



Australian Government

APSREFORM



Charter of Partnerships and Engagement

Good Practice Guidance



Charter of Partnerships and Engagement

Good Practice Guidance

This document provides additional guidance on the Charter of Partnerships and Engagement to the Australian Public Service (APS) on how to partner and engage effectively. It sets out the behaviours for improving the way the APS puts people and business at the centre of policy, services and delivery.

Purpose

The development of a Charter of Partnerships and Engagement aims to support agencies to build their capability to genuinely partner and engage with people and communities, non-government sectors, academia and industries, to develop more fit for purpose policies and services.

By realising the aspirational principles of the Charter of Partnerships and Engagement, the APS will:

- meet the Government's commitment to genuine partnership and engagement in policy-making and service delivery with the public.
- instill public trust and transparency in government institutions and processes, and embed integrity in public service culture and behaviour.
- build on current best-practice frameworks for partnership and engagement and inform the development of future frameworks.
- work across and within the APS, to genuinely partner and engage with all people, communities, non-government sectors, academia and industry.

It applies to all staff, partnering and engaging across the APS.





Putting people and business at the centre of engagement and partnership

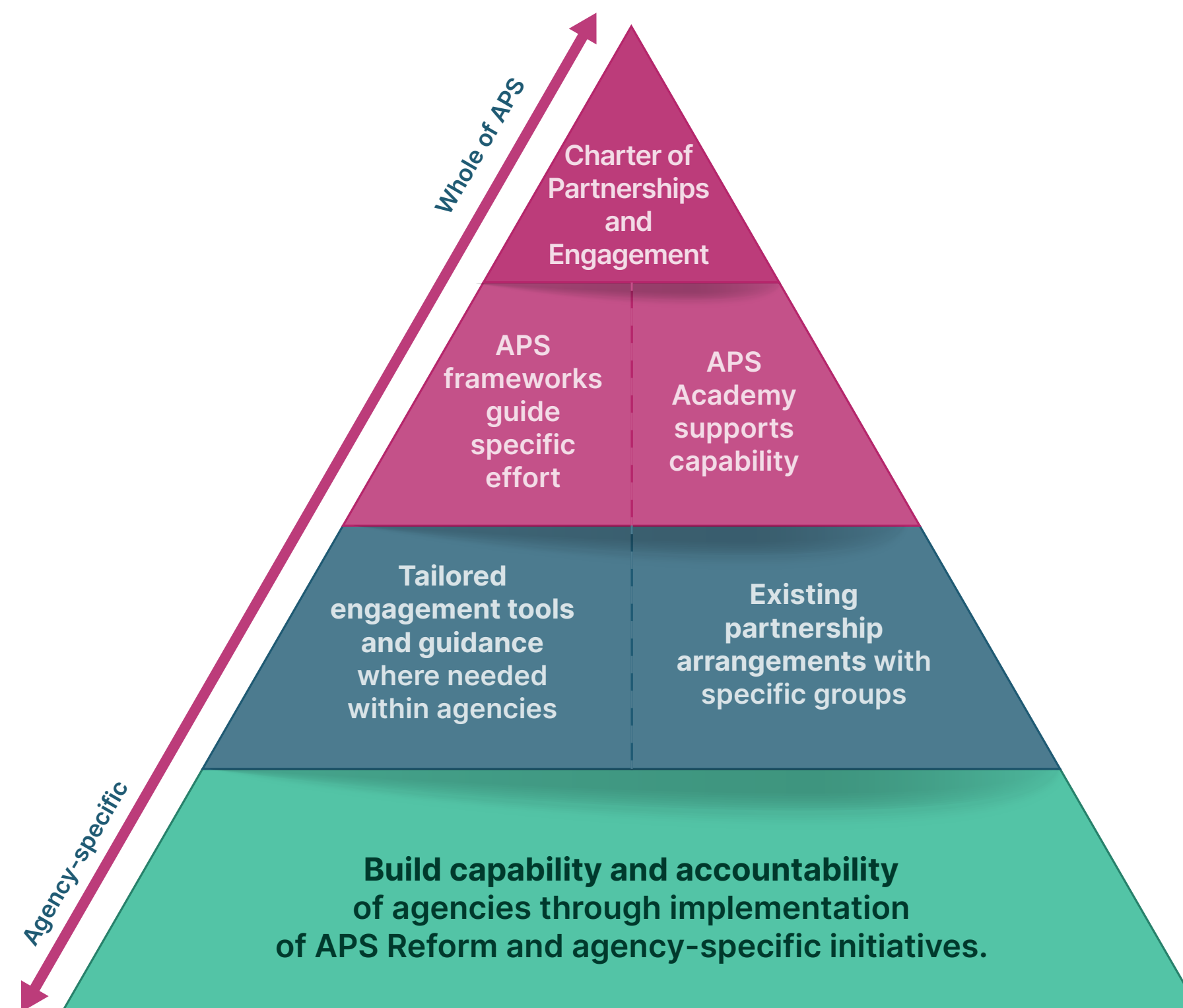
The Charter of Partnerships and Engagement, and underpinning guidance, aims to support staff to build the capabilities to engage meaningfully with the Australian community. It highlights the importance of building relationships and working collaboratively towards shared outcomes, where they exist. This is equally important, whether undertaking engagement or working within formal partnership mechanisms, and applies to all staff across the APS.

The Charter of Partnerships and Engagement Good Practice Guidance is a front door to a range of further support for APS employees to build their capabilities.

- The [APS Academy Engagement and Partnership Craft](#) provide resources and training for those wanting to build their understanding and capabilities in engaging and partnering.
- The [APS Engagement and Participation Framework](#) provides guidance on how to engage well, as well as advice on how to identify the right

methods of engagement to achieve the level of participation required.

- The Charter Good Practice Guidance also links to international and domestic best practice engagement and partnership advice, to help inform planning and practice.
- This Good Practice Guidance is supported by tailored guidance within departments across the APS that support staff to engage and partner respectfully within the specific context of their agencies, such as the [NDIA Engagement Framework](#).
- Government also has long standing commitments to working in partnership with external stakeholders on shared priorities. For instance, the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#), [Empowered Communities](#), [Stronger People Stronger Places](#), or [Connected beginnings](#).



The difference between engagement and partnership

The terms 'partnership' and 'engagement' are often used together, to talk about the relationship government has with external stakeholders. While good engagement and partnership share many similarities, the Charter of Partnerships and Engagement Good Practice Guidance seeks to show the difference between the two, noting they will be relevant in different situations.

The following Good Practice Guidance materials go into further detail, as some key differences are:

- Partnerships imply shared decision making and power sharing between groups.
- Partnerships are longer term commitments, requiring government to invest time, resources and effort in the partnership, to build trust and a shared understanding.
- Partnerships ask government and external partners to agree on shared priorities and ways of working to progress shared goals.

Spectrum of Engagement and Partnerships

Partnering and engaging can be considered a spectrum. Moving along the spectrum from left to right shifts the amount of power away from being solely with government, to being shared with external groups. Trust in government should also increase as you move along the spectrum.

The Spectrum draws on some existing models of engagement including the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum and the APS Framework on Engagement and Participation.



Spectrum of Partnering and Engaging					
Engagement approaches including co-design			Partnership approaches including formal partnerships		
Share	Consult	Deliberate	Collaborate	Partner	Empower
Government provides information on the policy or service.	Government asks for the views of groups and individuals, and some of these views may be incorporated into the final product, but they do not have a say in the design of the process or the outcome.	Government actively involves people and groups throughout an engagement process, taking advice on board to improve the policy or service. There may be formal structures like an advisory group in place. Remuneration for time may also be present.	There is more exchange of knowledge and ideas than involvement. Individuals and groups share some decision-making and say over the process and potential outcomes. Power is still not equal, but there may be some transfer of resources.	Government partners with an external group as equal parties to share decision-making through all stages. Even within partnering approaches there will be weaker and stronger forms of partnership.	External groups decide upon their priorities and Government assists in implementing the decisions made. This includes self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly when there is a commitment to meaningfully collaborate and build long term relationships.



