

Aboriginal Procurement Strategy 2024

Prepared by Building on Strengths Consulting
for the Department of Energy, Mines,
Industry Regulation and Safety.

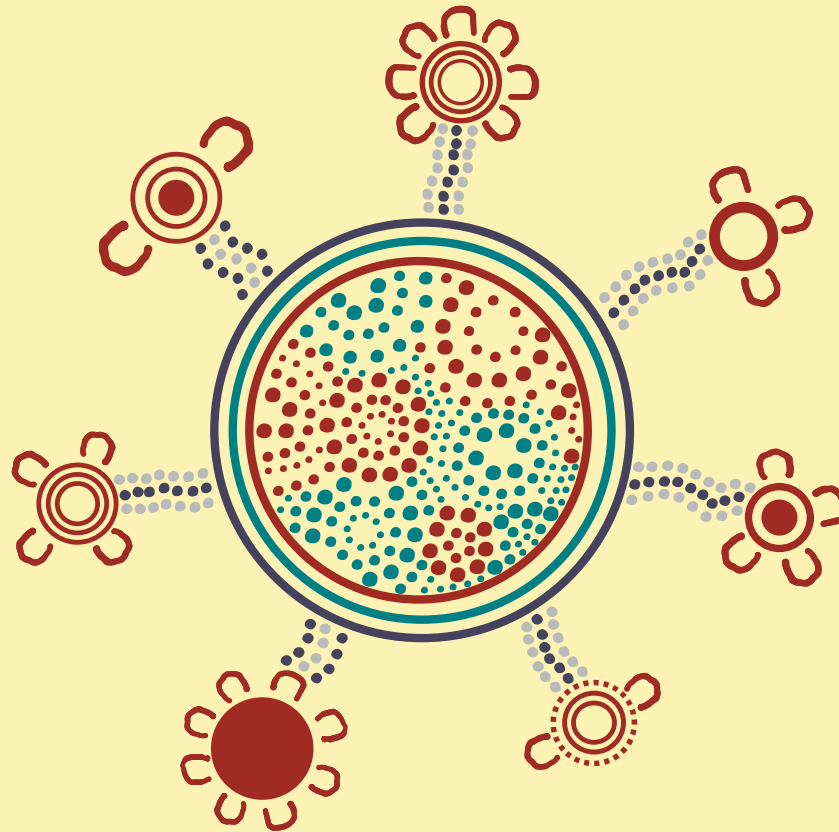
This strategy was prepared on Whadjuk,
Malgana, and Southern Yamatji countries.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (DEMIRS) respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal peoples as being the traditional custodians of Western Australia. We acknowledge the enduring connection Aboriginal people continue to share with the land, sea and sky through both their ancestral ties and custodianship to Country. We pay our respect to Elders both past and present, and acknowledge the value brought to our Department through the collective contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Western Australia.

Artwork

The artwork published in this strategy was developed by Building on Strengths Consulting, in partnership with Aboriginal Elders across Western Australia. These Elders represented the Indigga, Malgana and Whadjuk Peoples. Rights to use the artwork within DEMIRS publications are the property of DEMIRS, with acknowledgement of Building on Strengths Consulting as the artist.



Contributors

This Strategy was made possible through the contributions of several staff within DEMIRS, external stakeholders, and Aboriginal Elders representing Miriwoong, Yaruwu, Wadjeri, Indigga, Malgana, Southern Yamatji, Wangkatja, Ballardong, Whadjuk and Menang Peoples. We would like to express our gratitude for the contributions of all involved in this project.



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Executive Summary

The Aboriginal Procurement Strategy aims to support DEMIRS staff in building their skills and confidence when engaging with Aboriginal businesses, support initiatives to increase Aboriginal participation, and empower Aboriginal businesses to increase their skills and capabilities. The goal of this strategy is to allow greater representation of Aboriginal businesses within DEMIRS procurement, and increase staff confidence when engaging in cross-cultural procurement and contract management.

This Strategy was developed to support the current DEMIRS Procurement Policy Principles:

- Maintain high standards of transparency, probity and accountability.
- Consider and apply value for money requirements, ensuring quality goods, services and works.
- Ensure accountability, consistency and alignment in procurement practices across business units.
- Commit to fair and effective competition, innovation and continuous improvement.
- Identify sustainable and socially responsible procurement solutions, such as increasing procurement from Aboriginal businesses and ensuring opportunities for Australian Disability Enterprises.
- Provide efficient processes, a robust risk management framework and flexibility to support the department and its suppliers.
- Facilitate and promote compliance with the *Procurement Act 2020* and WA Procurement Rules and mandatory requirements.

In addition to this, the Aboriginal Procurement Strategy aligns with DEMIRS strategic priorities and Contract Management Framework.

