they are articulated to all staff and relevant others."

Marr Mooditj Training Inc. (MMT)

"MMT continually scans its internal and external environment to identify compliance requirements and emerging risks. Where a compliance requirement or risk is identified, MMT's Director informs the Management Committee of the need to develop/revise policies to address emerging needs.

When establishing organisational policy and direction, the Management Committee takes advice from the Director and, where relevant, from subject matter experts and/or consultants, in order to make informed decisions. The Director provides the Committee with documentation outlining the emerging issues, discussing associated advantages/emlerging risks and resource implications, and providing a breakdown of policy options, as well as recommendations. The Committee, after deliberation and, if required, further research and community consultation, sets the policy direction for the organisation, and makes appropriate changes to the budget and strategic plan and, if appropriate, to the organisation's policies and procedures.

Where new/revised policies have operational actionable outcomes, the Director will establish action plans for implementation, allocating timelines and responsibilities. These action plans are then operationalised by individual managers to establish individual action plans for their team members.

Where a change in policies is required, the Director, or a delegated person, develops a policy statement and, where required, associated procedures, which are then submitted to the Committee for approval. Once approved, the policies and procedures are disseminated to staff during weekly staff meetings, posted in the intranet (Company Web) for easy access, and included in the induction process for staff. Where the policies affect students, they are incorporated into the student's enrolment pack and explained at induction."

Waminda South Coast Women's Health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation

"Policies and processes are born from all staff being able to have their ideas, concerns and input included into a policy framework. At the monthly staff workshops staff are able to bring ideas/concerns to the fore. This is a cyclical process as it filters back to staff for ratification, agreement, endorsement and implementation. Policies are an ever-evolving beast that [continuously] need review and improvement – this is how we operate our framework."

6 Criteria 4: Culture-smart Solutions

"[In] Aboriginal communities where traditional culture is strong, the relationship between the old people, the keepers of culture and law, and the young people, who need to make their way in a different world, is critical."

Djilpin Arts Aboriginal Corporation

Culture lies at the heart of governance for all societies; whether they are nation states, minority groups or small communities. Culture is the system of distinctive ideas, customs, social behaviour, meanings, laws and values that are shared by a particular group of people, and which come together to form the foundation for the way they live. A shared culture enables people to communicate with each other, behave in an accepted way and work together to achieve common goals.

Some commentators see the role of Indigenous culture within organisations as problematic; a source of potential conflict or corruption that undermines effectiveness. However, many Indigenous people have a different view. They see it as a strength; a source of 'governance capital' and internal legitimacy that enables challenges to be met.

So what role does culture play in the governance of Indigenous Australian organisations? And what kinds of culturally informed governance arrangements seem to be effective?

6.1 THE ROLE OF CULTURE

This section discusses Indigenous culture as a source of strength.

6.2 CULTURE-SMART SOLUTIONS

This section explores how organisations are designing governance arrangements that are informed by local cultural priorities and values, and crafted to be practically workable in local conditions.

Follow this link to view a video clip of the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation describing their culture-smart governance solutions

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=euWcF51nka0

Follow this link to view a video clip of the Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation describing their culture-smart governance solutions

https://youtu.be/Xls4iOO-mBM

6.1 THE ROLE OF CULTURE

Today, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and their leaders work persistently to find common ground between their own ways of governing and the structures and institutions of governance that operate in the wider Australian society. A fundamental Indigenous measure of the success of those efforts is whether their contemporary governance arrangements have both internal cultural legitimacy and the practical ability to get things done.

Cultural legitimacy in governance arrangements means having rules, structures and processes that: are informed by an understanding of particular Indigenous cultural traditions; embody values and norms that are important in those traditions; reflect contemporary Indigenous ideas about how power and authority should be structured and put into practice; and are generated through peoples' own conversations and efforts (and so have the support of the people being governed)[36].

(a) Discussion and analysis

Applicants demonstrated that Indigenous culture, in its diverse forms across Australia, was consistently drawn upon to design governance solutions. This work of 'culturising' governance was apparent in **all** the applications, across **all** criteria. Applicants thought deeply about their cultural values, relationships and priorities, and how these might be used to strengthen the effectiveness of organisational governance.

Successful governance arrangements were the result of commitment to the hard work of monitoring the effectiveness of cultural solutions over the long term. This included assessment of the ongoing relevance of an organisation's cultural and community underpinnings. The process was regarded as a positive source for building the legitimacy and resilience of an organisation's 'internal culture'.

6.2 CULTURE-SMART SOLUTIONS

Culture-smart solutions are where governance arrangements are determined locally, capture local members' priorities, resonate with their cultural values and relationships, and so are seen to be credible at the local level. This approach to governance innovation builds on existing Indigenous capabilities and expertise, emphasises practical applications that work, and reinforces collective identities and rights. Culture-smart governance arrangements have greater potential to mobilise support and encourage a mandate from group members, boost internal accountability and legitimacy, and contribute to enhancing the overall performance of an organisation.

(a) Discussion and analysis

Applicants described a multitude of ways that culture-smart solutions were created and integrated into governance arrangements and organisational practices. This was done via:

- structures of governance;
- design and use of cultural protocols;
- membership and community engagement strategies;
- roles for senior men and women;
- customised representation models;
- decision-making processes;
- policies and HR guidelines;
- cultural maintenance initiatives;
- investment in local capacity and leadership succession;
- investment in staffing;
- dispute resolution; and
- communication and information tools.

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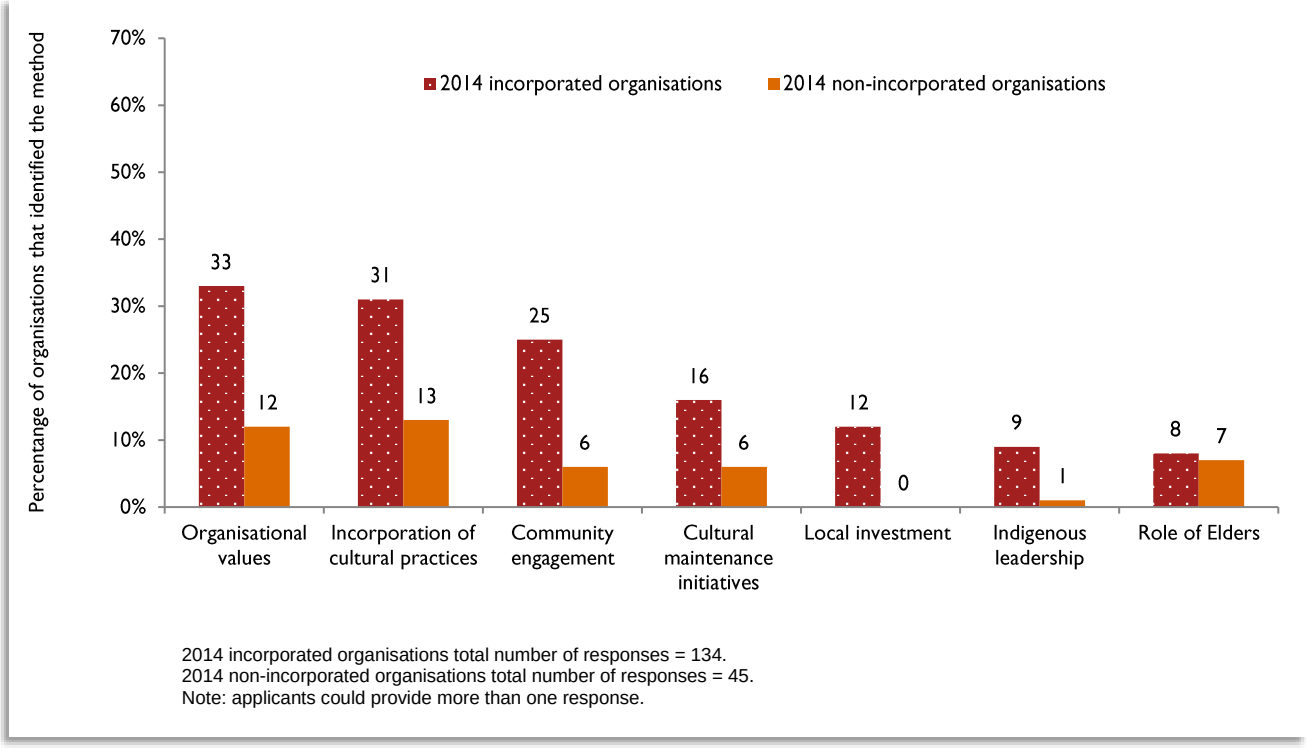
[36] Indigenous Governance Toolkit Section 2.1