Australian Government

Charter of Partnerships and Engagement

The Charter of Partnerships and Engagement sets out principles for improving the way the APS puts people and business at the centre of policy, implementation and delivery.

By realising the aspirational principles of the Charter of Partnerships and Engagement, the APS will:

1. meet the Government's commitment to genuine partnership and engagement in policy-making and service delivery with the public
2. instil public trust and transparency in government institutions and processes and embed integrity in public service culture and behaviour
3. build on current best-practice frameworks for partnership and engagement and inform the development of future frameworks
4. work across and within the APS, to genuinely partner and engage with all people, communities, non-government sectors, academia and industry.

When developing policy and delivering services, the APS will strive to be:

Open

Be open to engaging with a diverse range of perspectives to inform policy and program development, so that those affected can have a genuine and equitable opportunity to have their say.

Responsive

Be willing to try new approaches to make sure engagements are fit for purpose, culturally appropriate and adaptable, while remaining outcomes focussed.

Transparent

Build public trust by acting with integrity, and being open and honest about expectations, roles and responsibilities, limitations, objectives and processes at the outset.

Accountable

Maintain clear and regular communication by sharing information, taking responsibility for commitments made and informing people and communities on how they have contributed to the final decision.

Informed

Underpin robust decision-making with the effective and ethical use of data, research and other insights, as well as informed by lived experience, history and context.

Collaborative

Encourage and build relationships through respectful collaboration, and partner with communities, businesses, academia, industry and other sectors, to achieve the best outcomes.

We encourage all APS staff to consider how you can apply these principles in your role.



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Engagement good practice guidance

OPEN

Be open to engaging with a diverse range of perspectives to inform policy and program development, so that those affected can have a genuine and equitable opportunity to have their say.

✓ **Gathering existing data on previous government engagements**

Do your research. Have other agencies or teams engaged on a similar topic in the past that you can learn from? Reach out to agencies with existing external relationships, such as [AusIndustry](#), [Regional Development Australia](#) or the [National Indigenous Australians Agency](#) to understand the context you will be engaging in.

✓ **Document how previous engagements could influence your engagement**

Take the time to map existing feedback to the issues you are considering. Look for opportunities to avoid asking stakeholders questions they might have heard before.

✓ **Identify how groups and individuals within them may differ in their level of influence, interest and needs**

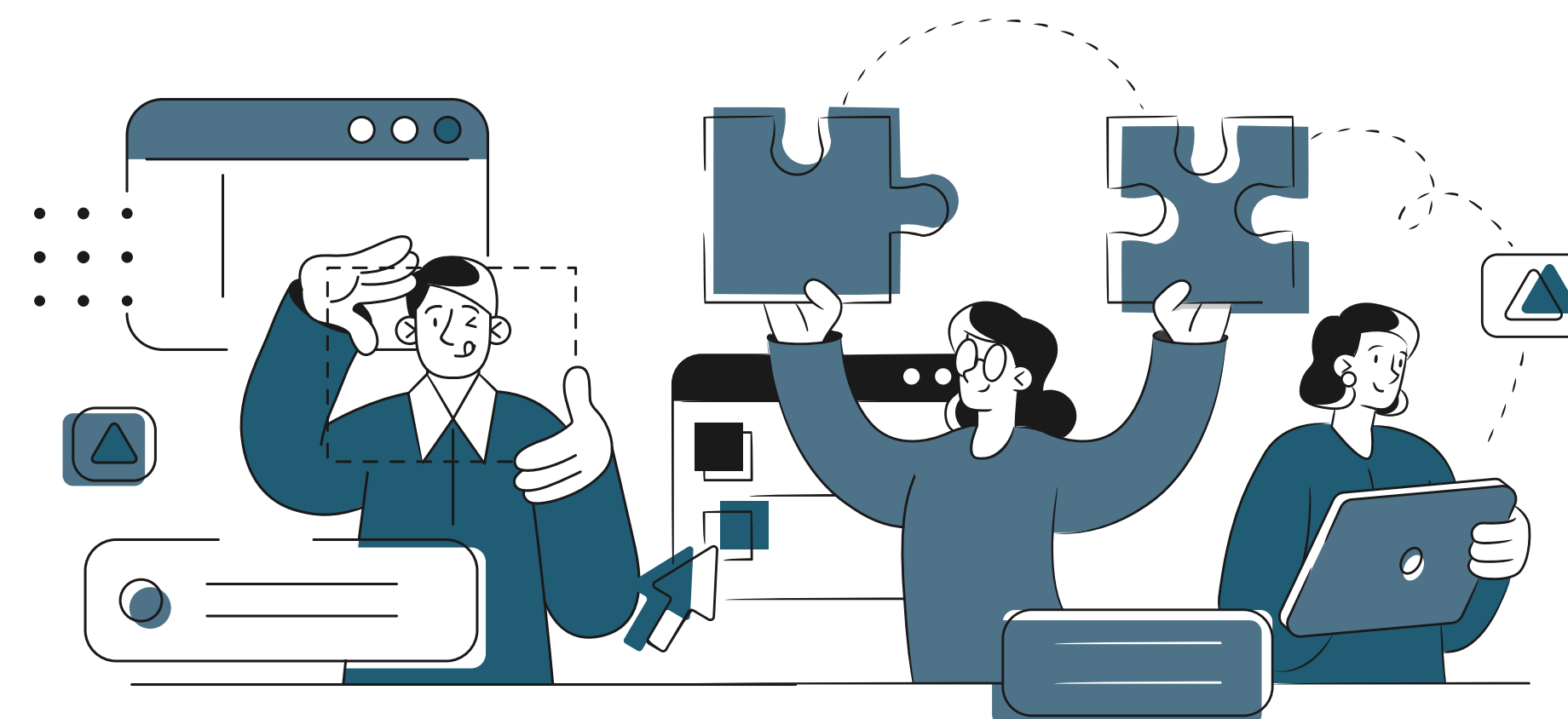
Based on what you know about the issue, identify the groups you think will be impacted by the policy or program, or who might have an interest. Consider their level of influence, level of interest, and what they might care about. This can help identify potential cognitive bias.

✓ **Actively plan strategies to engage marginalised groups**

If you have identified any marginalised or under consulted groups that you think will have a high level of interest, consider how you can proactively engage them. For instance, are there areas of government with existing relationships, or would some engagement methods work better than others? Could an industry association provide an introduction to specialist knowledge?

✓ **Undertake stakeholder mapping to clarify who to engage, who not to, and how best to engage them**

Once you have identified who might be interested, you can then identify the specific groups and individuals you hope to engage with, and the best methods to reach them. For instance, do groups want to help define the problem, or do others want input into potential solutions? Are some groups comfortable engaging online, and do others prefer face to face?



Tips on what to avoid

- **Always talking to the same groups** or people can cause engagement fatigue, or give you a biased understanding of an issue.
- **Engaging with a pre-determined outcome**, may erode trust or goodwill.

Tools & Guidance to help

- [Stakeholder mapping template](#)
- [Stakeholder engagement plan template](#)
- [Getting Stakeholder Engagement Right guidance](#)
- [Free Prior and Informed Consent in the work of the Australian Heritage Council](#)
- [Good Practice Guidelines for Engaging with People with Disability](#)

RESPONSIVE

Be willing to try new approaches to make sure engagements are fit for purpose, culturally appropriate and adaptable, while remaining outcomes-focussed.

✓ **Understanding of community, cultural and other protocols informs your process from the outset**

Each community or stakeholder group is different. Have you identified how community or cultural protocols might impact your engagement? For instance, do you need to seek permissions to engage, or avoid religious or local holidays?

✓ **Accessible design of engagement materials**

Seek advice on how to make sure engagement materials are accessible, taking into account the methods of engagement and the level of participation you are after. For instance, accessibility might look different if you are providing information, versus seeking two-way engagement.

