



Checklist: Where does power lie in a partnership?

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The aim of this multi-part checklist is to assess where power lies in a relationship between a mainstream funder – government, NGO or business – and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service provider.¹

Both parties should make their own assessment by recording the most appropriate response to each question, according to the number at the top of the column. For example, if the answer to the first question is "sometimes" then you would write "1" in that column then move to the next question.

Scores for each section can be added at the end.

If it is safe to do so, and there is a commitment to building the relationship, then both parties can discuss their respective assessments.

Contractual arrangements

Question	Always (2)	Sometimes (1)	Never (0)
Are there open negotiations before each agreement?			
Do negotiations for the next agreement begin at least six months before the existing agreement lapses?			
Is a draft of the next agreement available to both parties at least three months before the existing agreement lapses?			
Is the next agreement signed at least two months before the existing agreement lapses?			
Is the first payment made in the month the agreement begins?			
SECTION TOTAL	/10		

Funding

Question	Mainly the Indigenous org. (2)	Equal contribution (1)	Mainly the mainstream org. (0)
If the funding supports a service, who decides what services will be provided?			

¹ This tool can be used by both parties, or it can be used by an external agency.



Question	Mainly the Indigenous org. (2)	Equal contribution (1)	Mainly the mainstream org. (0)
If the funding supports a position, who decides the role to be filled?			
Who decides on the quantum of funding?			
Who decides on how long the funding agreement lasts?			
SECTION TOTAL		/8	

History

Question	No (2)	Maybe / slightly (1)	Yes (0)
In the history of the relationship, has the mainstream organisation ever cut funding against the wishes of the Indigenous organisation?			
Has the mainstream organisation ever cut funding against the wishes of other similar Indigenous organisations?			
SECTION TOTAL		/4	

Question	Yes (2)	Maybe / slightly (1)	No (0)
In the history of the relationship, has the mainstream organisation always fulfilled its part of the agreement?			
Does the partnership agreement acknowledge the history of relationships between mainstream organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?			
SECTION TOTAL		/4	

Deliverables

Question	Mainly the Indigenous org. (2)	Equal contribution (1)	Mainly the mainstream org. (0)
Who put forward the deliverables of the agreement?			
Whose way of operating do the KPIs reflect?			
SECTION TOTAL		/4	

Meetings

Question	Mainly the Indigenous org. (2)	Equal contribution (1)	Mainly the mainstream org. (0)
Who decides the site of the meetings?			
Who decides the frequency of meetings?			
Who decides who attends the meetings?			
Who chairs or leads the meetings?			
If minutes are taken, who takes them?			
SECTION TOTAL	/10		

Reporting

Question	Mainly the Indigenous org. (2)	Equal contribution (1)	Mainly the mainstream org. (0)
Who decides on the frequency of reporting?			
Who decides on the content of reporting?			
Who decides on the format of reporting?			
Who decides if a version of the reporting will be available to the public?			
SECTION TOTAL	/8		

Scoring

Add the section totals and see how you score against the possible total of 48. The analysis takes into account that:

- mainstream organisations generally possess more resources than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations
- funder generally possess more power than service providers.

In accordance with Closing the Gap priority reforms, such as building the ACCO sector and changing the way governments do business, and regarding the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to self-determination, individual partnerships should vest power in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

Score	Comment
33-48	Power in this relationship lies with more with this Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation, which will go some way towards redressing the contextual power imbalance.
17-32	Power in this relationship is balanced, which means it will not address the existing contextual power imbalance.
16 or less	Power lies with the mainstream organisation and perpetuates the existing contextual power imbalance.

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This checklist was developed by Yulang based on its experience of examining and experiencing relationships between Indigenous and mainstream organisations, and draws on the substantial work of SNAICC (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care) on partnerships.

Suggested citation

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