The diverse and innovative ways organisations wove cultural solutions into their governance are explored in further detail below.

Figure 32: Ways of reflecting Indigenous cultural values and practices



6.2.1 ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

(a) Discussion and analysis

In both 2012 and 2014 applicants identified culture as being at the heart of their operations and core values. Organisational values were the overarching core principles and standards that reflected the cultural norms of an organisation. Indigenous organisational values placed culture at the heart of their ways of doing things. It is interesting to note that applicants cited culture as a critical component of their mandate from members to govern, not the statutory rule book or constitution. The majority of applicants identified that their overarching cultural mandate made a major contribution to the organisation's effectiveness and credibility.

(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Tranby Aboriginal College

"The following core values have been identified and agreed upon by both the College and Co-operative members. These values create the framework for all decision-making, from program design and teaching style, to selection of partnering organisations and organisational communications. They are as follows:

- Cultural Integrity: We acknowledge that Tranby is located on the traditional lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. We respect and support the cultural diversity and needs of our staff and students and all people involved with Tranby.
- Social Justice: We have a strong and proud history in social and political movements. All of our work is underpinned by the rights and aspirations of Indigenous people and Tranby will continue to be active

in progressing an Indigenous rights agenda.

- Excellence in Education: The primary business of Tranby is to deliver the highest quality education to Indigenous people. We do this by providing every possible support to our students and ensuring that our courses are relevant and responsive to the needs of Indigenous people across the country.
- Professionalism: We are committed to the objectives of Tranby and work together to achieve the best results for our students and the College. In achieving the objectives of the College, we respect, support and value the knowledge, skill and commitment of staff, students and supporters of Tranby."

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)

"The manner in which VACCA integrates and promotes culture is ever present in our work and we place high importance on ensuring Aboriginal cultural observance forms part of everything we do. This principle is what makes VACCA unique and it is what we do well. This is evident in our cultural resources, integration of cultural programs and activities into our client services, to the way in which we review our work practices to ensure that we are providing culturally responsive programs, quality cultural support plans etc. The Board and CEO regularly challenge the staff to ensure we make a positive difference and that Aboriginal governance is never lost."

Muntjiltjarra Wurrgumu Group (MWG)

"From day one we have been clear that our group must reflect our cultural ways of organising, behaving and doing. We made sure the MWG is made up of all of our family groups, has men and women on it and includes all ages. When we did the survey we had men and women surveying each other as we know this is the proper cultural way to do it. We practised the questions on ourselves first and trialled it with some of our people first to get the questions just right. We wanted to make sure that we asked the questions in the way Martu speak.

Often people will raise other matters of concern in our MWG meetings and people want to bring these matters to everyone's notice. We are respectful of these discussions and often we will let people speak even if the items were not on our agenda. We recognise that often people need to bring matters to the table as they happen and not put them on hold for another time. Culturally we see this as being important – to allow people the space to raise matters in their own time. We make decisions by consensus after lots of discussion before we come to an agreement.

We also work as a collective and do not have a chairperson – we all share that role. We see not being an incorporated body gives us a lot of freedom to work in our own way that suits us and is determined by us."

6.2.2 GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

(a) Discussion and analysis

Governance structures were an area in which culture-smart design was crucial. Applicants outlined a number of processes, which included:

- Culturally-informed processes integrated as core elements of the s/election of governing representatives;
- Candidates nominated for governing bodies based on cultural geographies;
- Positions reserved for particular Indigenous groups/interests. 56% of applicants identified this as an important method of creating equal representation for different groups within the operational region;
- The governing body structured to reflect traditional family and social categories;

- Roles and/or places on the governing body created for Elders so that advice and direction on key issues or decisions could be sought. Some organisations formed an Elders Advisory Council separate to the governing body;
- Positions created on the governing body for youth representatives; and
- Widespread consultation and then formal endorsement of these solutions by all members at the Annual General Meeting.

(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Gallang Place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation

"Over the past 20 years Gallang Place has developed a governance process that meets the regulatory and legal requirements under law, but has incorporated many culturally appropriate practices into their governance model. This involves a highly collaborative and mutually respectful process of information sharing, problem solving and collective decision-making. Where appropriate the Board of Management of Gallang Place will actively seek the counsel of external Elders and community leaders to ensure their knowledge and wisdom informs the decision-making processes. Management will also engage professional services eg legal, financial in making decisions that support good governance."

PRK Radio

"The radio enjoys a wealth of directors far advanced in age and they guide the organisation in cultural rightness. The Elders in the radio station ensure that culture is represented and respected in our events, behaviour and policies as well. Indigenous way of doing business which involves consultation with Elders and people with cultural rights is greatly encouraged."

6.2.3 SKILL-BASED GOVERNANCE

(a) Discussion and analysis

Applicants carefully considered their leadership's suitability for governance. Cultural knowledge and seniority, alongside local standing within the community or group, were identified as being important qualities for governing. In 2014 cultural legitimacy was the most frequently reported factor (58%) for the legitimacy of representatives/leaders of non-incorporated organisations. Applicants described their governing leaders as prominent, powerful, respected, professional, and skilled, who were viewed as role models in the community. Several noted that their directors also participated in other leadership roles within the community and more widely.

Additionally, having or acquiring new skills and areas of expertise to do with board roles and responsibilities on organisations; for example, financial literacy, running meetings, chairing, negotiation and mediation skills, policy-making experience, public speaking and strategic planning, were considered important. Significantly, a number of applicants invested in the governance development of their leaders. Many not only accessed one-off workshops run by external providers, but also took the next step and established their own internal training and professional development units and/or staff expertise. This enabled more sustained support and mentoring to be delivered to board members and the governance training to be customised around local ways of exercising authority, making decisions, and being accountable.

(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre (MWRC)

"Framing all of MWRC's operational values is to always strive to build the governance and leadership capacity of women, both within and outside the organisation. MWRC has always ensured that the board of directors have represented each one of the local language groups. This has ensured that the governance has remained grounded in the cultural and political authority of the region. The board members extensive knowledge of the surrounding environment and society, their varying experiences of working at the coal face and understanding of the cultural complexities of the region, is highly valued by MWRC as it informs the establishment and drive of many of their community programmes and outreach work.