✓ **Actively listen and monitor progress, to adapt and improve approach**

If you have identified specific stakeholder groups you wish to engage with, it is important to monitor their level of engagement. If they are not engaging, reflect on how you might adapt your approach to increase their engagement.

✓ **Training and supporting staff in culturally and psychologically safe engagement methods**

This could include looking for opportunities to ensure training incorporates lived experience of the communities engaged. For instance, engaging local First Nations Traditional Owners ahead of travel or engagement with a community, to understand local context.

✓ **Ethically and proactively share insights with other agencies, if identified**

If an issue is raised outside of your policy or program remit, be sure to proactively pass on the information to the relevant policy owner. This will help reduce consultation fatigue, by reducing the likelihood of stakeholders being asked the same questions by different government agencies.

✓ **Demonstrate you have heard what was shared**

It is important to provide validation that you have heard and understood the advice you have been provided.



Tips on what to avoid

- **Inexperienced engagement leads** can lose trust with stakeholders, if they do not understand how to engage respectfully or meaningfully.
- **Inaction in response to feedback** can leave stakeholders feeling like they have not been heard, or miss opportunities to receive more meaningful advice.

Tools & Guidance to help

- [Trauma informed resources](#)
- [APSC Cultural Capability Hub](#)
- [APS Academy accessibility guidance](#)
- [Guidance for proponents on best practice Indigenous engagement for environmental assessments under the EPBC Act](#)
- [Good Practice Guidelines for Engaging with People with Disability](#)

TRANSPARENT

Build public trust by acting with integrity, and being open and honest about expectations, roles and responsibilities, limitations, objectives and processes at the outset.

✓ **A stakeholder engagement strategy is in place that clearly sets scope, objectives, limitations, timeframes, and levels of participation required**

It is important to identify any constraints on the engagement, and plan to manage them. For instance, the amount of time available, the amount or type of information that can be shared, the available budget, the level of influence that stakeholders may have on policies and programs, or the expectations of your Minister.

✓ **Planned approach is effectively communicated to identified stakeholders**

Once a plan is in place, think about how you will communicate it to identified stakeholders. This might include the development of a communications plan for the engagement plan, and could look to communicate the level of participation or influence a stakeholder might have if they engage.

✓ **Clearly communicate how feedback will be used**

When planning your engagement and communicating the approach, clearly acknowledge how feedback will be used, to set realistic expectations. Is it informing problem identification? Are you testing a potential policy response? Or, are you communicating how a policy or program might be implemented?

✓ **Risks have been identified and mitigated**

Engagement planning should include risk planning. Risks might relate to the engagement outcomes you wish to achieve, any risks for stakeholders engaging in the process, or relate to the safety of the team undertaking the engagement.

✓ **Coordinate engagement with other agencies on related work**

Some stakeholders engage with a range of different government departments regularly. There may be an opportunity to align or combine engagements, as a strategy to reduce consultation fatigue.



Tips on what to avoid

- **Setting unrealistic expectations** can happen if you are not clear on the barriers or influence a stakeholder might have on a policy or program.
- **Engaging beyond the authority or scope** of your work can create unrealistic expectations, so communicate early on what you can and cannot engage on.

Tools & Guidance to help

- [Stakeholder mapping template](#)
- [Stakeholder engagement plan template](#)
- [Getting Stakeholder Engagement Right guidance](#)
- [Free Prior and Informed Consent in the work of the Australian Heritage Council](#)

ACCOUNTABLE

Maintain clear and regular communication by sharing information, taking responsibility for commitments made and informing people and communities on how they have contributed to the final decision.

✔ **Sticking to the engagement plan, or clearly communicate reasons for change**

Plans change for a whole range of reasons. Government expectations, weather or the availability of external stakeholders might shift unexpectedly. If this happens, it is important to communicate the change and, if required, adapt the engagement approach.

✔ **Opportunities for input are clearly advertised**

If you have identified clear interest groups, make sure you have a plan for clearly advertising the opportunity for them to engage. This might be through advertising opportunities on social media, or directly approaching key stakeholders with an interest, ahead of the engagement.

✔ **An appropriate mechanism is in place to receive feedback during and after engagement**

Stakeholders may have feedback on the engagement approach itself, and there should be a clear mechanism for providing feedback both during and after the engagement process.

✔ **Clearly documenting engagements and advice received**

Documenting what you have heard is important. Not everyone working on the policy or program might attend the engagement, so a record will help share insights. A written record can also help others working on a similar policy or program, or who might be undertaking a similar engagement approach.

✔ **Sharing when a decision has been made and how engagement contributed to it**

Sharing the outcomes of the engagement with those who have engaged will help to demonstrate how you have taken ideas or feedback on board. This might mean sharing that the work did not go forward, or there was no clear outcome.



Tips on what to avoid

- **Forgetting to share the outcomes of the engagement** can contribute to people feeling unheard or contribute directly to engagement fatigue.

Tools & Guidance to help

- [Trauma informed resources](#)
- [APSC Cultural Capability Hub](#)
- [APS Academy accessibility guidance](#)
- [Guidance for proponents on best practice Indigenous engagement for environmental assessments under the EPBC Act](#)

INFORMED

Underpin robust decision-making with the effective and ethical use of data, research and other insights, as well as informed by lived experience, history and context.

✓ **Research and share existing data on the issue to build a clear understanding of the problem**

Data and research can inform the planning of an engagement process, or provide an evidence base to inform more collaborative engagement approaches. Data and evidence that has informed an engagement approach can also be provided as an evidence base and inform advice to decision-makers.

✓ **Experts, specialists and/or experienced practitioners inform ethical and effective engagements**

Seeking advice from engagement practitioners, policy experts or communities you wish to engage, can increase the quality of your engagements. This might include helping identify specific stakeholders, build a better understanding of the issues being explored, or include advice on the engagement approach itself.

✓ **Value and learn from people with lived experience**

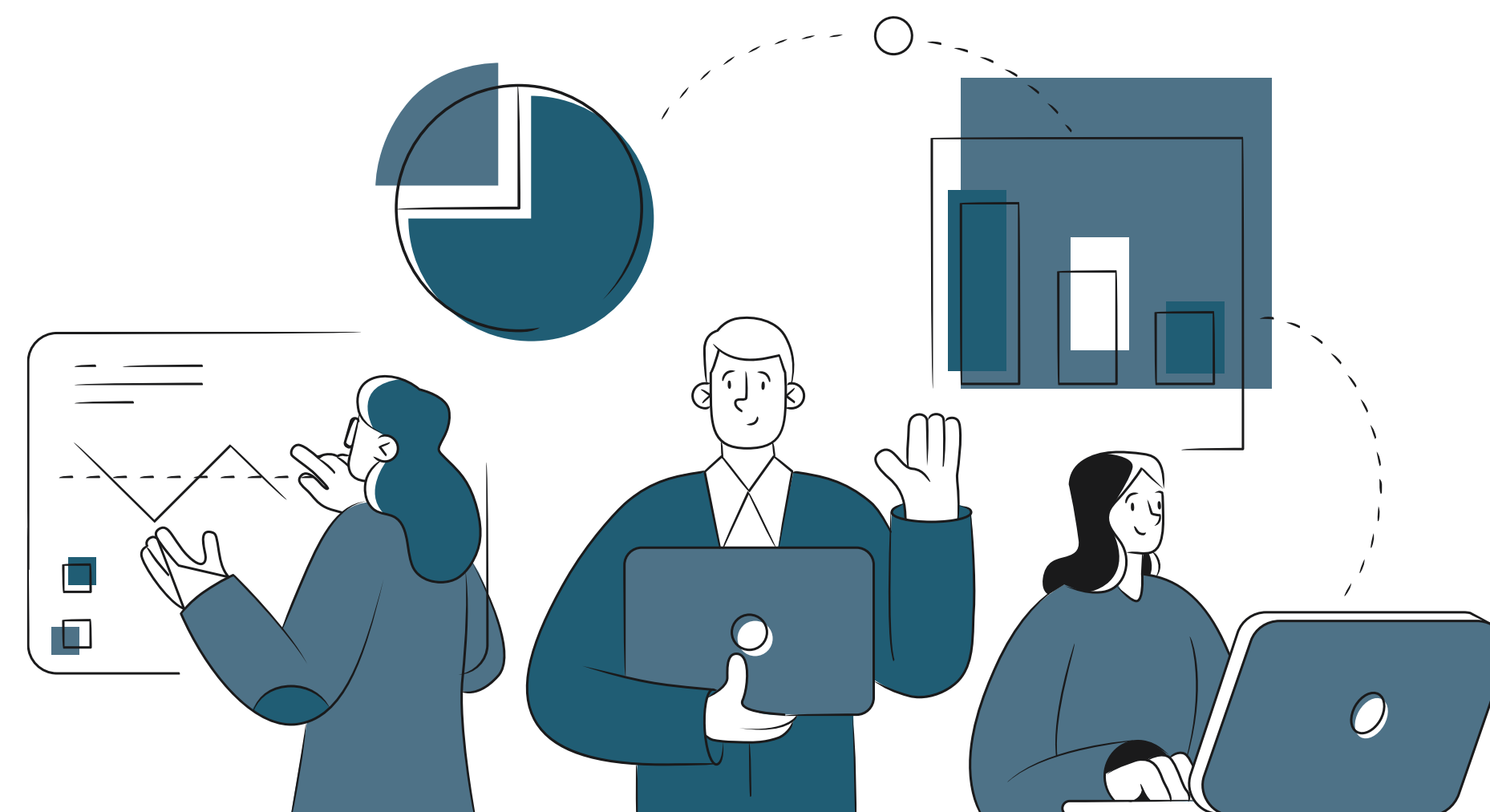
Where there are relationships in place, look to learn from lived experience, to inform planning of engagement approaches. Some communities or sectors have significant experience engaging with government, positively or negatively.

