

INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE AWARDS 2021 CATEGORY 3 INFORMATION PACK

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The Indigenous Governance Awards are hosted by Reconciliation Australia and the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute in partnership with BHP Billiton to identify, celebrate and promote effective Indigenous governance, through which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are creating positive change in their communities, lives, and futures.

CATEGORIES

The categories for the 2021 Indigenous Governance Awards are:

- **Category 1** - Outstanding examples of governance in Indigenous-led non-incorporated initiatives or projects
- **Category 2** - Outstanding examples of governance in Indigenous-led small to medium incorporated organisations (under \$1 million annual revenue)
- **Category 3** - Outstanding examples of governance in Indigenous-led large incorporated organisations (\$1 million and over annual revenue)

This Information Pack contains details for Category 3

ELIGIBILITY

Category 3 is open to Indigenous organisations operating at a community, regional or national level that are Indigenous controlled and that have been in existence since at least January 2017 (three years).

To be eligible to enter the Awards the governing body of your organisation must be at least 51 per cent Indigenous. We do encourage partnership projects to apply as well as organisations with a mix of Indigenous and non-Indigenous board members; however, the majority of the governing body must be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

The Awards are open to all previous applicants—except for those who are previous winners or highly commended in 2018.

By nominating for the Awards your organisation agrees that information from your application may be used to promote the Indigenous Governance Awards. Promotion may include the production of an Awards booklet and video, and media coverage. This would be arranged in consultation with the organisation.

Applications close on **31 March 2021**.

PRIZES

The winners in each category will receive \$20,000 to assist their organisation, project or initiative and the highly commended winners in each category will each be awarded \$10,000.

Additionally, all finalists receive an Awards package comprising:

- A 12-month partnership with a high profile corporate partner, who will provide mentoring and assistance in an area identified by the finalist.
- An award to commemorate their achievement.
- Travel for two members from each finalist organisation to attend the Awards presentation event in Melbourne in September 2021.
- A communications package of photos and footage from the judge's site visit to their organisations for the finalists own use.
- Promotion as a finalist in the Indigenous Governance Awards.

Shortlisted applicants in the Indigenous Governance Awards will receive feedback on their governance from the judging panel. Applying for the Awards is a great opportunity to reflect on the governance of your organisation or group and to receive expert advice based on your application.

SELECTION CRITERIA

In Category 3 we are looking for governance that demonstrates:

1. **Innovation** – the initiative/project demonstrates innovation and ingenuity in its governance development and response to local conditions and circumstances.
2. **Effectiveness** – the initiative/project's governance can effectively solve problems, deal with disputes and achieve positive and measurable results in addressing a key concern, problem, or challenge facing its community/region.
3. **Self-determination** – the initiative/project strengthens self-governance and leadership for its members/community.
4. **Sustainability** – the initiative/project's governance can face challenges and adapt to changing circumstances.
5. **Cultural legitimacy**– the initiative/project fits, reflects, and strengthens the community or region's culture.

JUDGING PROCESS

An independent panel of judges, will assess the Indigenous Governance Awards. Please keep an eye on our website for the members of the 2021 judging panel at www.indigenousgovernance.org

The judging process for the Indigenous Governance Awards involves:

1. Assessment of applications

A review committee of the judging panel will assess all applications based on the selection criteria and shortlist the best applicants in each category. The judging panel will then review all the shortlisted applications and select finalists across the three categories.

The 2021 finalists will be announced in June 2021.

2. Site visits

Each finalist organisation will receive a site visit from members of the judging panel from June to August in 2021. The site visit will involve consultation with members of the governing body or decision-making group as well as employees, managers, members and other stakeholders in the community (if applicable).

If appropriate, the site visits will also involve photography, filming and possible media coverage for the finalist.

3. Final selection

Following the site visits the judging panel will reconvene to review the site visit reports and decide the Winner and Highly Commended organisations in each category.

The winners will be announced at the Awards presentation event in Melbourne in September 2021.

HOW TO APPLY?

Applications are open until 31 March 2021.

Once you've read through this Information Pack, visit the Indigenous Governance Awards webpage to complete the online application.