MWRC also recognises that many of the women do not have formal governance training. To ensure that accessible information is provided, MWRC has produced a tailored governance manual for the board. The board along with the executive officers have all received external governance training from Lee Collis through the community legal centre. MWRC is aware that more extensive governance training for the board needs to take place. Building the capacity of the board to feel confident and empowered to make decisions takes time. As an organisation we are on a journey of governance training and ensuring we meet compliance requirements. This is one of MWRC's primary purpose, to ensure that local women occupy positions in all levels of governance, and even if they do not have the qualifications or expertise for that role, they learn by doing."

Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC)

"All families are represented on the Board of QYAC. Although participation is not mandatory for all members at group meetings, there is a strong engagement from most families who appreciate the opportunity to have their values and priorities represented at a governance level. This strengthens engagement across our significant membership, and ensures that the full range of perspectives and feedback are heard."

6.2.4 CULTURAL INITIATIVES

(a) Discussion and analysis

Applicants identified a close connection between provision of cultural initiatives and governance effectiveness. This involved having policies or programs specifically established to celebrate and share culture, and build cultural identity and pride. Initiatives included the promotion of traditional language and art, protection of traditional lands, support for language resurgence, and youth engagement programs. For some applicants, Indigenous knowledge and sharing of culture was integrated into the daily life of the organisation.

(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

"The CLCAC has been developing and working on a dictionary for the Gangalidda Language. The development of the Gangalidda Dictionary has been generated to publish and distribute throughout the Gangalidda speaking community. The dictionary will be produced both as a written and electronic multi-media resource, and circulated specifically within the Doomadgee and Burketown communities where most

Gangalidda People reside.

Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (CLCAC)

The Gangalidda dictionary has been carefully developed in consultation with the Gangalidda People and the Gangalidda Elders to be user-friendly, taking into account that most Gangalidda speak English as their first language, and many have low literacy levels. The combined print/digital format of the dictionary has been designed to make this resource accessible to everyone, and increase its value through its flexible application to a variety of potential uses.

The Gangalidda Dictionary has been created to provide a key resource in the revival and active maintenance of the Ganglidda Language to counter 'language shift' and the loss of the language and culture. The Gangalidda Dictionary will be used to increase the use of the Ganglidda Language and the number of speakers of the Language.

The obvious benefit of the Dictionary is the capture of essential knowledge from the few remaining fluent speakers and the fostering of greater intergenerational understanding, interest and appreciation of Gangalidda Language and culture. Beyond this, the dictionary will strengthen cultural identity and increase pride within the community, general wellbeing and community cohesion."

Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation Ranger Program

"It is notable that local language shapes the work. It is present in Circle of Elders deliberations. Rangers are recording flora, fauna, and other aspects of work using local languages. The strategic plan is partly framed in language. Mapping is being done in language. Cultural planning is being shaped by language. The emphasis on language keeps this important part of the culture relevant and alive, and increases the sense of involvement and ownership of the work by the Rangers.

'Intergenerational exchange' (work across the generations) is a feature of the work. This is reflected in the relationship between the Rangers – who range from senior men and women to teenagers. This intergenerational aspect is present in the way the project works with other local projects that have a youth focus, (such as the work with Yijla Yala and the Love Punks – local youth projects). This aspect will be enhanced when the "Junior Rangers" program evolves.

Protocols and work practices recognise the role of the country itself – and the lore and culture as having a role in governing the way people behave and act. Meetings on country so that in looking after country the country can look after Rangers. Rangers and COE constantly mediate their response to country, by singing out to country, and obeying the signs from country (as mediated by rock art).

One of the innovations in the project has been around the issue of "cultural health and safety". Borrowing the language of industry, the Rangers have evolved a way of working that emphasises that the way people interact with the country has implications for the spiritual, psychological, and physical health and safety of people. This is expressly emphasised in work practices. Newcomers are not only "welcomed" to country, but exposed to a briefing about how to respect the country from a traditional Aboriginal perspective – how to interact with the country in a way that builds a proper respectful relationship between the person and the country."

6.2.5 DECISION-MAKING

(a) Discussion and analysis

Applicants identified decision-making as an area where Indigenous cultural values and social processes were critical. This included making sufficient time for issues to be considered and reconsidered, both by the governing body and community members, in order to mobilise a consensus, support informed decision-making, and generate collective buy-in for follow-up action. Specifically, applicants noted the importance of

Elders' involvement in decision-making and future planning processes. This took the form of consultation, seeking advice on both business and community issues.

Importantly, applicants backed up these preferred cultural processes with hard-headed mechanisms that enabled them to stay on top of monitoring the implementation of decisions, and to provide the governing body with regular 'action updates'.

(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation

"Ungooroo AC has developed a broad range of internal policies and procedures that provide clear guidelines that assist staff, management and the board to make decisions that reflect the needs of the organisation and community. This allows day to day operational decisions to be made by staff with more serious long term decisions made in consultation with senior management and the board.

Major decisions that involve organisational change and/or decisions that involve traditional culture are dealt with in consultation with Elders and other community members in order to gain community input. This may be done during prearranged community consultation events, a special general meeting or the annual general meeting.

Decisions are recorded (minutes) and information circulated to all relevant people to ensure that decisions are actioned and follow up processes implemented."

Yuendumu Early Childhood Reference Group (YECRG)

"The YECRG makes decisions as a group, through talking and sharing ideas. At YECRG we have an agreed approach to decision-making. The approach involves communicating with each other, the broader community and other services in Yuendumu, so that we can achieve our vision together. For instance, we talk a lot about issues at meetings and at home with our families. If we don't agree on an issue, we revisit it later on and we keep talking until a consensus is reached. We rotate the person to chair the meeting and support young ones to present. We ask for feedback after every meeting to make sure everyone is comfortable with the decisions made. Once we talk in the meeting we share the good decisions with everyone walking out through the gate, we don't change anything. Everything is written and recorded so no one will forget and so that next time through this minute making we can share it again. We talk about protocols, about rules in the meeting and about taking time out so that we can talk in our language. Sometimes Elders don't understand academic English so we explain to them in language. For example, translating difficult English concepts into our language. Sometimes one English word such as "grant" has to be translated into many words in Warlpiri. We also warmly welcome visitors to participate in our meetings and they present what they want to share with us and we are happy to learn about their experience."

6.2.6 LOCAL INVESTMENT

(a) Discussion and analysis

Applicants described their organisation's Indigenous leadership as being particularly important in how they reflect cultural values and ways of making decisions. This ranged between having an all-Indigenous board, an Indigenous CEO and majority Indigenous staff. Many prioritised local investment – the targeted investment in the capacity of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community or nation members. 29% of applicants stated a focused intention to employ, train and develop opportunities for local Indigenous people through Indigenous employment strategies, transition to work programs, and professional development. Activities also included cultural training for Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff such as a cultural component to

organisational inductions, cultural awareness programs, classes in local language and matching staff up with one-to-one cultural mentors.

(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Inala Wangarra Inc.

"Inala Wangarra demonstrates effective leadership by:

- Employing local community members as Project Officers as we value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's capacity to be change makers within their own neighbourhoods.
- Nurturing and advocating for local community members to be employed in other community agencies as transformation must come from within.
- Modelling leadership behaviours in the way we consult, inform, interact and deliver services ensuring that we maintain cultural protocols and sensitivities.
- Supporting other local Indigenous organisations.

