

24 September 2018

Indigenous Electoral Participation Program

2018-2021

Program Overview

Future direction of the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program

Background and Context

Evidence indicates Indigenous Australians participate in the electoral process and elections less than other demographic groups.

The AEC has publicly acknowledged that the current delivery method of the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program (IEPP) has not resulted in a **sustained** increase in Indigenous enrolment and participation with the electoral process by eligible Indigenous electors. Other government agencies such as the ABS have also experienced difficulty in engaging with Indigenous Communities in civic related activities such as the Census.

This experience along with previous program reviews, consultation with IEPP staff and State Managers and consideration of the federal fiscal environment, has informed the development of the strategy for the future direction of IEPP.

Previous review recommendations have consistently emphasised the importance of the AEC investing in strategic partnerships with other organisations to extend the reach and impact of the program. Past reviews' recommendations have also highlighted the need to strengthen program governance through clear reporting structures and to implement systematic monitoring and evaluation. In addition recommendations targeted recruiting for specific skill sets and staff capability development as a priority.

Many Australian people who are currently disengaged from the electoral process may experience several challenges to participation. Previous reviews recommended aligning IEPP with the AEC's broader Community Engagement activities. With IEPP working alongside the other Community Engagement programs, provides an opportunity to reduce duplication and concentrate effort.

IEPP - Goals

1. Increase enrolment, turnout and formality for Indigenous Australians at elections through building improved understanding and awareness of electoral processes.
2. Grow the number of politically neutral, trained Indigenous Australians available for employment by the AEC for electoral events.
3. Transform the program delivery model to a community enabled model based leveraging partnerships with government agencies, community organisations and service providers who will assist the AEC in reaching out to Indigenous Australians.

Strategy – “community enabled” engagement



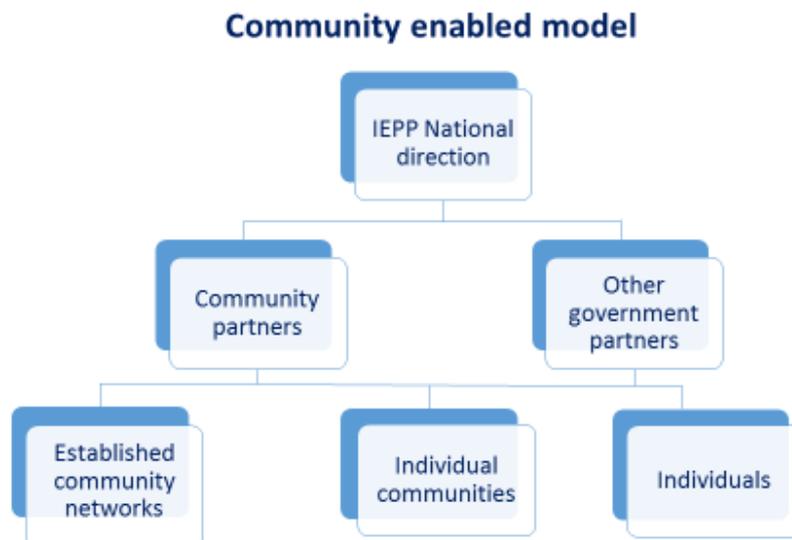
In order to maximise the limited resources the AEC can bring to bear directly in the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program, the AEC will move from an “AEC led” direct engagement model to a “community enabled” model.

The Program will target the development of **specific partnerships** with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and other government agencies and non-government organisations that have existing relationships with Indigenous people and communities and will extend the AEC’s reach and influence.

This strategy, when implemented, will build on synergies and connections that already are in play across the sectors targeted by the AEC for increased participation, such as the homeless/itinerant, youth, people with a disability and people from CaLD backgrounds. Many of the organisations with which the AEC can look to form partnerships with, are already engaged with and provide services to a range of Australians.

This change aligns with the broader government policy led by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and articulated through the *Indigenous Advancement Strategy*¹.

The new delivery strategy for IEPP provides a sustainable model that enables the AEC to leverage existing dialogue built on trust and access the resources of existing and new partnerships, particularly in the lead up to an election. This model supports the AEC’s values through: agility and quality in program delivery; professionalism through expanded networks and reach into communities; which support electoral integrity through enrolment, participation and formality.



¹ Indigenous Advancement Strategy <https://www.pmc.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/indigenous-advancement-strategy>

Benefits

The strategy will actively encourage and provide opportunities for Indigenous community members and organisations to engage with the AEC. This will be achieved through an evidence based approach and engagement with community partners.

Benefits that may be realised by the implementation of this strategy by the Indigenous community and the AEC include:

- increased overall impact through multiplying the outcomes generated by the limited resources available in the AEC
- using data and community feedback to inform choices about the location and operation of polling places
- increased ability through evidence, to target specific communication, education and public awareness activities to inform communities with low electoral participation
- increased electoral participation of Indigenous communities, specifically enrolment, turn out and formality
- a greater understanding of the challenges and opportunities for improved electoral participation for Indigenous peoples
- increased engagement by providing Indigenous communities with opportunities to have their views considered and acknowledged
- more information to support improved decision making about AEC service delivery
- streamlining processes for the recruitment and training of the election workforce
- established partnerships that can be called upon leading up to and during an election in particular to identify potential Indigenous Voting Information Officers and polling officials with an Indigenous language.

Delivery Model

Model overview

IEPP will retain its unique badging and all IEPP state-based staff positions will retain the 'identified position' classification.

A small national team structured alongside the Community Engagement Team will support the Program Manager and provide national leadership, undertake nationally driven activities and work with state based staff to deliver the agreed program.

The operating model will see the National Program Manager working in collaboration with State Managers and IEPP staff to utilise existing partnerships and begin the process of establishing new formal partnerships with community organisations and other service providers to assist the AEC in improving enrolment, turnout, formality and understanding of the electoral process by Indigenous Australians.

Working through community organisations, Commonwealth, State and Local Government entities, and other service providers to promote and distribute information on recruitment opportunities and electoral education, the AEC will be able to reach deep into communities where current resources cannot extend.

To deliver this strategy the AEC will require a mix of capabilities. Direct engagement with Indigenous communities to understand and educate people about the electoral process will still be a requisite capability however this activity *will be limited* under the new model.

The program will be agile to allow the development and delivery of localised plans (State or locality based) over and above agreed National and State plans where appropriate opportunities arise.