
Engaging with Aboriginal Businesses



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'Don't see an Aboriginal business as any different to a mainstream business – we are perceived as high risk sometimes due to being a Social Procurement engagement ... (but) we understand we must deliver projects on time, within budget, safely and deliver on what we say.'
– Victorian Aboriginal business

What is an Aboriginal business

In Victoria, Aboriginal businesses are defined as a business that:

- is at least 51 per cent Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned
- undertakes commercial activity
- operates and has a business premises in Victoria
- is certified by Kinaway or Supply Nation.

Certification & Registration

There are two organisations that offer options to certify / register as an Aboriginal business – checking that a business is certified by one of these organisations will ensure you are spending your money with genuine Aboriginal business:

SUPPLY NATIONS

Recognises two levels of Indigenous business ownership:

- Registered Businesses which are 50% or more Aboriginal owned
- Certified Suppliers which are 51% Aboriginal owned, managed and controlled.

Aboriginal businesses are encouraged to register and/or certify their business on Supply Nation's national Indigenous business directory.

The registration and verification process helps ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses are Indigenous owned, are audited annually and comply with established standards

KINAWAY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Kinaway Chamber of Commerce Victoria offers similar services at a state level, including an Aboriginal business certification service and a Victorian business directory.

As of 2023, Kinaway have over 600 Aboriginal business memberships, 18% of whom work within the construction industry.

To become a member of Kinaway, businesses must demonstrate that they are 51% Aboriginal owned, managed and controlled

Principles when engaging with Aboriginal businesses

1. Identify clear goals and objectives
2. Build meaningful & respectful relationships
3. Develop cultural awareness & sensitivity
4. Ensure effective channels of communication

When engaging with Aboriginal businesses, we encourage you to adopt these key principles in your approaches to foster meaningful and sustainable partnerships

- Start by identifying the goals and objectives of the partnership.
 - Engage in open and honest dialogue with Aboriginal business partners to understand their aspirations, needs and priorities.
 - Seek alignment between the goals of both parties to ensure a shared vision for the partnership
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- Cultivate trust by demonstrating genuine commitment to cultural preservation, respecting their Culture and traditions and honouring protocols.
 - Open communication where partners can share successes, issues and feedback will foster long-lasting and mutually beneficial partnerships
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- Develop a deep understanding of Aboriginal history, Culture, customs, traditions and values within your team.
 - Be mindful of potential cultural differences and ensure your actions and communication reflect cultural respect
 - Seek guidance from your Aboriginal business partners on how to navigate cultural protocols
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- For meaningful engagement, ensure effective communication channels are used.
 - Prioritise inclusivity and use a combination of culturally appropriate methods such as face-to-face meetings and community gatherings, with digital platforms
 - Seek guidance from Aboriginal business partners on their preferred method of communication

**Engaging with
Aboriginal business is
a requirement of
working on
Government project-**

**Minimum
requirements are
embedded in all
contracts**

Key Tips to get started

Talk with other contractors: the Big Build website has multiple examples of working with Aboriginal businesses in their construction projects. Start by reaching out to people who have done this before

Look at the directories of registered /certified Aboriginal businesses: find potential suppliers via the Kinaway Chamber of Commerce Victoria and Supply Nation directories.

Reach out to other Aboriginal organisations: Aboriginal Land Councils can provide strong information on Aboriginal people they represent. Start by reaching out and building authentic relationships. A list of Aboriginal Land Councils can be found here at [Creative Spirits](#)

Plan early: look at opportunities for engaging Aboriginal businesses right from the design phase or even without having a project in mind.

Build relationships: identify Aboriginal businesses and invest in building real connections.

Explore small changes: to your tender and contract management processes to make contracts more accessible and manageable especially for smaller businesses in early stages of development.

Work to build an inclusive workplace culture: to set partnerships up for success, start work [early](#) to create an inclusive and culturally safe workplace culture