Promoting transparent and culturally appropriate processes within the community."

Waminda South Coast Women's Health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation

"The Board of Waminda is visionary – the Board supports a Supported Employment Strategy and a robust Employee Assistance Program to ensure many Aboriginal Women have access to ongoing and interesting employment opportunities. Waminda operates as a team of like-minded, passionate women who support and nourish each other's personal and professional development. Together we operate under the ethos of Aboriginal community control, and believe in working together to run an organisation that responds to the needs of the local communities, as dictated by them. New staff are able to work closely with experienced workers, non-Aboriginal staff are provided with a cultural mentor and the self-care of staff is of highest priority. We work as a caring, tight-knit organisation sharing common beliefs and striving towards a common goal."

6.2.7 DISPUTE RESOLUTION

(a) Discussion and analysis

All applicants developed a package of procedures and methods to resolve both internal and external disagreements and complaints. A number referred to cultural practice as an important component of the suite of tools they used; for example, employment of traditional law/lore, codes of conduct that enshrined culturally-preferred behaviour and practice or unresolved disputes referred to the Elders in Council.

Interestingly, no applicant relied solely upon these, but also employed mediation services, external expertise, arbitrators, legal advice etc. as required. This encapsulated the culture-smart strategic approach, in which the most effective techniques from the Indigenous world are combined with those that prove useful from the wider society. This approach provided workable processes for a complex area of contemporary governance where different processes could be called upon at different stages of a dispute or complaint resolution procedure.

(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation

"Waltja has clearly documented processes for dealing with customer complaints, grievances and appeals. Staff must support a client with their complaint by recording it in writing (even when is it against staff). If clients or community representatives have a grievance about any aspect of Waltja's training or client services, they are encouraged to discuss the grievance with the responsible member of staff.

The client may give permission to another person to assist them to make the complaint (by interpreting or helping them to speak up strong). The staff member will attempt to resolve the grievance through discussion and mediation with the people involved, or through making changes to their own practice. They must let the complainant know what steps are being taken to address the complaint. If the client prefers not to deal directly with the relevant staff member, they are encouraged to go to the CEO.

Clients may send a written statement of their grievance to the CEO, or make a verbal complaint. The grievance or appeal may be made in person, by phone, or by another person on behalf of the client. The relevant senior Waltja worker will follow up the grievance at the earliest opportunity and record all action taken on the grievance/appeal form. This needs to be done whether or not the grievance has already been resolved to the client's satisfaction. The CEO may require staff concerned to complete a grievance/appeal staff report. If a grievance remains unresolved, the CEO will refer the grievance to Waltja's Executive. The Executive will consider the grievance and provide an opportunity for the person to present their case. The decision of Waltja Executive will be final. Waltja will give written advice to the client about the decision of the Executive. Clients may wish to lodge an appeal against a Waltja decision which affects them. The CEO is to identify an independent panel of two people, who have the cultural and language skills needed for liaison with the client who lodged the grievance. The client must be given the opportunity to formally present their case. The panel will advise Waltja and the client of the outcome of the appeal (via the grievance/appeal panel report). Waltja will follow up with written advice to the client about the panel decision."

6.2.8 GOVERNANCE RENEWAL AND ADAPTATION

(a) Discussion and analysis

Applicants searched for governance practices that supported resilience. A number of applicants identified flexible, adaptive and responsive governance as a critical factor in resilience over the long-term. These organisations reviewed the governing body to ensure the currency and range of skills, and reviewed the 'fit' of their governing model in the context of changing conditions or the expansion of functions. Cultural solutions were also reviewed to confirm ongoing effectiveness and to see whether they were still regarded as being credible by members. This practice highlighted that culture-smart solutions are not final; they also need to be reviewed and perhaps reshaped as situations change.

(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service (AADS)

"An example of how our governance has developed in response to needs of our members is the recent review and changes to the AADS constitution. Board Members were requesting clearer roles and responsibilities, and more transparency and accountability embedded in the constitution. Members also wanted to ensure a history of commitment to AADS before someone could become a Board Member and there was also a push for rules that ensured that if something goes wrong, that the organisation was even more protected through further strengthening of the constitutional rules. On 19 May 2014 AADS held a Special General Meeting where members passed a Special Resolution endorsing changes to AADS constitution. Some of the changes included:

- Clearer roles and responsibilities of the Board of Management.
- Requirement for a person to have been a member of AADS for 12 months before being eligible for election onto the Board (demonstrates commitment).
- Board Members are not allowed to become a staff member and vice versa for a stipulated period of time after their term has finished (protecting the organisation).
- Clear, fair and impartial processes for when things go wrong, for example if there is a need to dismiss a Board Member.
- Board sitting fees to be approved by the members, not by the Board of Management – allowing for community scrutiny (transparency and accountability)."

6.2.9 eGOVERNANCE

(a) Discussion and analysis

All applicants put considerable thought into how new media and technology could creatively support their governance and operations. Electronic mediums included website content (blog, events calendar, annual and financial reports, policies, photos, interviews, videos), email, electronic newsletters, media releases and social media such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Many applicants embraced the electronic age and adopted these mediums into eGovernance strategies to enhance their governance capacity. For example, teleconference and video chat enabled more effective communication with residentially dispersed board members living in different communities. Several applicants invested in making videos on governance issues, recording Elders' insight into cultural ways of governing that could then be used for staff and board inductions. Applicants commonly presented their cultural vision and governance charters online as a way of telling the culture story for their governance.

(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Cultural Mapping and Community Governance (CAN WA)

"Increased cultural pride and the opportunity to celebrate culture. This is the key to self-determination. Cultural pride flowed from the workshops where people (Elders and young) were empowered by their culture and the opportunity to safely discuss what they know and what they'd like to know. Comments from people who came to the workshops unsure, demonstrated that they walked away with a sense of cultural identity, pride and tools to express and celebrate this. And a desire for more.

The Elders interviews are an amazing archive of culture knowledge and content. The Elders shared so much of their lives, experiences and fears but also hope and belief in their people and in the Noongar way. The launch of the video and publication is going to be an amazing celebration of the collective cultural pride demonstrated throughout the project."

Mad Bastards

"Day to day operational decisions are carried out by Mibbinbah, and the Working Group is kept abreast of progress via regular emails and an annual planning meeting. For key decisions, for example, funding applications or changes to the program's content or format, the Working Group is engaged. As the Working Group is national, engagement generally occurs by phone and email. The whole Working Group is informed of decisions and then those who are able to offer specific expertise (for example, healthcare) continue to contribute advice until an agreed path forward is determined. The rest of the Working Group is informed of the course of action and then Mibbinbah implements whatever is required."

Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre (MWRC)

"A project that is currently underway and has had much media attention is the photographing of MWRC's staff members portraits and recording of their oral history for public display and dissemination. The project is now expanding to include the voices of women from across the region. The collection captures the unique qualities of the individuals while weaving together a shared and remarkable history. The project has taken on a life of its own, transforming into a living archive which reflects on the history of the women's movement across the Fitzroy Valley region. It works to empower and unite the staff of the organisation who are taking an interest in one another's life stories. On a broader level, it is using the women's voices who established the organisation, and those who continue to maintain and drive its work, to represent it to the public."