Notices

Language – This document uses the term Aboriginal, rather than Indigenous or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. While we encourage and value Torres Strait Islander participation, as a Western Australian Department, in respect and reflection of the diversity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities across Australia, DEMIRS respectfully uses the terms ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples,’ and ‘Indigenous’ interchangeably.



Why is an Aboriginal Procurement Policy needed?

The State Government implemented the Aboriginal Procurement Policy (APP) in 2018, which mandates progressive targets for WA Government agencies to award contracts to Aboriginal businesses. Within the department, we strive for excellence by **supporting a safe, fair and responsible future for the Western Australian community, industry, energy and resources sector.**

As stated in our *Towards 2025* strategic plan, one of our strategic priorities is for **policy solutions to enhance community and industry empowerment and protections.**

The department's current Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan outlines the importance of increasing Aboriginal procurement and engagement, for increased diversity, influence, and impact for industry in Western Australia. The Aboriginal Procurement Strategy supports the Reconciliation Action Plan through upholding the following priorities:

Walking together

- 1 By promoting respect for Aboriginal people.
- 2 Establishing guiding principles and directives around how we can best guide our staff in effectively providing information to Aboriginal businesses through the department's procurement processes in order to better meet our legislative requirements, participation requirements, contracting targets and reporting requirements.
- 3 Supporting Aboriginal representation in decision-making, and building the engagement capacity.
- 4 Working together to achieve the vision of our Reconciliation Action Plan while also living out our departmental values.

Keeping culture at the heart of how the department conducts business with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and businesses

- 1 By supporting and promoting culture and the department's responsiveness to cultural protocols and practices with Aboriginal people and communities across WA.
- 2 Building the cultural responsiveness of the department's workforce through tailored training and development.
- 3 Reshaping our department's services and systems in order to work in harmony with cultural protocols.

Investing in foundations and futures

- 1 By expanding economic opportunities for Aboriginal people and businesses whilst reducing barriers to enterprise.
- 2 Reviewing and modifying departmental systems and services to ensure we continue to build on, and not undermine, Aboriginal people's strengths, cultural identities, community leadership, and ways of working.

Further building Aboriginal Empowerment into how the department works alongside Aboriginal people, communities and businesses

- 1 By developing our community partnerships, shared decision-making, and engagement between the department and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, businesses and networks.
- 2 Ensuring the department is providing adequate training for our staff around Aboriginal procurement.
- 3 Supporting Aboriginal-led solutions around effective, culturally appropriate engagement and procurement practices.
- 4 Strengthening our departmental accountability.

The Strategy

The Aboriginal Procurement Strategy shows the intertwining application and influence of four different strategic priorities:

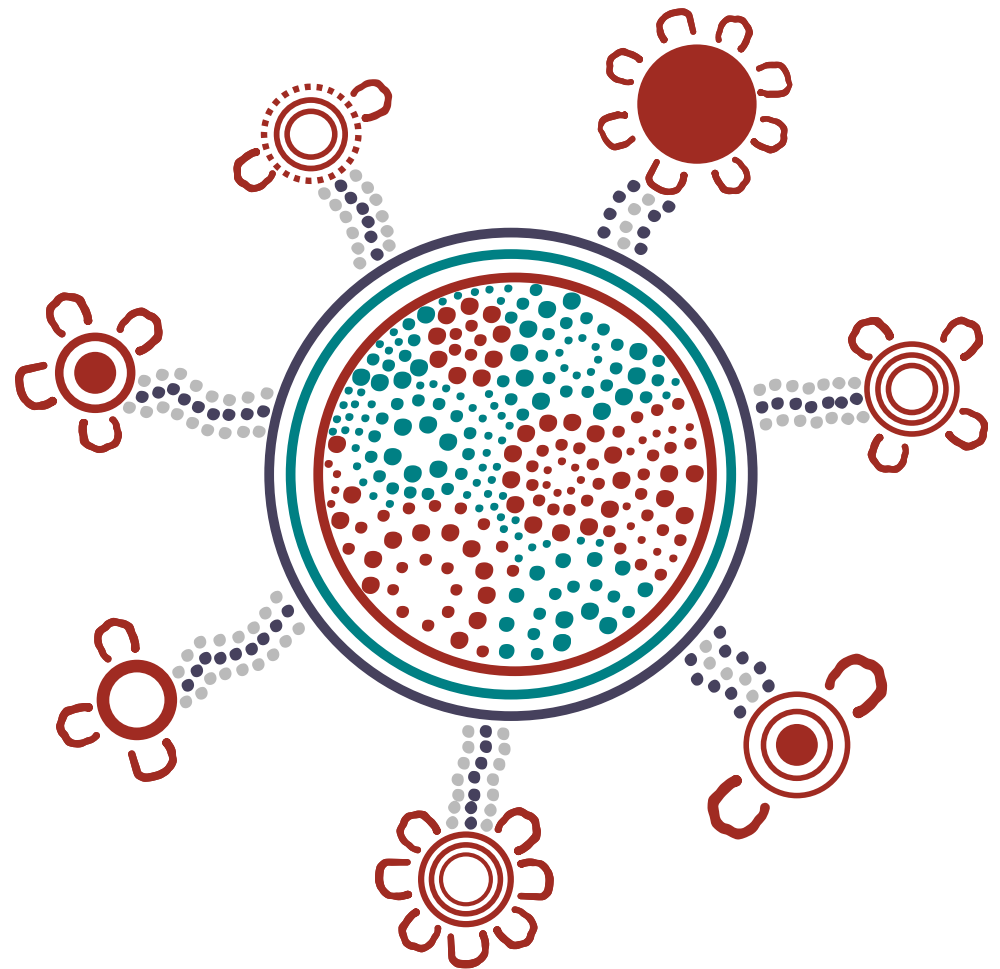
- Attraction
- Accessibility
- Expectations
- Empowerment

