

The Australian Industry Group

# Employing First Nations People in Your Business





There are numerous practical steps your organisation can take to create an inclusive environment and improve readiness to employ First Nations employees.

## 1. Provide an inclusive workplace environment

As a first step, ensure your organisation's policies are fair and promote equal opportunities for First Nations employees. This may include:

- anti-discrimination policies
- flexible work arrangements
- support for cultural leave (see below).

Increase organisational awareness and understanding of First Nations cultures, histories, and experiences by providing all employees with cultural awareness training.

This training should cover:

- cultural protocols,
- communication styles, and
- the significance of cultural events such as [National Reconciliation Week](#) and [NAIDOC](#) week.

See [cultural-capability-resource-checklist.pdf](#)

Establish clear, accessible, and effective complaint procedures for workplace racism and act on complaints.

## 2. Reconciliation Action Plan

Consider committing to a [Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#).

RAPs help organisations to build genuine and respectful relationships and promote cultural awareness which in turn can help to improve service delivery, open doors to new markets and enhance organisational reputation.

For First Nations peoples, RAPs create economic opportunities, support self-determination, contribute to cultural safety, increase representation and encourage meaningful community engagement.



### 3. Recruiting First Nations Employees

Implement inclusive advertising and interview techniques to improve attraction and retention of First Nations talent.

#### Culturally Appropriate Job Advertisements

Ensure your job advertisements are culturally sensitive and inclusive. Use language that resonates with First Nations peoples and highlight your organisation's commitment to diversity.

#### Key Elements to Include in Your Job Advertisement

When preparing your job advertisement include:

- a clear description of the role and what is expected of the successful candidate
- leave entitlements, including [cultural leave](#)
- hours of work and potential for flexible working arrangements
- reference to your [Reconciliation Action Plan](#) and/or [First Nations engagement strategy](#) (if applicable)
- a positive statement encouraging First Nations peoples to apply

#### Review corporate imagery

Ensure your website and promotional material reflect community diversity.

#### Consider where and how your prospective candidates may find your advertisement

Consider collaborating with First Nations employment agencies, educational institutions, and community organisations to widen the talent pool.

Also consider advertising your roles on First Nations focused platforms in addition to your usual attraction strategies. Such platforms include:

- Community social media pages
- Koori Mail
- Indigenous Employment Australia
- Word-of-mouth
- First Nations job fairs
- Torres News and Cape News (Weipa)
- First Nations Telegraph.

#### Application time frames

Consider whether application time frames are long enough to allow potential candidates to hear about the position through word-of-mouth.



## 4. Assist candidates to prepare for the interview

Clearly explain the position and what you expect of the successful applicant, as well as the interview and appointment process.

Communicate your expectation of the candidates, including dress code, attendance, behaviour and timing of the day.

Provide candidates with examples of the type of activities that may be included in the recruitment process to help them prepare.

Provide details in writing and check in with candidates before the day. This will ensure they have understood the information provided.

### Interview process

Adapt your interview techniques to be more inclusive. This can include offering flexible interview formats and allowing applicants to bring a support person with them to their interview.

Consider how you can simplify and standardise your selection process to reduce the effect of personal bias in the decision making.

Begin with some general welcoming conversation and be genuinely interested in the person to help them feel comfortable and relaxed. Try to build rapport and trust before you ask probing questions.

### Accommodate cultural differences

Ensure selection panel members are trained in cultural capability and encourage diversity on selection panels by including a First Nations person where possible. Understand what hiring prejudices are and how they operate.

Be mindful of cultural differences in [communication styles](#). First Nations communication is often indirect and uses stories, metaphors or subtle cues to convey their messages.

Give candidates time to think through questions and their answers. Silence is not necessarily a sign that a candidate does not understand.

Body language, such as gestures, postures, and hand movements, can be significant in communication. Be aware of eye contact, facial expressions and nonverbal cues that may convey meaning and emphasis.

Be clear on the type of answer you are looking for (e.g. a simple answer or detailed example of their experience). A brief response may not indicate the candidate does



not know any more, but that they are shy or feel '[shame](#)'. Ask for more detailed answers in a conversational manner.

## 5. Onboarding First Nations employees

As with all new employees, once a First Nations candidate is recruited, it is important to onboard them well to ensure they are supported during the first few months of the job. For many First Nations peoples or those new to the industry, your workplace may seem foreign and daunting.

The following steps may help to address this.

### Welcoming Environment

Make your workplace welcoming and respectful of First Nations cultures. Display artwork, acknowledge traditional landowners, and celebrate significant cultural events, such as NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week.

Promote an environment where questions and feedback are welcomed.

### Orientation session

Welcome the new employee to your business and provide an overview of your company culture, policies and procedures.

- Clearly communicate the expected working hours, dress code, break times, and conduct.
- Offer regular feedback and support.
- Ensure employees understand their rights and duties, including:
  - workplace health and safety
  - employee benefits
  - any specific policies related to their position
  - [cultural leave](#) and provisions for [sorry business](#).

Communicate your organisation's policy regarding taking time off for cultural events or ceremonies, such as sorry business, and be clear if this time is paid or unpaid.

See [Sample Leave Policy | Ai Group](#).

### Support and Mentoring

Create support networks within your organisation. Assign a mentor to support your First Nations employee. This could be a peer or supervisor.

Provide opportunities to connect with other First Nations employees and community and attend [cultural events](#).



Invest in the professional development of employees and opportunities for advancement to help them grow within your organisation.

## Offer Flexible Work Arrangements

[Flexible work arrangements](#) can help First Nations employees balance work and personal commitments.

For many First Nations people, responsibilities to family, community and culture are extremely important. These responsibilities can sometimes conflict with workplace responsibilities.

Get to know your employee to understand what their commitments may be.

## 6. Links to Useful Resources

- [Topic Guide: Attracting, Recruiting & Onboarding Talent | Ai Group](#)
- [Sample Leave Policy | Ai Group](#)
- [faqs-on-mentoring-.pdf](#)
- [First Nations people - Fair Work Ombudsman](#)
- [First Nations people - Do you need time off for Sorry Business fact sheet](#)
- [First Nations people - Supporting employees during Sorry Business fact sheet](#)
- [Targeted recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: A guideline for employers](#)
- [Attracting and recruiting First Nations employees | Business Queensland](#)
- [Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees | Business Queensland](#)
- [Attracting and recruiting First Nations employees | Business Queensland](#)
- [Employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people | Business Queensland](#)
- [Employers | NIAA](#)

## Webinars

- [Empowering First Nations Trainees and Apprentices | Ai Group](#)
- [Achieving Impact: Insights from Businesses Implementing Reconciliation Action Plans | Ai Group](#)
- [How to build a culturally safe workplace with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff | Australian Institute of Family Studies](#)
- [Enhance your business – First Nations cultural capability webinars | Business Queensland](#)
  - [Working with First Nations peoples](#)
  - [Creating safe and inclusive workplaces](#)



- [Valuing cultural diversity, recruitment and engagement.](#)