✓ **Learn from staff with engagement, policy and subject matter expertise**

Actively seek out good engagement practice. Across the APS, a range of expertise in engagement can be accessed through existing networks, who can help you to plan your approach.

✓ **Commit to share engagement skills and experience**

Where you might have experience or subject matter expertise, look for ways to share across government. Being generous with your time and knowledge may mean an external stakeholder has a better experience engaging with government.



Tips on what to avoid

- **Ignoring the context of contributors**, as every stakeholder brings their unique perspective, which may or may not be shared by others.
- **Assuming knowledge or not sharing what you learn**, because not everyone is an experienced engagement specialist, sharing is good practice.

Tools & Guidance to help

- [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)
- [APS Policy Hub](#)
- [OPEN Community of Practice](#)
- APS Academy – [Delivering Great Policy](#)
- APS Academy – [Data Literacy](#)

COLLABORATIVE

Encourage and build relationships through respectful collaboration, and partner with communities, businesses, academia, industry and other sectors, to achieve the best outcomes.

✓ Engaging through existing mechanisms or relationships to build on existing trust

A number of departments and agencies across the APS have existing engagement and consultation mechanisms with service users, industry groups, service providers and other stakeholders. They can help connect you to subject matter experts and quickly test ideas. For instance, the Office for Women, the National Disability Insurance Agency, National Indigenous Australians Agency, Department of Social Services and Regional Development Australia all have direct access to representative groups.

✓ Engaging with partner agencies towards aligned agendas

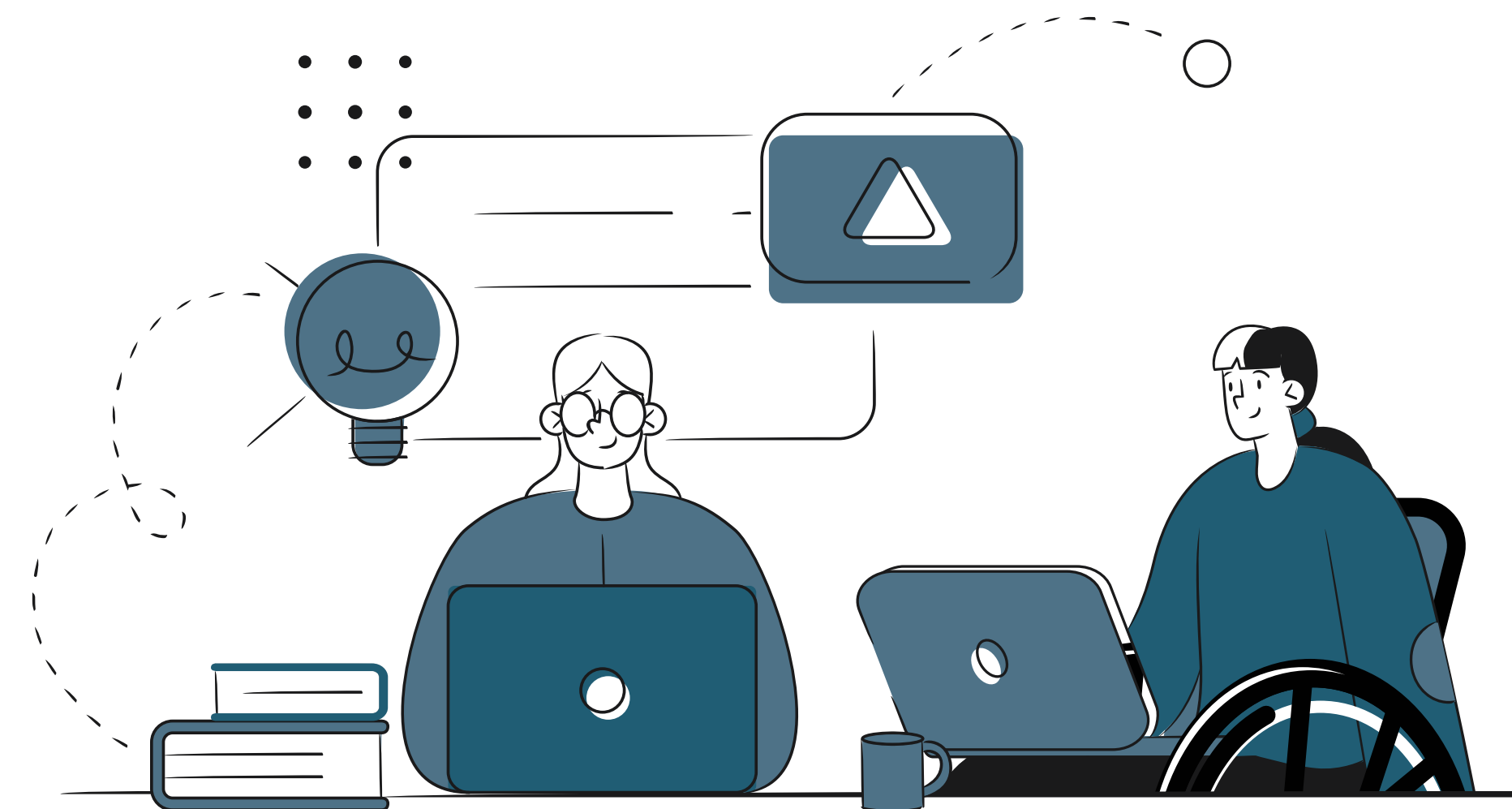
Collaboration is not only external. Within the APS, it is important to look for opportunities to engage meaningfully with other areas undertaking similar policy and program work. Cross portfolio collaboration can result in more aligned approaches and services.

✓ Clearly identify topics for collaboration

Whether engaging internally or externally, be clear on what areas government can collaborate on, or what might be off limits, to ensure activities reflect the level of decision-making authority available.

✓ Look for engagement tools that support the greatest level of collaboration, given known constraints

The APS engages when it needs help from the public to find and implement a solution. However, collaboration can take more time and resources. It is important to make sure you are using the right tools, to support the right level of collaboration. For instance, the use of co-design of policies or programs, or the use of a citizens jury or other deliberative approaches will result in different outcomes.