7 Criteria 5: Sustainability and Governance Resilience

How do organisations secure their success over time? Over the long run, why are some organisations more successful than others? Sustainable governance supports the development and achievement of long-term goals, and ensures an organisation is resilient during times of change and in the face of challenges. In practice, sustainability is about preparation and planning. Organisations that plan ahead can usually survive conflict and major changes. They are also better at keeping new plans going, sustaining economic development, and reliably delivering services and support to their members and communities[37].

7.1 LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

This section explores the ways organisations evaluate their overall governance and operational effectiveness.

7.2 PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

This section looks at the focus of organisations' strategic and financial planning.

7.3 PUTTING YOUR HAND UP

This section highlights areas that organisations feel the need for improvement and would seek assistance with if available.

"Most proudly the Management Committee sets a very clear and consistent vision for the organisation. This has created stability for the organisation and has empowered operational management to be able to make sound, pragmatic and appropriate decision-making on a day to day basis."

Arwarbukarl Cultural Resource Association ACRA)

"A strong, shared vision, appreciation for historic challenges and a clear future vision support the ongoing effectiveness of Girringun Aboriginal Corporation governance."

Girringun Aboriginal Corporation

Follow this link to view a video clip of the Ngnowar Aerwah Aboriginal Corporation discussing sustainability and governance resilience:

https://youtu.be/4808g81wH0I

[37] Indigenous Governance Toolkit Section 5.6

7.1 LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Successful organisations continually review their governance arrangements and evaluate project delivery and impact to ensure the intended outcomes are being achieved. Governing bodies that want to be able to facilitate community members in providing their informed consent to strategic planning decisions will have the capacity to monitor and report on their own performance and outcomes. Doing so also enables organisations to rectify any operational problems when they arise.

7.1.1 ORGANISATION AND PROJECT EVALUATION METHODS

(a) Discussion and analysis

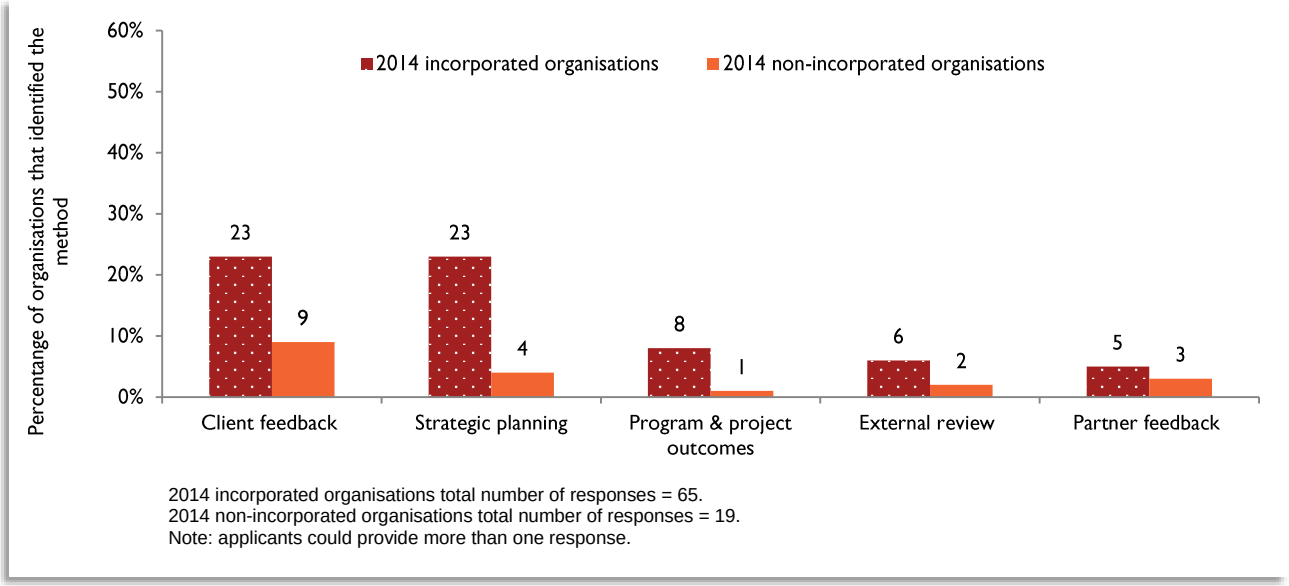
Applicants noted the importance of providing programs in line with community need and often provided multiple ways to seek client and community feedback. The overwhelming majority of incorporated applicants (92%) conducted an organisational evaluation or performance review. Most used between 1 to 3 different methods.

Client feedback and strategic planning were the most commonly relied upon methods of evaluation and the majority of incorporated applicants (56%) utilised both. Client and stakeholder feedback was gathered through staff satisfaction surveys, client case management reports, participant surveys, complaints registers, as well as less formal means such as face-to-face community feedback or audience response.

Structured strategic planning frameworks were adopted. These included SWOT analysis, KPI measurement tools and scheduled ongoing evaluation reviews. External reviews were utilised far less frequently. This may be due to the resource costs (financial, staffing etc.) required to conduct them.

Interestingly, very few applicants engaged in the financial and performance reports prepared for evaluation by external partner and funding bodies as a tool for their own performance review. This indicates an opportunity for funders to consider how their reports could be redesigned to suit both the purposes of the donor and the grantee. This would both improve the effectiveness of the reporting process and reduce the administrative burden for organisations. This may be particularly relevant to Indigenous service based organisations, which often have multiple funding and reporting obligations.

Figure 33: Methods of evaluating the organisation or project



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Cherbourg Junior Police Rangers

"At the commencement of the program in 2011, a project plan was developed which incorporated the aims and objectives of the program and clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of the staff involved. Staff meet at the end of each school term to discuss the past term and any plan for the new term. Issue[s] that have been identified during the term are discussed and any necessary changes made."

Kimberley Land Council – Kimberley Healthy Country Network

"Many groups in the Kimberley have developed ten year strategic plans for their country using a methodology known as Conservation Action Planning…they are powerful tools for planning, implementation, communication and evaluation of Traditional Owners' priorities for work on country. The CAP methodology concentrates on a participatory process which identifies "threats" that negatively affect the health of the targets…[the] simple targets/threats format allows HCACs, rangers and other staff to constantly access the priorities of the wider native title group – specifically for that native title group. Each groups needs are individually expressed and acted upon."

Marr Mooditj Training Inc. (MMT)

"Our Management Committee sets our strategic direction, purpose, vision, values and objectives, which are reviewed annually taking into account changes to our operating environment. Following the Management Committee review, we conduct a five-day planning workshop with all staff, including management, educators, administrative and support staff.

During this workshop, our strategic goals are communicated and discussed, operationalised, and converted into individual goals and performance indicators, as well as individual development plans. We use this time to strengthen alignment of individual and team goals and expectations to organisational strategic and operational requirements, and to strengthen the team spirit and cohesion of the individuals who make our work a success. The workshop is also used for planning the training calendar for the year, as well as to provide staff with targeted development in areas that have been identified as requiring systemic improvement through performance management and continual improvement processes.

MMT prepares an annual Business Plan, which is monitored and reported to our funder and partners. The Business Plan allows us to define our goals and measure our performance against those goals and range across all of our operations, and gives all staff the opportunity to contribute to the effectiveness of the organisation.