Attraction is visualised as the lines going between the Aboriginal business community and the space of DEMIRS procurement and contract management, and is the first priority in the procurement process.

The space within the three concentric rings demonstrates work within the procurement and contract management space, wherein the nine stages of the DEMIRS Contract Management Framework are actualised. These are in the colours of **accessibility** and **expectations**, showing the strong focus on these priorities during that stage.

The widest ring represents the focus of DEMIRS, and is coloured to represent business **empowerment**, the overarching goal of the procurement relationship. The impact of this empowerment, when done authentically, extends into the greater Aboriginal business community.

Together, these colours and images show the role and focus of each strategic priority during the procurement process with Aboriginal businesses, and act as a roadmap for DEMIRS procurement officers as they successfully engage with Aboriginal businesses.





Strategy Priorities

Attraction refers to a range of behaviours initiated by DEMIRS staff to increase DEMIRS visibility in the procurement advertising space. The goal of this is to put DEMIRS contracts before an increased number of Aboriginal businesses, whilst minimising logistical and perceived barriers to applying. Through successfully doing both these things, more Aboriginal businesses will be attracted to apply for DEMIRS contracts.

Accessibility extends on from attraction and continues minimising logistical and perceived barriers whilst also shifting in its focus, to be more conscious of stakeholders' experiences and reservations in the process. Accessibility acknowledges the systemic barriers Aboriginal businesses may have, including implicit exclusion and the ongoing impact of historical exchanges between Aboriginal businesses and Government Departments.

Expectations provides DEMIRS staff an opportunity to examine their assumed knowledge, and allows Aboriginal businesses to understand the process, including normalisation of unexpected events, and the expectation for navigating this process. Expectations includes outlining what DEMIRS expect from businesses, and actively seeking information about what businesses expect from DEMIRS in exchange. Through effectively establishing and revisiting shared expectations, a collaborative and empowering working relationship can be established.

Empowerment is an overarching goal of all interactions through this process, whereby DEMIRS staff can provide support to the business at whatever level is needed to allow the procurement and contract management to be successful, with the least unnecessary involvement from DEMIRS. This requires responsive initiative by DEMIRS staff, coupled with culturally sensitive practices and interactions, with the end goal of upskilling businesses' professional competence and confidence.

Developing the Strategy

The development of the strategy involves four key stages. This cyclical sharing of information ensured that the cultural knowledge of Elders, lived experiences of external stakeholders, and expertise of DEMIRS staff were circulated and analysed together.

Stage 1

What we already knew

- DEMIRS and WA Government documents.
- DEMIRS reports and data.

Potential trends identified

- Attraction – desired outcome to increase application numbers.
- Process – sometimes challenging for DEMIRS and businesses.
- Outcomes – inconsistent, unpredictable.

Businesses' perspective

- Attraction – no significant reputation (strength and a challenge).
- Process – challenges in understanding expectations and how to raise concerns.
- Outcomes – challenges when business is underprepared or not empowered.

Stage 2

Check with Elders

- Confirm potential themes.
- Understand any other unknown experiences or insights.

Outline process of strategy in action

- Explore the process from start to finish to identify strengths and challenges.
- Find gaps in information and try to find answers.

Confirm themes

- Check with Elders.
- Check with businesses.

Stage 3

Finalise findings

- Consult with Elders regarding image.
- Explore main themes through process.

Check

- Check with Elders to approve images.
- Check themes against available data and documentation.
- Check with DEMIRS working group.

Stage 4

Themes in practice

- Explore implications of each theme through procurement process.
- Identify best practice from DEMIRS staff.

Create supporting documents

- Write Aboriginal Procurement Strategy Guidelines.

Staff professional development

- Create and facilitate staff training.

Next Steps

The DEMIRS Aboriginal Procurement Strategy is a strong part of how we ensure Aboriginal voices are represented, and a whole-of-Government approach to increasing Aboriginal participation is actualised.

We are excited to support all DEMIRS staff in understanding the application of this strategy, in successfully implementing the guidelines, and in strengthening existing good practice.