Tips on what to avoid

- **Assuming all contributors have a shared understanding of what collaboration means**, given every engagement process is different. Be clear on the approach upfront, to manage expectations.

Tools & Guidance to help

- APS Academy – [Human centered design tools](#)
- APS Academy – [Case studies - Business Engagement](#)
- APS Craft Conversations – [Engagement and Partnership](#)
- [APS Engagement and Participation Framework](#)
- NDIA – [Working towards co-design](#)
- New Zealand – [Policy Methods Toolbox](#)

Self assessment tool

OPEN

- Do you know how different groups might be affected, their level of influence and what they care about?
- Have you undertaken stakeholder mapping to identify who to engage, and how?
- Have you spoken to other agencies or specialist areas to understand potential interest groups or issues (or previous engagements on the topic)?

RESPONSIVE

- Have community, cultural or other protocols been identified at the start of the process, and have they informed the approach taken?
- Are engagement materials accessible to anyone impacted by the policy or program?
- How are you open to feedback on the engagement approach?
- Are staff appropriately trained in the chosen engagement approach?

TRANSPARENT

- Have you developed a stakeholder engagement plan?
- Have you identified the level of participation you are seeking (Share, Consult, Deliberate, Collaborate), and clearly communicated your approach?
- Do you have a clear plan to share how you will incorporate stakeholder feedback?
- Have you undertaken a risk assessment and do you have a mitigation strategy in place?

ACCOUNTABLE

- Have you stuck to the engagement plan, or clearly communicated reasons for change?
- Have you clearly advertised opportunities for engagement?
- Have you documented the feedback you have received through your engagement?
- Have you provided feedback to those involved, once a decision has been made?

INFORMED

- Have you identified (and shared) available data on the issue to build a clear understanding of the problem?
- Have you researched and engaged experts to inform an approach and potential solutions?
- Have you taken learnings from lived experience or previous engagement (and history of government policy) to inform process?

COLLABORATIVE

- Can you engage through existing mechanisms or relationships?
- Have you clearly identified topics you have the authority to collaborate on?
- Do your engagement tools support the greatest level of collaboration, given known constraints?



APSREFORM

Partnership good practice guidance

OPEN

Encourage and build relationships through respectful collaboration, and partner with communities, businesses, academia, industry and other sectors, to achieve the best outcomes.

✓ Assess readiness for commitment to partnership

Before committing to work in partnership, it is important to consider the authority, capability, capacity, and expectations of both partners to work collaboratively. This is something that could be undertaken together, to ensure shared expectations around the level of commitment and objectives of the partnership.

✓ Seek agreement on shared values and language, e.g. what 'trust' and 'collaboration' mean to each partner

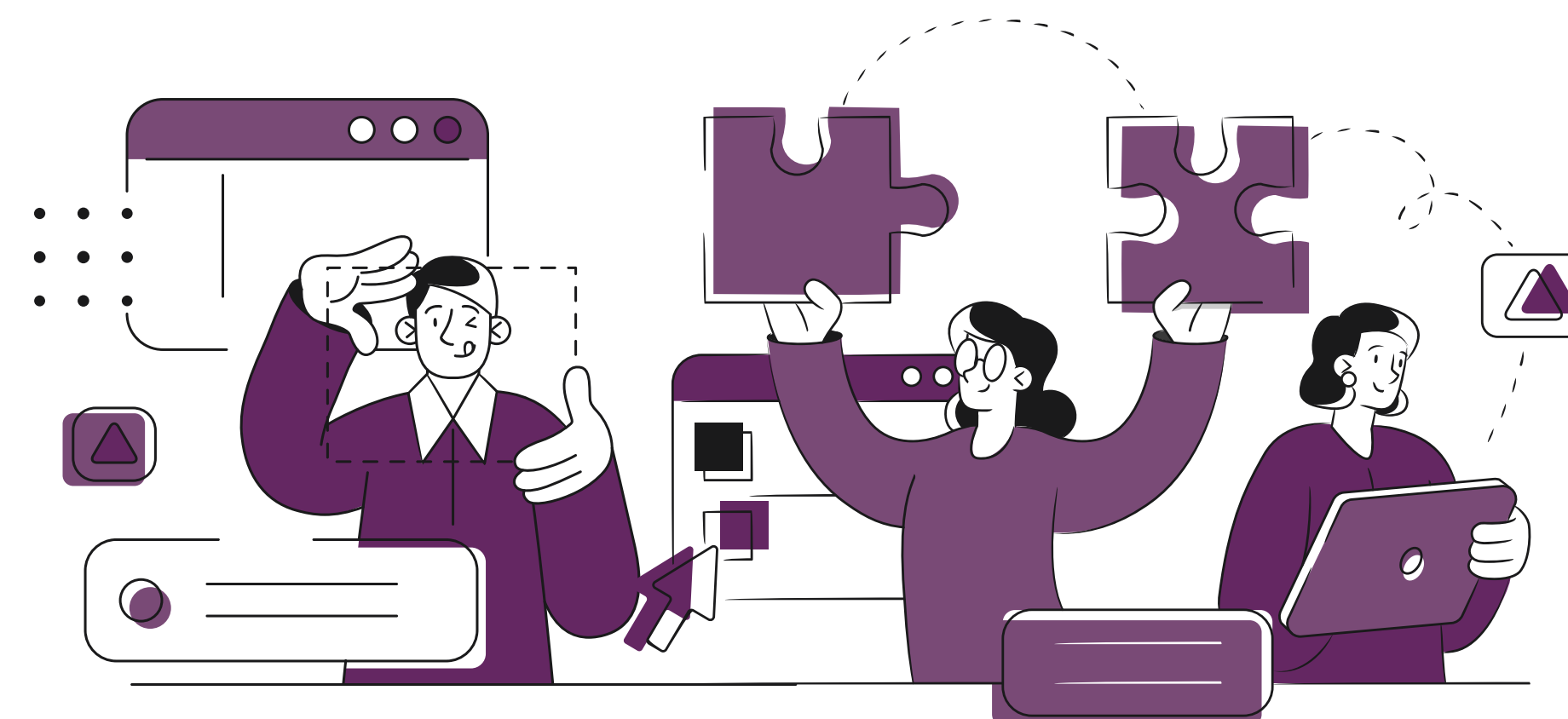
Every partnership is unique, and the commitment to each partnership will be different. The meaning of the commitment, and level of shared decision-making, will need to be explored and negotiated between partners to ensure shared expectations and ways of working.

✓ Shared commitment to listening to the views of community and other stakeholders about their needs, priorities and aspirations

Even if a partnership between government and an external group is in place, there may still be a need to jointly commit to consider the views of other stakeholders. For instance, a place-based partnership might focus on priorities set through engagement with the broader community.

✓ Develop an agreed approach together

Being open requires government to build a consensus with partners through shared decision-making, and not make pre-determined decisions where there is an expectation of an agreed approach.



Tips on what to avoid

- **Rely on one view within a partnership to justify a decision**, as no one person has all the answers.
- **Planning in isolation** does not support consensus building.

Tools & Guidance to help

- [Collaboration Spectrum Revisited Liz Weaver](#)
- [Becoming Partnership Ready: a checklist](#)
- [Partnering Initiative – Partnership support tools](#)

RESPONSIVE

Be willing to try new approaches to make sure engagements are fit for purpose, culturally appropriate and adaptable, while remaining outcomes-focussed.

✔ **Agreeing on shared behaviours that respect community, cultural and other protocols**

It is important to understand how community or cultural protocols might impact decision making processes within different partnerships. Respectful engagement might look different when working with different groups. For instance, understanding who might have authority to share decisions, or the impact of different communication or decision-making approaches on building trust and goodwill.

✔ **Partners have an agreed way to regularly review what works, what does not and why, to support continuous improvement**

Undertaking regular health checks on the partnership will support both partners to consider how the partnership is operating, and whether there is a need to refine the agreed ways of working. For instance, have the agreed ways of working cultivated trust between partners, or are there behaviours to reflect on?