Each staff member prepares an Action Plan, keeping in mind Marr Mooditj over all objectives, and give us the opportunity to examine how we do things on a day to day basis to meet our organisational goals, the national training priorities, Aboriginal Health Priorities and our involvement and contribution to the community. Additionally, we conduct fortnightly staff meetings to discuss student and operational matters, to ensure that all staff are aware of relevant information, and to provide a forum for discussion of existing and emerging issues. Continual improvement issues are a standing item at these meetings."

"To cater for the growing needs of the community, we hold community days and staff days where feedback from the community is gathered and collated and used to evaluate our programs and adapt to what the community identifies they require. Cultural camps are also run for clients, members and staff to come away onto country and discuss the directions in which the service should be heading. For example, evaluations uncovered that access to appropriate clinical services was required."

Waminda South Coast Women's Health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation

7.2 PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

Planning allows an organisation to look at the big picture of where it is heading and measure how well they are doing. A strategic plan is a written document that sets out an organisation's intended goals and actions during a specified period: where you want to go and how you're going to get there. It might set out the vision; explain the priorities, goals and strategies; and what actions, resources, people, and amount of time are needed. Put simply, a strategic plan is a leadership tool. So even if there is a high turnover of leaders and senior managers, the organisation will have a better chance of staying on track. It is also a way of being on the front foot in making your own decisions about your future, rather than having them imposed on you from the outside[38]

7.2.1 FOCUS OF FUTURE PLANNING

(a) Discussion and analysis

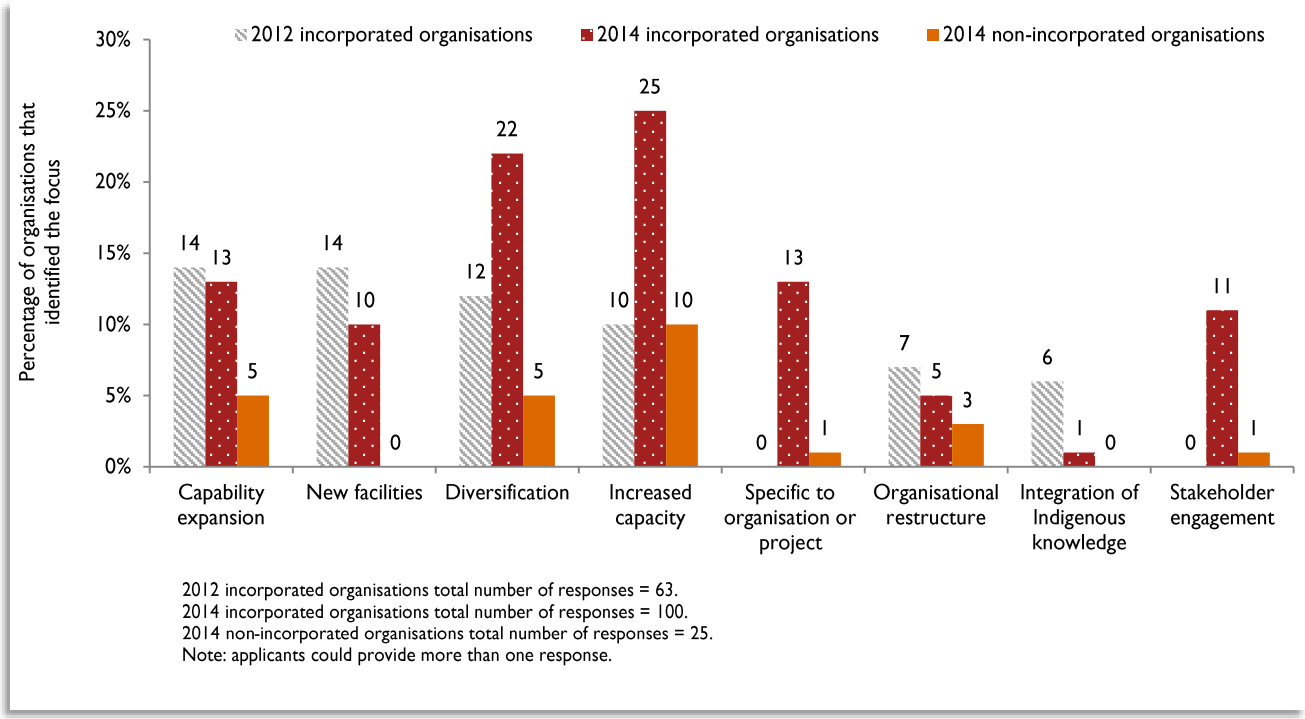
Applicants focused on a wide range of priorities in their future plans from expanded capability and increased capacity or programs, to new facilities, financial diversification, organisational restructure and increased stakeholder engagement. The 2014 applicants very generously shared their own strategies for change: 41% of incorporated organisations attached and 75% described their plans for the future.

Funding diversification frequently featured as a key focus. Between 2012 and 2014 twice the number of incorporated applicants looked to diversify their funding sources (a growth from 30% in 2012 to over 60% in 2014). Applicants reported that, due to an unstable funding environment, there was a strong focus on simply 'being the last man standing' and remaining solvent during these times of funding uncertainty. In fact, one organisation had put future planning on hold until notification of recent funding round results.

In 2014 both incorporated and non-incorporated applicants sought to diversify through a mixed funding model, establishment of partnerships and through social enterprise development opportunities. The increased number of applicants that looked to engage with stakeholders reflected this intention. Examples of engagement to maximise impact included: building sustainable relationships with governments, shires and service providers; relationship development with potential partners to facilitate future project sharing, and facilitation of two-way information exchange between communities and external agencies.

[38] Indigenous Governance Toolkit Section 5.3

Figure 34: Focus of future planning



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Djilpin Arts Aboriginal Corporation

"Djilpin Arts will continue to focus on community training, employment and participation, ongoing development of key programs and projects, and increasingly prioritise social and cultural enterprise. To this end Djilpin has recently built a visitor accommodation centre (Winner: Nicholas Murcutt National Architecture Award 2013). Located next to Ghunmarn Culture Centre, this now provides the infrastructure necessary for developing income-earning cultural tourism programs."

Maryborough Aboriginal Corporation for Housing & Cultural Development (MAC)

"MAC plans to increase the size and mix of its housing stock. Also in 2015 MAC will establish two revenue streams through social enterprise to supplement its finances, maintenance and a lawn mowing business, which will train and employ Indigenous people. The other benefit is that MAC can offer an add-on service of lawn mowing/maintenance which can then benefit our asset management. MAC is also planning to operate a small laundromat offering a laundering service for the community which, based on market research, should prove profitable. Through planning MAC will identify other opportunities to increase revenue and thus be in a position to purchase more housing stock.

In the long term MAC envisages creating a cultural centre with other ventures attached including a bush tucker garden, a conference centre, and art space and café similar to the Mossman Gorge set up. This would allow extensive training and employment and would assist with reconciliation as it would become a tourist and business centre where Indigenous culture is integrated into the community."

7.2.2 FOCUS OF FINANCIAL PLANNING

(a) Discussion and analysis

The overwhelming majority of applicants in 2014 focused their financial plans on diversification (80%). This presented a 20% increase from the previous Awards period. Applicants explored diversification through the development of mixed funding models, identification of additional revenue streams, fundraising strategy refinement and investigation of alternate investment forms.

