

# What can we do?

## Cultural legitimacy in governance rules and policies

Task	Some questions to ask	Example	What can we do?
<p>Diversify your membership and those you communicate with.</p>	<p>What is the average age of our governing body members? Do our rules and policies consider all age groups?</p> <p>How can we make sure information reaches all cultural and age groups in the community so we can make better rules and policies?</p>	<p>A corporation has a committee of nine Elders from different communities and three younger members. This ensures that cultural values are reflected in its work. The corporation also conducts community ‘yarn ups’ (social functions that are sometimes attended by up to 120 people) as a means of spreading information about current issues.</p> <p>A health committee is made up of ceremony leaders and Elders from eight language groups, as well as outsiders. Elders have the traditional authority to ensure the right people are involved in decision making, and decisions are underpinned by the desire to keep the culture strong.</p> <p>A council ensures the clan is represented in the organisation, reviving the traditional roles within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander society, and the sharing of knowledge between young and old.</p>	

<p>Give your community the chance to be involved.</p>	<p>How can we make the community more directly involved in rule and policy making?</p>	<p>An organisation makes major decisions, plans and cultural decisions only after community consultation, advice from community councils and input from other local experts and elders. At each board meeting the community councils are invited to a preliminary session with the board to give them a chance to share their ideas and raise concerns.</p> <p>Another health service conducts all its board meetings as open forums, which it advertises in the community. Community consultation is vital for conveying the service's cultural practices, and for establishing its legitimacy and support within the community.</p> <p>A council actively involves the local community in decision making. The community is consulted on each proposal, which ensures the council is working towards shared goals.</p>	
<p>Make cultural awareness mandatory.</p>	<p>How do we make sure that all cultural sensitivities are considered when we create rules and policies?</p>	<p>An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander congress ensures all its staff members are given a thorough cultural and legal introduction.</p> <p>A health service ensures that non-Indigenous staff members undertake orientation so they can learn to take cultural practices into account.</p>	

<p>Be gender sensitive.</p>	<p>Do we make sure men and women are treated fairly in our programs?</p>	<p>A health service provides gender-specific clinics and health camps, and conducts nutritional and physical activity programs in the bush.</p> <p>A congress has created gender-specific reference groups—like its birthing service and male health programs—to help it decide cultural issues.</p>	
<p>Accommodate both traditional and modern cultures.</p>	<p>How do we manage non-Indigenous culture and rules?</p> <p>Are we managing two-way governance properly?</p> <p>What can we do to improve how we manage two-way governance?</p>	<p>A management committee supports tradition, law and culture in all remote communities. Its board is made up of respected senior women who are nominated by their communities, and discussion at board meetings is in the local language as well as English so everyone understands what’s going on and has a chance to participate.</p> <p>Another corporation’s councillors are elected according to traditional practice, but follow the directions of their clan Elders in an unwritten code. According to the formal rules, all decisions about land require the consent of the traditional Elders belonging to that country.</p> <p>An institute hosts a committee, which comprises Elders who advise on cultural matters and determine funding allocations for language and cultural maintenance programs.</p> <p>A community health corporation has three Elders/traditional owners on its board, but traditional authority is not</p>	

		used in the decision-making process. Traditional owners do not have more sway on matters than the other board members, and decisions are made on the basis of benefit to the entire community and not just one section or group.	
Respect the opinions of those outside your governing body.	<p>Do we encourage other community members to give us feedback on our decisions?</p> <p>Do we share our decisions properly with others?</p>	An artists' organisation represents many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. Those artists outside of the governing body are still consulted when decisions and policies are made. This way, the board reflects cultural values and norms, while also meeting the requirements of an incorporated association.	
Legalise your culture.	<p>What policies do we have that ensure culture is maintained within our governance?</p> <p>What can we develop further to ensure our governance continues to uphold our culture?</p>	<p>Several local governments have unique preambles written into their constitutions setting out the central role of traditional cultural laws, values, social organisation and ways of behaving as their foundation.</p> <p>One government has developed a set of written policies for its governing body, which includes cultural expectations and responsibilities. It also provides support and guidance for councillors dealing with cultural challenges that may make their roles difficult to carry out.</p>	