✔ **Actively engage across government agencies and/or sectors to progress shared priorities and partnerships**

While one department or agency may be the lead agency when working in partnership with an external group, the priorities the external partner may wish to work on may extend beyond the scope of one department. Therefore, the government partner needs to engage internally, to ensure cross portfolio collaboration on agreed topics.

✔ **Invest in the relationship**

Working in partnership requires continuing investment in the relationship itself, and constant negotiation to achieve shared outcomes.



Tips on what to avoid

- **Assuming what works within one partnership will automatically work with another**, because every partnership is unique.

Tools & Guidance to help

- [Collaboration Health Assessment Tool | CSI](#)
- [Partnership Health Check Tool](#)
- [Trauma informed resources](#)
- [APSC Cultural Capability Hub](#)
- APS Academy – [Accessibility guidance](#)

TRANSPARENT

Build public trust by acting with integrity, and being open and honest about expectations, roles and responsibilities, limitations, objectives and processes at the outset.

✓ **Formalising an agreed scope and expectations of the partnership, including areas for shared decision making**

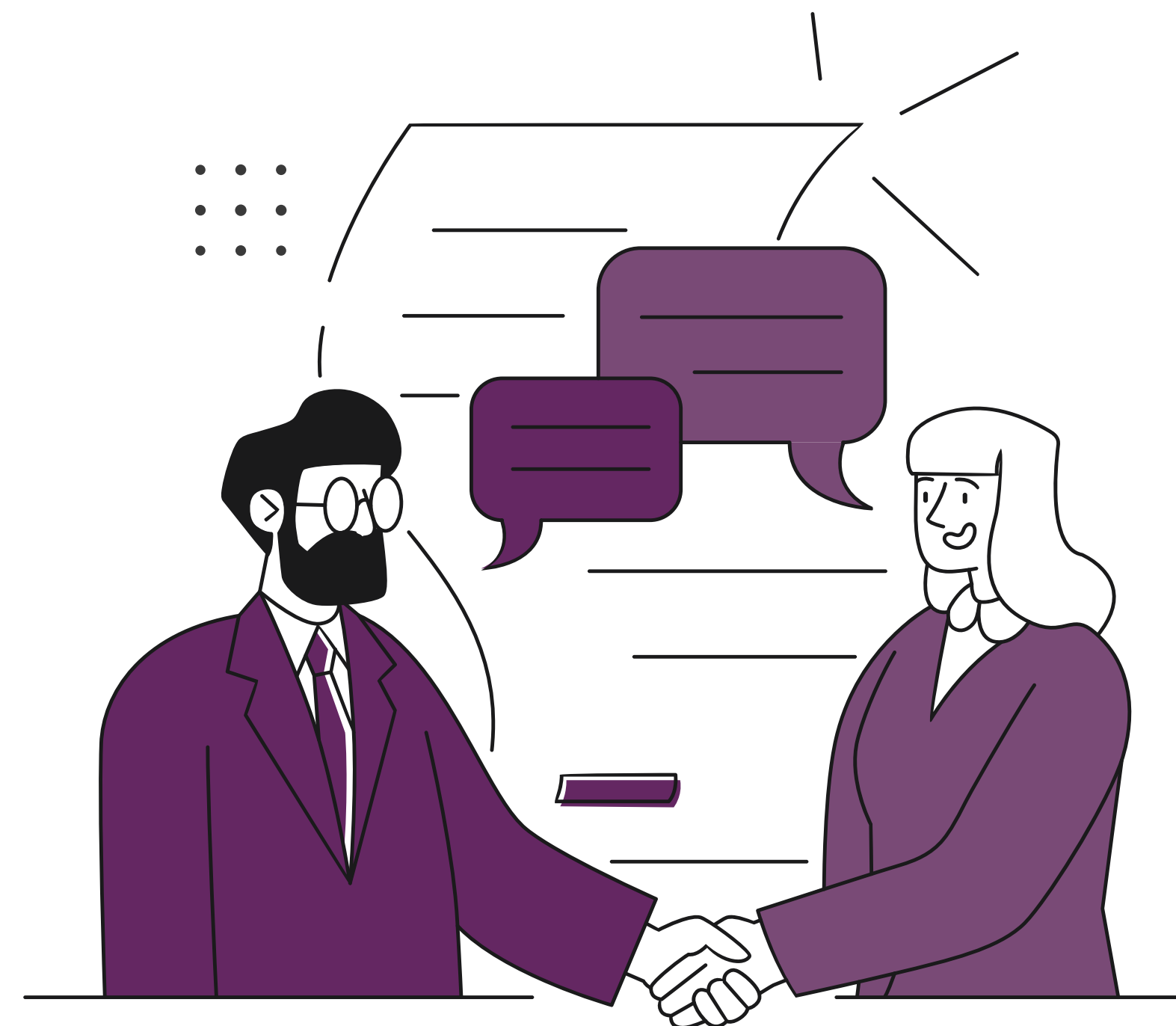
A formal partnership should be agreed within a formal agreement. A formal agreement would set out agreed ways of working, and any areas of agreed shared decision-making, including what shared decision-making looks like in different contexts. A funding agreement or procurement contract does not usually meet the threshold of a formal partnership, because one signatory has powers over another that cannot be balanced.

✓ **There are transparent processes and shared understanding of respective governance arrangements, authority, roles and responsibilities**

A formal partnership or collaboration agreement should set out the agreed ways of working, to transparently state requirements for both sides. For instance, this could reflect the governance arrangements of each partner, including clarifying who holds the authority to engage in shared decision-making.

✓ **Communicate frankly and honestly on non-negotiables up-front**

As in any negotiation, there will be some areas where agreement is not easily reached because of clear non-negotiables. For government, this might relate to Ministerial decision-making powers, or timeframes to feed in to Cabinet or other decision-making processes. Clearly communicating these non-negotiables upfront helps to set realistic expectations.



Tips on what to avoid

- **Locking in timeframes and scope of engagement before agreed** with partners is not shared decision-making. Instead, be aware of what can and cannot be negotiated, and come to a consensus on how to proceed based on these positions.

Tools & Guidance to help

- [Successful partnerships: a guide](#)
- [Collaboration Spectrum Revisited Liz Weave](#)
- [South Australian Commission on Excellence and Innovation in Health – Partnership Approach and Tools](#)
- [NESTA partnership toolkit](#)

ACCOUNTABLE

Maintain clear and regular communication by sharing information, taking responsibility for commitments made and informing people and communities on how they have contributed to the final decision.

✔ **Two-way accountability frameworks in place, which are regularly reviewed/updated**

Shared accountability is about being jointly accountable to each other, and to communities and other partners, for the goals and outcomes of the partnership. This includes being accountable to those affected by the decision, and to government accountability mechanisms.