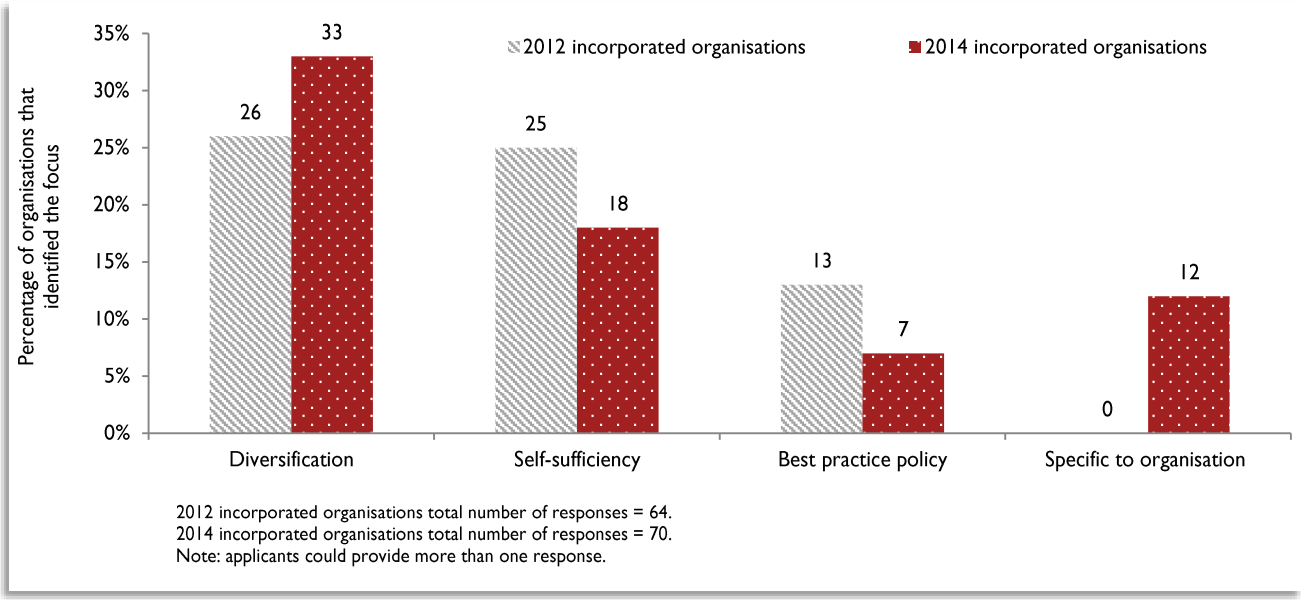
Through diversification, applicants hoped to sustain quality service delivery that responded to community need, without the forced compromise or diversion of focus from external factors. Diversification also encouraged increased flexibility in service delivery design and approaches, as it lessened the need to align priorities to ever-changing government policy.

To address uncertainties in the funding environment, notably fluctuating priorities in government funding and increased competition for corporate and philanthropic grants, applicants explored innovative ways to secure new income streams. Many developed their own enterprise initiatives such as arts and tourism ventures, accommodation facilities, micro-business incubators or local service businesses. Applicants also created new external partnerships with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations, which aligned service delivery, fostered innovation and increased impact.

Self-sufficiency was high on the agenda across 2012 and 2014. Self-generated funding strategies included investment opportunities, social enterprises, fee-for-service arrangements and revenue from property. Applicants prioritised self-sufficiency for ongoing operational sustainability, self-determination and independence.

The 2014 applicants backed up their aspirations with action: 85% outlined future financial plans and a quarter attached detailed plans with their application forms. Many financial plans involved continued investment in best-practice strategies to improve financial management and stability.

Figure 35: Focus of financial planning



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

KARI Aboriginal Resources Inc.

"Developing new income streams from corporate partnerships, fee for service programs and other non-government funding is a new, important focus for KARI. Reducing our reliance on government funding is key to increasing our financial independence and self-determination, so we can continue providing the most culturally appropriate and effective services to Aboriginal children, families and communities. We are also looking at applying for charitable status for KARI, so we can seek additional income from donations and fundraising initiatives."

Kirrawe Indigenous Corporation

"Due to the competition for Government Funding along with a lack of monies in both State and Federal funding budgets, Kirrawe is focusing more on raising our own funds for programs and services. This is critical if we are to be sustainable and independent. To achieve this [the CEO] has been researching opportunities to start a social enterprise so Kirrawe can self-fund programs and services. Kirrawe is also using Crowd Funding through 'Give Now' and 'Givematcher', and is currently setting up 'Buy a Buddy' through chuffed.org to fund the Mentoring program. In addition [the CEO] has attended training on Grant and Tender Writing and participated in the Queensland University of Technology Workshop on Grant Writing and Sourcing Philanthropic Organisations."

Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre (MWRC)

"As MWRC has grown the Fitzroy Valley society and economy has become increasingly structured around government and other community organisations delivery of services. The organisation remains within this paradigm of service delivery, where successive governments have outsourced their responsibilities to a proliferation of Aboriginal community organisations. Our ability to come together and effect change, on the scale of the whole community, is continuously inhibited by the chronic insecurity of short-term funding arrangements.

Much of our advocacy work is toward resetting the relationship with government so they not only commit to our long term strategies, but they become a facilitator and vital stakeholder in supporting the development of our community's major priorities. At the moment our units and programmes are 98% government funded. Through exploring development methodologies such as collective impact, we are looking at alternative forms of investment from philanthropic organisations and donations and marshalling the support and resources of the private economy. As an organisation, we value highly the support we receive from government and other bodies. However, what the organisation has achieved could never have been done by the government acting alone. The organisation's leadership has had to come from the community.

By increasing the social enterprise capacity, per above, MWRC will be creating an income stream for the organisation, so it can begin to support some of its operational and governance training costs in keeping with the planned capacity building of the entire organisation. Creating an income stream will help the organisation begin to break down divisions between units and programmes which are often funded by separate government departments which have diverging outcomes, goals and reporting requirements. Developing a financial base will help us improve cross-organisational linkages for more effective collaboration between staff to work toward our strategic goals.

MWRC further plans to improve its partnering potential with corporates and philanthropic bodies through developing its public profile, media and online presence. The organisation is seeking funds to develop its corporate capacity to begin developing new relationships and transitioning it into a new investment paradigm."

Waringarri Arts Aboriginal Corporation

"Increasing financial understanding is a key aspect of governance training and the future financial plan. Waringarri Aboriginal Arts has developed a Money Business presentation to assist our artists and staff to understand finance. This information has been shared with other art centres to help with their understanding. The Money Business presentation was developed in partnership between Waringarri Aboriginal Arts and ANKAAA with key contribution by Chris Griffiths – Waringarri employee."

Yuku-Baja-Muliku Landowner & Reserves Ltd (YBM)

"As most of our real estate lies within western conservation systems, such as National Parks we must maximise our natural resource management activities and enable private enterprise to diversify our land management income. We are currently exploring opportunities around contracted service provision, ecosystem services, private sector donations and support eco-tourism. We have also gained some areas of Aboriginal freeholds and general freeholds where we can explore options around small scale agriculture and tourism. Our major focus on tourism is to provide well managed visitor infrastructure, such as campsites and walking tracks. Our participation with the development of first stage of the Cape York Dreaming Track is our current focus. Our aim is to have this up and running in the next 12 months. We are also investigating the potential development of a significant wind farm at Archer Point that [if] successful will shift us significantly towards economic independence, while providing clean and green energy to the North Queensland Market."