Should you wish, you can also download the application pack and submit your application via email or post.

Email: iga@reconciliation.org.au

Post: Indigenous Governance Awards
Reconciliation Australia
PO Box 4773
Kingston ACT 2604

Applications must be received by **31 March 2021**.

Applicants may be contacted after they have lodged their application form and asked to provide further information to the judging panel.

HELP! — ASSISTANCE WITH APPLICATIONS

The following sections of the Information Pack contain hints and tips for completing the application form. The questions in the application can be daunting but don't give up! The following hints and tips can help you get started and steer you in the right direction.

Please read through the hints and tips here, and if you have any questions the IGA team can help you complete the form. Please contact us at:

Phone: (02) 6153 4400

Email: iga@reconciliation.org.au

Resources

The Indigenous Governance Resources contains information and tips on governance, as well as case studies from previous applicants. It is a great place to go for help.

For further information visit indigenousgovernance.org.au

HINTS AND TIPS TO COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION – CATEGORY 3

These hints and tips will assist you in answering the questions in the application form by providing some more detail about the question as well as examples and suggestions. The tips and examples are from previous IGA applicants however don't feel restricted by them—we're also interested to know about innovations in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance!

How do I answer?

Answer clearly, but don't be concerned with using formal language, it's the story we're after, not the way it's told. You can supply supporting documents like governance plans, organisational structures, annual reports, media stories, and newsletters etc. to provide more detail if required.

What if there's a question that doesn't apply to our organisation?

Don't give up if there are a few questions that don't seem to apply to your organisation, just leave it blank and move on. Come back to the question later and if you are still having trouble please give us a call.

There are six main sections in the application form, responses should be aligned to your organisation's governance model and the selection criteria.

We've provided here a brief overview on each of the six sections in the application form, in order of:

1. **About us**
2. **Innovation**
3. **Effectiveness**
4. **Self-determination**
5. **Sustainability**
6. **The role of culture**

1. **About us**

The answers you give in this section will help us understand the governance structure of your organisation as well as who you are and what you do. You can attach supporting documents to show more detail about your governance model if required.

While it is a requirement of the Awards that a majority of the governing body (at least 51 per cent) is Indigenous, the board can be a mix of Indigenous and non-Indigenous members.

Here are some tips and potential examples on governance models:

- The governing body meets regularly (e.g. monthly, every six weeks, every three months etc.) and holds an Annual General Meeting.
- The governing body, staff and others are aware of the systems, policies and procedures that are in place to clarify roles and responsibilities, and to set standards of how the organisation conducts its business.
- The organisation has their accounts audited annually and produces an Annual Report. Steps are taken to ensure board members understand this report if there are language or literacy barriers.
- There is good financial management through preparation of a clear budget each year, regular financial reports to the governing body, and policies outlining financial procedures and delegations (e.g. who can spend what, who can sign cheques etc.).

2. **Innovation**

This section is an opportunity for you to highlight what you think is great about your organisation, what makes your organisation unique and what works so well about your governance.

When you tell us about your overall governance, focus on telling us about what you do that is new or unique to your organisation.

We're also particularly interested in how your organisation's governance reflects the needs of your members and the local circumstances of where you work. For example, how do you ensure specific groups of your community are represented in your governance model? How do you ensure that you are meeting all your legal

requirements as well as the needs of your members? What ideas and practices have you developed that enable you to do this effectively?

Here are some tips about innovation:

- There is a balance on the governing body between community representation (age, gender, background, region, language groups etc.) and the expertise and experience needed to govern effectively.
- The governing body provides positive and confident leadership with a clear vision, and a commitment to achieving that vision.
- The organisation is clear about how cultural rules and values will be implemented—for example, the way leaders are chosen, how decisions are made, what behaviour is expected of board and staff members, the conditions of work, and how you feed information back to members and community.
- There are good systems in place for maintaining continuity and skills on the governing body such as staggered elections, mentoring of new members, developing potential members and succession planning.

3. Effectiveness

In this section we're keen to hear about your effectiveness as an organisation, especially the results you have achieved and how you deal with challenges.

