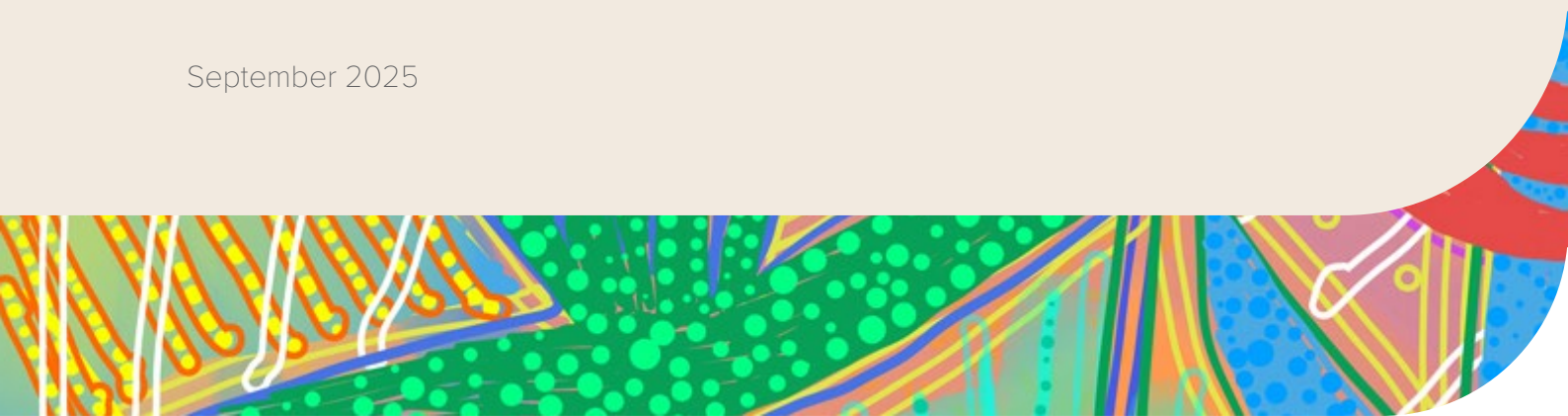


Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance case studies

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These case studies show how the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) is partnering with First Nations people to represent and include First Nations perspectives and contexts in AERO's work. They describe a First Nations-led and governed process that upholds Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance.

Guided by the principles of Maïam nayri Wingara (2018) and the Lowitja Institute (2024), these examples reflect AERO's commitment to being a learning organisation and respectful partner, open to changing how we work and continually improving how we show up in partnership with First Nations people.

These case studies illustrate the practical ways in which Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles can be implemented as part of AERO's day to day work. For more information about these principles, please refer to:

- Data and Information Management Policy
- Indigenous Data Sovereignty Guidance.

Case study 1

Establishing the First Nations Expert Reference Group

Background

AERO's First Nations Expert Reference Group (ERG) is a select team of specialists committed to advancing First Nations education through their extensive experience and expertise.

AERO drew upon Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) principles in recruiting for and establishing the ERG, ensuring members had agency over their participation, contributions and how their data and knowledge were used.

Transparency and consent

- Applicants were advised on how their data would be used, stored and secured, with free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) sought at every stage.
- We used plain language and encouraged open dialogue to meet the requirements of FPIC. For instance, we provided a chance for applicants to ask questions during information sessions. This took place before they signed contracts to become members.
- Members retain full control over what knowledge is shared and how it is documented, mitigating risks of inappropriate use. For instance, they are advised that they have the right to withdraw consent, and are provided with information about what takes place if information they provided has already been published.

Culturally inclusive selection process

- Selection panels recruiting for ERG membership included First Nations representatives to uphold cultural protocols and ensure applications were evaluated fairly and respectfully.
- Applicants were offered multiple methods by which they could access and submit expressions of interest (EOIs), and were provided with one-on-one support to complete them.
- A structured feedback process was provided for unsuccessful candidates to encourage future participation.

Diverse representation

- A structured process was used to assess applicants' experience, location (mapped using the Modified Monash Model [MMM]), jurisdiction and First Nations Country. This approach enabled a data-driven yet culturally informed selection, ensuring diverse representation while upholding Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles.

Secure data handling

- All ERG data is held in files with access restricted to authorised users.
- Non-essential data collected is archived or destroyed, in compliance with privacy standards and Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles.

Prioritising mutual benefit

- AERO remunerates members for their expertise and contributions. This aligns with the principles of mutual benefit and transparency.
- All projects commit to 'loop back', informing members about where and how their contributions have been incorporated into AERO's work, as well as where contributions have not (or not yet) been included.

Case study 2

Staff engagement with the First Nations Expert Reference Group

Background

AERO's First Nations ERG is a select team of specialists committed to advancing First Nations education through their extensive experience and expertise.

Members are invited to collaborate with AERO staff to guide research, shape policy and promote effective educational practices tailored to the needs of First Nations communities. This collaboration is underpinned by ICIP and Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles.

Project engagement

- An EOI process matches members with relevant projects, empowering them to determine their involvement based on expertise, interest or geographic relevance. For example, ERG members with teaching experience, expertise in youth engagement or lived experience as young First Nations people were engaged for the Engaged Classrooms Through Effective Classroom Management project.
- The EOI process also sets out the total anticipated commitment including approximate hours reviewing materials and dates for meetings, so that members are fully aware of the time commitment required to participate.

- ERG members are given control over how their contributions are documented, shared and credited, with informed consent obtained before and during participation, as relevant.
- Where requested, feedback from members is anonymised and analysis focuses on identifying broader themes rather than individual responses. This approach prevents misuse of cultural and sensitive information

Prioritising mutual benefit

- AERO ensures members of the ERG see the impact of their contributions, for instance by offering members project updates, summaries or debriefs.
- All projects 'loop back', informing members about where and how their contributions have been incorporated into AERO's work, as well as where contributions have not (or not yet) been included.

Culturally inclusive engagement

- ERG members are offered various engagement options, including, where feasible, face-to-face or virtual discussions as well as flexible options such as written feedback, surveys or shared documents.
- These options are designed to remove barriers to participation, allowing all members to contribute in a way that works best for them.

Secure data handling

- As in the recruitment phase, all ERG data is held in files with access restricted to authorised users.
- Non-essential data is archived or destroyed, in compliance with privacy standards and IDS principles.

Supporting AERO staff to work effectively with ERG members

- AERO staff are thoroughly briefed on respectful engagement, including consideration of meeting times and methods that support accessibility.
- AERO's First Nations team has developed a guide for facilitating ERG meetings and meets with AERO teams prior to ERG engagement to prepare for ERG meetings and to clarify roles and responsibilities of participants.
- AERO supports staff to embed the ICIP and Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles in their work by providing policies, processes and resources such as cultural responsiveness training, our Data and Information Management Policy, and a growing suite of Indigenous Data Sovereignty-specific guidance.