7.3 PUTTING YOUR HAND UP

It is important to periodically review governance arrangements to clarify what is working well, and to scope out potential areas for improvement. Trust in an organisation's leadership and capability is essential to keeping stakeholders invested and engaged. To sustain credibility, get things back on track, or simply move in a fresh direction it can be helpful to ask for assistance from experts.

7.3.1 PRIORITY AREAS FOR GOVERNANCE IMPROVEMENT

(a) Discussion and analysis

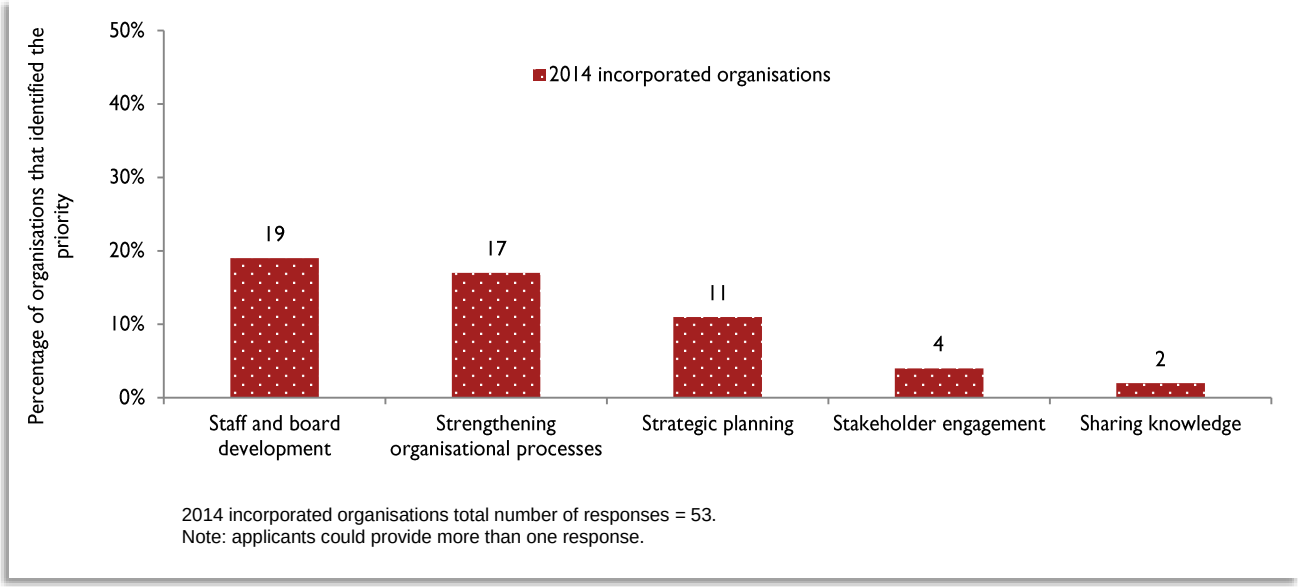
Applicants described governance development as a high priority to secure ongoing sustainability and to underpin planning for future economic development opportunities. Some applicants reported a more intensive focus on governance development during particular points of the organisational lifecycle, such as planning for expansion or growth of the organisation.

Staff and board development was the most frequently discussed priority to strengthen organisational governance. Specifically, applicants referred to provision of ongoing governance training for the governing body, leadership training and career pathway support for staff members, as well as succession planning and offering youth leadership development activities to build the confidence of the next generation to be involved in leadership positions and on local boards.

Strengthened organisational processes were the key focus of governance development for 41% of applicants. Many wished to engage external expertise for assistance in change and growth management, governance model evaluation and finalising business or strategic plans. Of those, improved monitoring and evaluation processes were of high priority.

Some applicants sought to strengthen the relationship with their membership and the wider community as part of their governance development strategies. Proposed activities included: encouraging community participation in the membership, more regular community events, increased communication and knowledge sharing, a tailored PR Policy and digital documentation of Elders' stories.

Figure 36: Priority areas for governance improvement



(b) Innovative ideas

Here are some innovative ideas and emerging practices that were identified as part of this review:

Association of Northern Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists (ANKAAA)

"The ANKAAA board and management could benefit from developing increased understanding of more complex money management. More advanced money management and planning skills are needed to achieve ANKAAA's long-term goal of building a strong independent organisation, which will continue operating well into the future to support the grandchildren.

It would be useful to build a new initiative for strengthening the understanding of money management and planning within the board and management by commissioning a very experienced facilitator and business advisor who has worked with ANKAAA previously to continue support to the board through a two year Advanced Money Management Program.

Embedding this in a culturally specific program and securing continuity over an initial two years would allow the program to build trust and capacity and make sure both the board and the outside advisors have a good space in which to communicate and understand one another."

Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (CLCAC)

"A key future priority for the CLCAC is pursuing economic and community development opportunities for Traditional Owners on the back of successful Native Title determinations. Enhancing governance support but more specifically, technical support, policies, procedures and resourcing around this issue is a very high priority moving forward. Economic participation is a high priority for all levels of Government and within Indigenous communities and requires a significant investment in ensuring appropriate and effective governance, structures and support processes are put in place in readiness for this post determination environment."

KARI Aboriginal Resources Inc.

"In our next phase of growth, KARI will be expanding from a medium-sized to a large organisation. In order to stick to our continuing goal of keeping KARI stable during times of change and making our growth sustainable, we will be consulting with external advisors to agree on an appropriate model to support that growth. As we will be changing from being a state-wide to a nationwide agency, we will be looking to similar successful models that have achieved this transition and continued to grow and succeed. We will look to organisations and business in Australia and overseas, delivering Indigenous and non-Indigenous services, for example Barnados Australia and the Benevolent Society. Growth will continue to be driven by our governance model, and the quality of services we are committed to providing for our clients and community. The 80% Indigenous composition of our Board and staff will be an ongoing commitment and goal. We will seek guidance from external advisers about creating specialist roles or functions within our governance structure to support our growth, such as the FAB Charter we have already introduced to support the Board in their financial oversight of KARI."

Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation

"We recognise that the strength of our organisation, its steady management and governance over the 18 years of our history, largely comes from our steady Board membership. We have been considering opportunities to provide Board experience to some younger members. It would be fantastic for young people to participate in Governance workshops – this might even be something that could be done in conjunction with schools as an entry to young people becoming members when they leave school and then being more able to confidently put their hand up to participate in our Board (and other Boards)."

Ngnowar Aerwah Aboriginal Corporation (NAAC)

"Our human resources are our organisation's greatest asset. Our volunteer Board is comprised of seven very passionate and committed Aboriginal people; however, we do not always have the funds to invest in further professional development and training to support their growth in skills and knowledge. If outside support were available, NAAC would be very keen to implement a meaningful and ongoing training program for Board members."

PRK Radio

"We would like to ensure more connection with the community by way of regular events, movie nights and games nights for kids. We will also like to go out country more with Elders and young ones to have picnics and bush cooking where culture and counselling can be offered. We would like to do more video recordings of stories from Elders and documentaries on the area. We will also get a stronger transmitter to project our stories farther on air. All these and many more are plans we as an organisation have projected and hoped to come to life with a potential of connecting with the people more and making it a people centred organisation."

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The Australian Indigenous Governance Institute and Reconciliation Australia acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures; and to Elders both past and present.