Solving problems and dealing with challenges

All organisations face challenges and go through difficult stages. How an organisation deals with its challenges is often the difference between organisations that survive and those that don't. Managing internal and external disputes is also important; if disputes are not dealt with fairly and in a consistent manner, staff, the community and members of the governing body can lose trust in the organisation.

Positive and measureable results

These questions are an opportunity for you to tell us about your results and what your organisation is most proud of. We know that there are many organisations achieving great things across the country within their local communities – often with little outside support and against the odds. Your successes and achievements can be big or small; external or internal. For example you may have trained and employed new staff, developed a mentoring program for young people, developed internal policies or a long term strategic plan. Or you may have advocated strongly for services for your members or developed a program that is achieving results – your successes will be unique to your organisation.

Here are some tips about effectiveness, solving problems and dealing with challenges

- Operational policies, procedures and codes of conduct are in place to guide staff to help prevent conflicts and crises by avoiding misunderstandings and to guide appropriate action when problems arise.

- Systems are established to receive and deal with complaints from staff and clients, and to proactively invite suggestions for improvement. Often these approaches are tiered, i.e. the complaint is first dealt with at the lowest level necessary in the organisation, and if that fails to resolve it, the matter is escalated to increasingly higher levels.
- Members of the governing body are kept well informed about the financial status of the organisation and are empowered to act if there are financial irregularities. If the governing body feels unsure about the finer details of financial management, they appoint a non-voting expert member or advisor who can assist them and build board capacity.
- The board is aware that it has overall accountability for the organisation, not the manager or CEO. It also feels empowered to deal with poorly performing managers or CEOs.
- The organisation can rebuild itself after facing big challenges and incorporate what it has learnt into its governance model to prevent a repeat occurrence.
- The organisation regularly reviews its programs, policies and programs to be sure they are achieving their goals.

4. Self-determination

In this section, we are interested to know how your organisation exercises self-determination through its development and training programs, communication with your members and in your decision making. These questions are looking for descriptions of how your governance shows, builds and strengthens Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authority and capacity over Indigenous affairs, resources and futures. Self-determination is the right of all peoples to 'freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development' (Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights).

Leadership, Self-determination, and Communication

Communication is vital to leadership, legitimacy, dispute resolution and getting things done. In this section we'd like to hear about how the organisation communicates with its community/region/members and other stakeholders.

Here are some tips about leadership, self-determination, and communication

- The organisation invests in the development of the governing body, staff, youth and potential leaders in a multitude of ways, such as by linking Elders with younger people and providing training and mentoring, including professional training and development.
- The governing body is empowered to make decisions and the organisation is not over-managed. Clear guidelines and frameworks are developed with the confidence that staff will get on with the job, often in small teams, supporting each other.
- The organisation is dedicated to effective communication with its members and stakeholders. It holds regular meetings in addition to the Annual General

Meeting to report and receive feedback and uses other communication tools (newsletters, email, noticeboards) to report on its activities.

- The organisation consults regularly with members and ensures that its communication tools are appropriate and uses translators and explanatory material when necessary.
- The organisation arranges promotion activities such as sponsored events like forums, cultural heritage projects, festivals, performances and workshops.

Decision making

How does your organisation work when it makes and carries out decisions? What gives decision-makers authority? How do you track the outcomes of decisions made by the board? The answers here should illustrate the working relationship between the board and the rest of the organisation. In most successful organisations it's very clear what sorts of decisions the board makes, and those made by management and staff. When there are really important decisions to be made, tell us how you go about making them.