✔ **Agreed reporting mechanisms and processes**

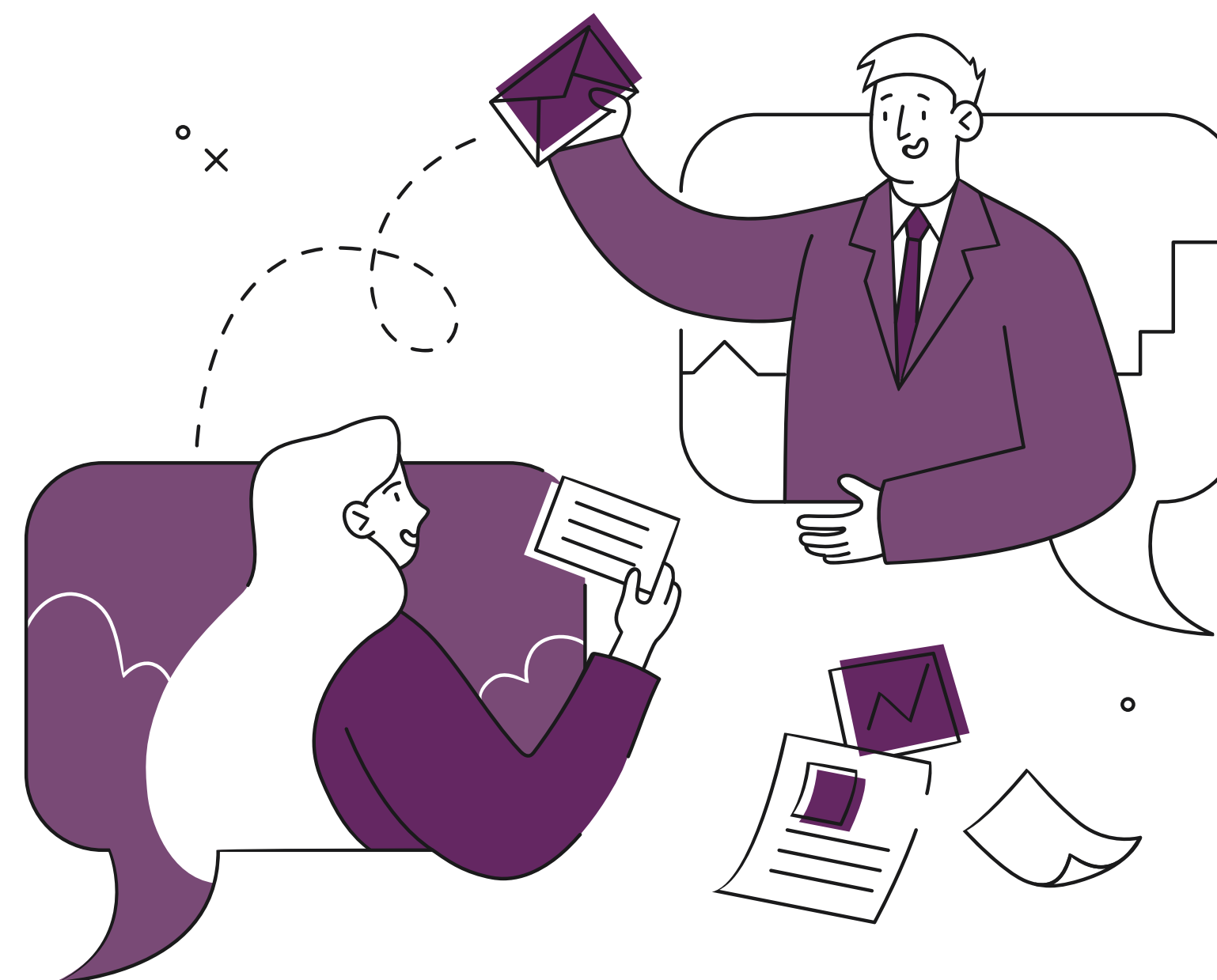
Regular reporting on the work of the partnership enables both partners to be accountable for the day to day behaviours and deliverables when working together, to ensure both partners are meeting their commitments.

✔ **Maintaining clear protocols to manage risks e.g. conflicts of interest**

Working together requires a clear understanding of shared risks. Where they are identified, for instance, around ensuring probity and managing conflicts of interest in decision-making processes, there needs to be clear protocols for managing these risks, so the work of the partnership is not compromised.

✔ **Agreed transparent escalation mechanisms, in case agreement cannot be reached**

Sometimes agreement cannot be reached, but the nature of a partnership is that two groups have chosen to work together beyond one decision. Therefore, to move forward, governance arrangements need to include escalation mechanisms for when decisions cannot be agreed.



Tips on what to avoid

- **When only one partner is accountable for outcomes**, it is not an example of shared decision-making.
- **Confusing funding agreements with partnerships**, because funding agreements have inherent power imbalances.

Tools & Guidance to help

- [Integrity | Australian Public Service Commission](#)
- [WA Communities Partnership Framework Partnership Indicators](#)

INFORMED

Underpin robust decision-making with the effective and ethical use of data, research and other insights, as well as informed by lived experience, history and context.

- ✓ **Partners share relevant information on priorities and limitations, communities and business needs, aspirations, and program or service performance**

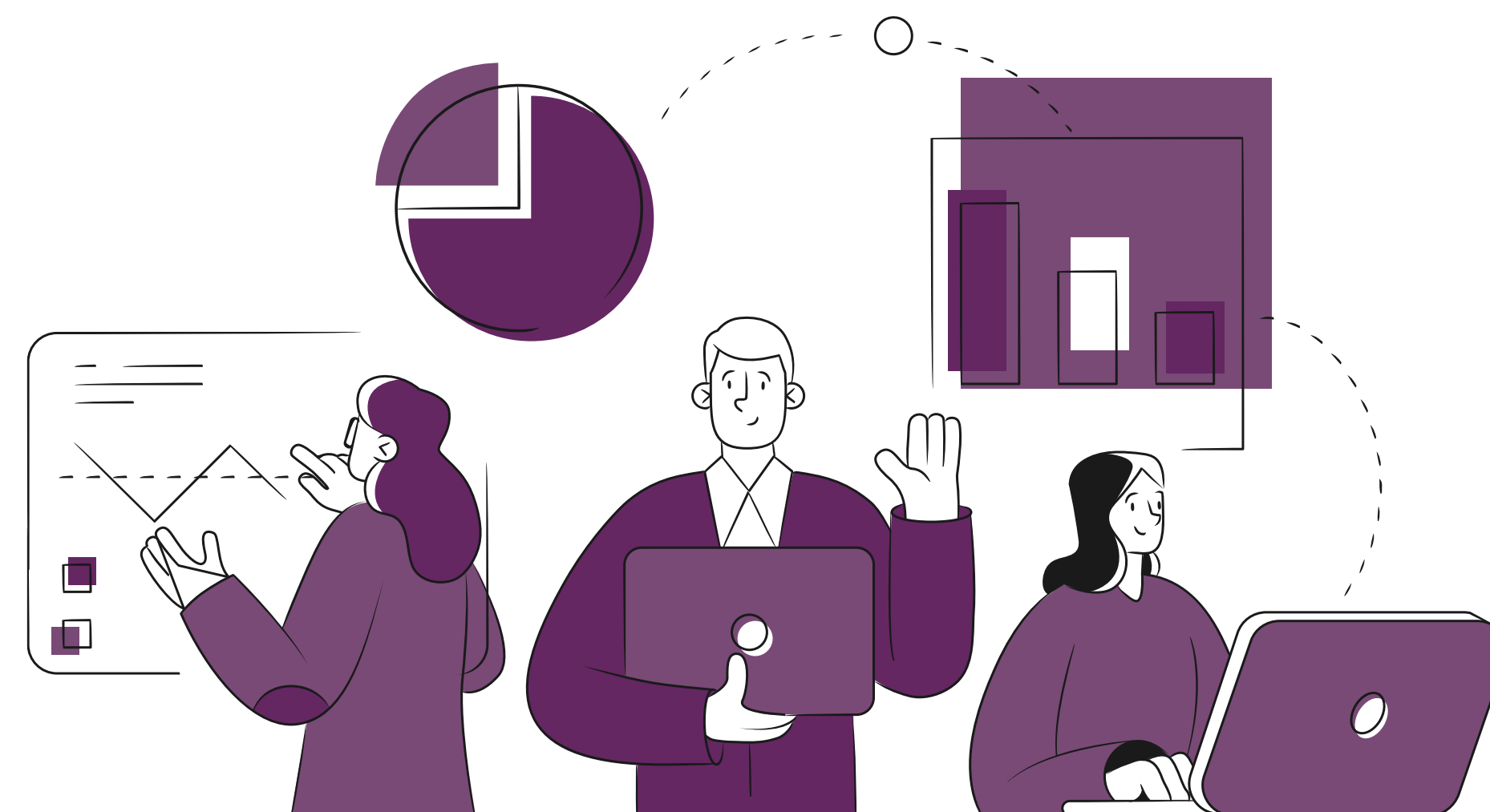
Understanding priorities and community need might come from one side of a community/business partnership, or from outside of the partnership. This information should be shared equally between partners, so decision-making is as informed as possible.

