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Understand Indigenous governance

Governance gives an organisation, community or nation the ways and means to achieve the things that matter to them. It's about how groups work together to achieve shared goals.

Governance is also about how people organise themselves to:

- manage their own affairs
- share power and responsibilities
- decide for themselves what they want for their future
- put those decisions into action.

Elements of governance

There are 8 elements of governance. For your organisation, community or nation to be effective, these elements should work together.

The first 4 elements are about your **context** - they set the scene. These elements include:

- purpose (what brings you together)
- people (who does it)
- culture (the way you do things)
- wider environment (outside influences)

The other 4 are about your **governance model (content)** - what you do. These elements include:

- structure (the type of group you form)
- rules (how you do it)
- strategy (what you do)
- resources (what you need)

Indigenous governance

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been practising governance since time began. What makes it Indigenous governance is the role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture plays.

Culture includes the knowledge, beliefs, ideas, values, powers, laws, meanings, and relationships shared by members of a group. It's what guides people's ways of life.

Changes to governance are more likely to be supported by members when they come from within the group and are seen as culturally legitimate.

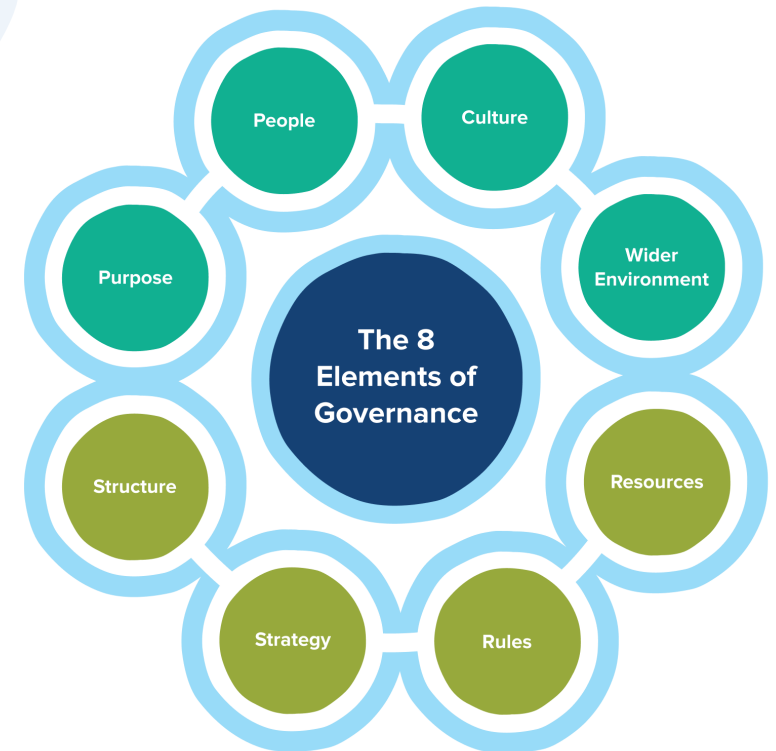
Understanding your culture is essential for effective governance. It forms the basis for making decisions and working together.

Governance lingo

What's the difference between governance and government?

Governance involves people with common interests working together to achieve goals. It includes all the processes, ideas, and structures that enable groups to accomplish their objectives.

Government refers to a formal structure responsible for making rules and decisions. Governments derive their authority from written rules, such as constitutions and legislation.



Context:
Setting the scene



Content:
What you do

What's the difference between an organisation and a corporation?

An **organisation** is a group of people who work together to pursue shared goals. Organisations may be informal or incorporated.

A **corporation** is an organisation that is incorporated. It carries more legal obligations.

Corporate or organisational governance is a system of rules that directs an organisation, community, or nation.

Indigenous governance is not the same thing as organisational or corporate governance. Indigenous governance is about how these two ways of governing come together – this is what we also call two-way governance.”

What is community governance?

A **community** is a network of people and organisations with shared links, including personal relationships, cultural identities, and traditions.

Community governance involves the relationships, cultural protocols, and practices that reflect the culture of a group's members. Organisations, corporations, nations and governments can all practice community governance.

What is nation building?

In Australia, a 'First Nation' may signify:

- a small clan, language-based group or tribal unit
- a native title–holding group or traditional land-owning group
- people spread out across a region, city, or multiple communities who consider themselves a single cultural unit
- a discrete community whose residents want to collectively govern themselves.

Nation building is how a First Nation enhances its own foundational capacity for:

- effective self-governance
- self-determined community and economic development.

Governance for nation building is about the practical mechanisms that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples use to govern in a way that maximises their ongoing self-determination.

Self-determination and governance

Governance is a vehicle for self-determination because it allows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to:

- **organise themselves in ways that are meaningful**
- **start development projects that align with cultural and collective priorities**
- **make laws and decisions that solve difficult social problems**
- **balance cultural integrity with change**
- **shape relationships with neighbouring societies in their own ways.**

Self-determination means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have meaningful control over their lives, including decision-making power and responsibility for their communities and lands.

Effective governance

Effective governance means having rules, structures and processes capable of achieving your objectives.

AIGI define 4 key principles that guide effective governance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups.



Principles of effective Indigenous governance

Customised. Your governance model needs to be designed for your specific purpose, environment and resources.

Culturally legitimate. Your governance should align with your cultural traditions, values, and contemporary ideas of how power should be shared. It should be supported by the people being governed.

Two-way accountability. Achieving effective and legitimate governance means Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must work across Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of governing.

Finding this balance means building governance that works well 'two ways'. This two-way accountability leads to a balancing act that is called two-way governance.

Evolving. Your governance model evolves to match changes in your members' priorities and preferred ways of doing things - it is not static.



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For more information,
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