Here are some tips about making and carrying out decisions;

- Frameworks and tools such as strategic direction documents, guides and plans are in place to help the governing body make good decisions. There are also policies and practices to avoid conflicts of interest. Where decisions are difficult or deadlocked, further information or advice from Elders or other parties is sought.
- There is a clear separation of strategic and operational decision-making, and an ability to appraise options and risks in making any decision. Decisions are mostly made democratically, often by processes which develop a consensus after first clarifying what the decision is about and what is at stake.
- With major decisions that require member or community input, the board may choose to hold community consultations, hold a special general meeting or discuss or vote on the decision at an Annual General Meeting. Some organisations hire facilitators to help explain the issues around the decision to communities/members to ensure they are properly informed or if there is a possible conflict of interest.
- There are processes in place allowing governing body members time to think about and discuss decisions both among themselves and in the community. If possible, most decisions are made through consensus (everyone agreeing) rather than the matter being put to a vote and the majority ruling.
- Staff and communities know what decisions have been made. There is a record of decisions made at each governing body meeting, and this information is circulated to everyone who needs it to ensure decisions are acted upon.
- Staff and management trust each other and cooperate. Staff feel they are supported by the governing body and trusted by management.

5. Sustainability

When you answer these questions, detail how you have planned for the sustainability of your governing body and staff, as well as your organisation as a whole. How do you intend to raise revenue? Do you have plans to become more self-sufficient? How are you equipped to deal with challenges and change? Resilience is your organisation's ability to recover from – even be strengthened by – the difficulties and challenges it faces. It's a tough environment out there for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and most, if not all, organisations have times when they struggle. Resilience is demonstrated by the organisation's response to these challenges and the steps taken to try and protect the organisation from facing the same issues in the future.

Here are some tips about future planning and resilience:

- Strategies are developed for greater self-reliance to enable the organisation to be more self-determining.
- Contingency policies that deals with difficult times or unforeseen circumstances.
- The organisation might have a strategic plan to guide it in the direction decided by its governing body and members, and provides staff with the opportunity to understand how their work contributes to the overall aims of the organisation. If it doesn't have a strategic plan, it has a clear idea about its future direction that is shared among its members/community.
- The organisation is creative and finds appropriate models and solutions to challenges and difficulties. It is flexible, adaptable and able to learn from experience.
- The organisation assesses the broader economic, social and political landscape when it makes its plans and budgets for the future.
- The organisation has elected to ask for external assistance or support in areas of weakness to ensure future sustainability. The organisation can talk to its stakeholders and explain any issues it's having in meeting its obligations and arrange ways of dealing with these issues.

6. The role of culture

When answering the questions in this section, be mindful that culture is an everyday thing – this section is not limited to just 'traditional' culture – so think about all the aspects of your organisation and how they reflect your community groups, region, members and stakeholders. In asking how does your members cultural values inform the ethics of the organisation, we're looking for examples of what you do as an Indigenous organisation, or how you conduct your business, that a mainstream organisation couldn't do or couldn't do as well.

Embedding these ethical principles can be visible through the sense of sharing and ensuring all voices are heard during meetings, allowing important issues to be discussed (even if it's not on the agenda), respecting cultural status (Elders, Traditional Owners), and prioritizing resolutions for new cultural issues that may arise. We also want to know if and how the work you do plays a part in strengthening and maintaining culture.

2014 IGA response:

“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.” **Wiluna Muntjiltjarra Wurrugumu Group Martu**

Here are some tips about the role of culture:

- The relationship between the governing body and the community’s traditional cultural practices and decision-making arrangements is clear, giving the governing body the legitimacy it needs to function in accordance with ‘lore’ and ‘law’.
- Successful organisations reflect cultural norms and ethical values of their constituents. These can be seen in the rules and processes they set up, the behaviours they allow and encourage and the cultural expectations they create for all the people involved, while still meeting Western requirements as incorporated bodies.
- Indigenous ways of doing business are incorporated into the organisation’s rules, structures, values and processes. Often the governing body reflects the community’s social structures.
- Staff participate in cultural awareness training. The organisation recognises the cultural life of staff and provisions are made for family and ceremonial events.
- The organisation actively recruits and trains Indigenous staff and creates career pathways for them.
- The organisation undertakes ongoing consultation with community members who have a real say in the way the organisation does its work, and in the organisation’s future planning.
- Ethical principles of your organisation can be seen in policies such as a code of conduct or conflict of interest.

SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

For online submissions, go to the IGA website www.indigenousgovernance.org
Alternately, you may also download the application pack and submit your application via email or post.

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Applications close 31 March 2021.

Good luck from the Indigenous Governance Awards team!