- ✓ **Partners share access to available demographic and administrative data, research and other evidence in a timely and accessible manner**

One partner might have greater access to relevant data than the other partner. For instance, government might be able to provide funding and demographic data to inform decision-making, and an external partner might be able to provide evidence of impact. The timely provision of all data, in a manner that is accessible to both parties, can inform better decision-making.

- ✓ **Use evidence and data ethically to inform shared decision-making processes**

External experts might inform the decision making process, either through technical knowledge, understanding of issues or knowledge of best practice responses. If engaged, this information should be made equally available to partners.



Tips on what to avoid

- **Withholding information** that informs the shared decision will result in a poorer decision.
- **Assuming all partnerships require the same information** does not take into account that all partnerships are unique.

Tools & Guidance to help

- [APS Policy Hub](#)
- [OPEN Community of Practice](#)
- APS Academy – [Delivering Great Policy](#)
- APS Academy – [Data Literacy](#)
- [Free Prior and Informed Consent in the work of the Australian Heritage Council](#)

COLLABORATIVE

Encourage and build relationships through respectful collaboration, and partner with communities, businesses, academia, industry and other sectors, to achieve the best outcomes.

✓ **Agreeing on shared priorities and a common agenda**

Agreeing on shared priorities and a common agenda between partners will help focus effort and resources on areas of shared interest. It also helps the government partner to see opportunities that might exist within government, which an external partner might be interested in.

✓ **Committing to long term thinking, and embedding the relationship to achieve shared outcomes**

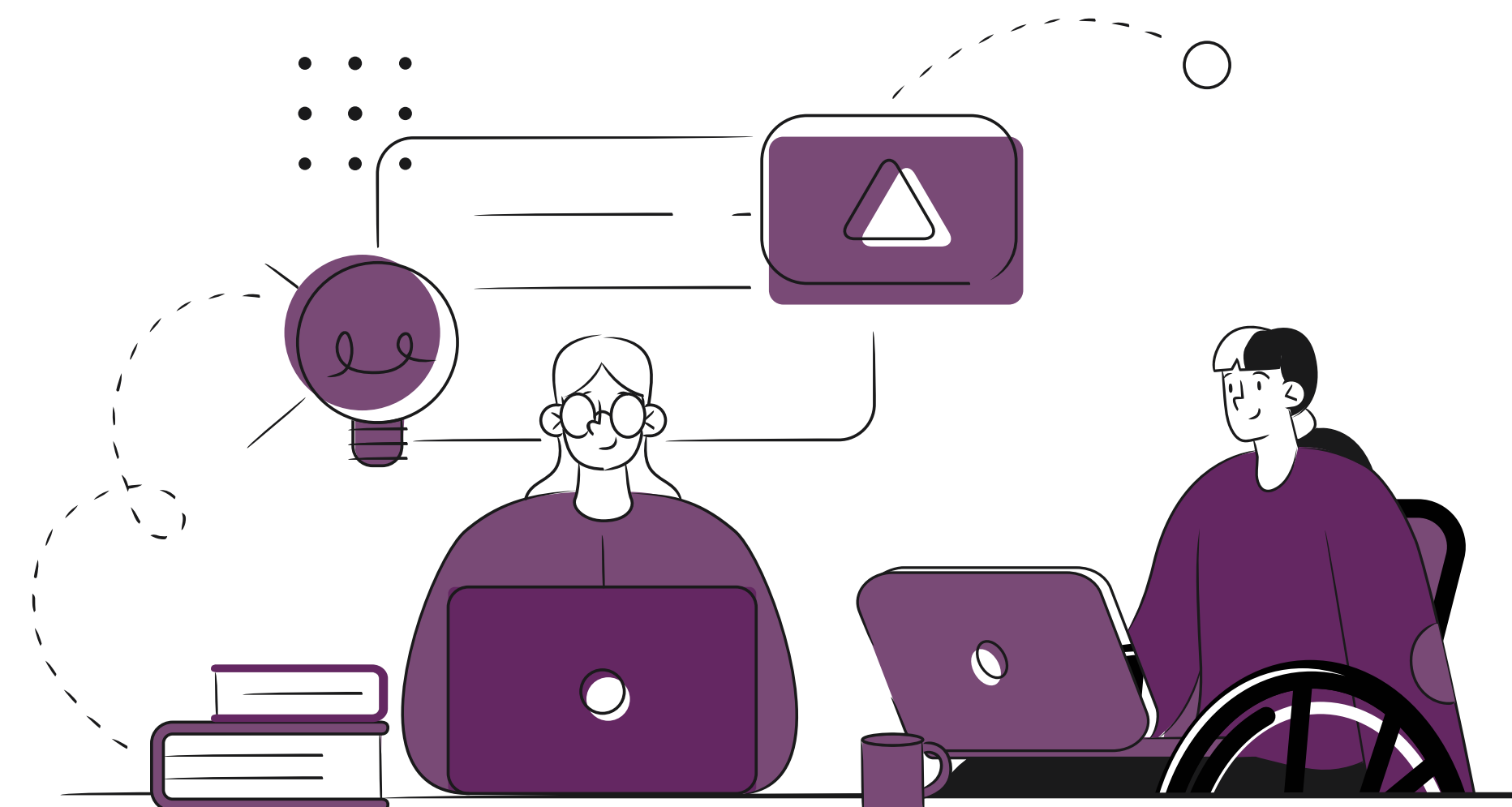
A commitment to partnership is a commitment to working together beyond immediate goals. Often this involves long term thinking, and committing to the relationship, even if there are sometimes disagreements along the way.

✓ **Supporting the participation of partners e.g. through provision of funds or adapting systems to enable participation**

Limited resources can impact an external partner's ability to work with government. When looking to establish a partnership, it is important to consider whether both partners need to allocate resources (and that the external partner is supported by government to do so), so there is time and capacity to work together.

✓ **Investment in the capability of all partners to collaborate using agreed methods**

Working in partnership requires new skills and capabilities for many individuals. If there is a formal partnership in place, there is an opportunity to find ways to build these new skills together. For instance, building an understanding of government rules and procedures, or skills in collaborative ways of working, like using co-design tools.



Tips on what to avoid

- **Assuming partners wish to collaborate on everything without considering context**, level of resourcing or identified priorities.
- **Focusing on the deliverables**, and not the partnership could damage relationships in the long run.

Tools & Guidance to help

- [APS Craft conversations](#)
- [Dashboard | Closing the Gap Information Repository - Productivity Commission](#)
- [Collaborative problem solving – OECD / PISA](#)

Self assessment tool

OPEN

Have you sought agreement on shared values, and what trust means for you and your partner?

Do you have an agreed plan on how to listen to the views of communities and other stakeholders on their needs, priorities and aspirations?

Have you and your partners come to a collective view on how to move forward?

RESPONSIVE

Is there formal agreement on shared behaviors to respect community, cultural or other protocols?

Is there a process in place to regularly review what works, what does not and why, to support continuous improvement?

Do you actively engage across government agencies to progress shared priorities and partnerships?

TRANSPARENT

Is there a formal agreement on the scope of the partnership, including areas for shared decision making?

Are there transparent processes and a shared understanding of respective governance arrangements, authority, roles and responsibilities?

Have you and your partner communicated frankly and honestly on non-negotiables up-front?

ACCOUNTABLE

Are there shared accountability frameworks in place, which are regularly reviewed/updated?

Do you and your partner maintain clear protocols to manage risks (e.g. conflict of interest)?

Where agreement cannot be reached, are transparent escalation mechanisms agreed?

INFORMED

Do partners share relevant information on priorities and limitations, community or business needs, aspirations, and program or service performance?

Do partners share access to available demographic and administrative data, research and other evidence?

Has all available evidence underpinned the decision-making process?

COLLABORATIVE

Are shared priorities agreed, and is there a commitment to a common agenda?

Is there a commitment to long term thinking and shared outcomes?

Are both parties supported to commit resources to the partnership?

Is there an investment in the capability of all partners to collaborate?