

THE INTERPLAY PROJECT

INDIGENOUS CULTURAL DATA PROTOCOLS

(Summary version - Aug, 2020)

1. Preamble

1.1 The Interplay Project works to build scientific understanding about different ways of Indigenous knowing and being. This understanding will contribute to building inclusive societies affording all people the opportunity to thrive. This is based on Interplay's belief in the fundamental importance of wellbeing for all people and its vision that all people are empowered to experience optimal wellbeing from the safety and strength of their own culture.

1.2 The term 'Indigenous' in this document is inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The terms 'Communities' and 'Community' in this document refer to all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Communities across Australia, representing a wide diversity of cultures, traditions and experiences. We acknowledge that the collective term 'Indigenous' is not used or accepted by all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

1.3 The Interplay Project has developed and applies a "shared space" model for working collaboratively between all participating stakeholder groups including Indigenous communities, funders, researchers and other partners. This is particularly aimed at empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities through grass-roots collaboration in the design, measurement and implementation of meaningful impact frameworks at all stages from inception and design through to implementation, reporting and use.

1.4 An essential feature of The Interplay Project's "shared space" model is the opportunity to share learning, build capacity and capability within and across the stakeholder groups. Each of the stakeholder groups may, through enacted reciprocity, develop capacities and capabilities that are directly relevant to the work of the other stakeholder groups. Knowledge Translation, Capacity Building and Capability Development are closely connected and this has implications for how the relevant ethical principles can be applied to questions about data collection, management, governance, ownership, analysis, reporting and use.

1.5 The Interplay Project acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities have their own protocols and that these must be observed, understood, respected and engaged with as an essential, ongoing part of the research process.

1.6 The Interplay Project recognises that there have been past instances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's knowledge and intellectual property being misrepresented, misappropriated and exploited and this has contributed directly to negative impacts on peoples' wellbeing.¹

1.7 The Interplay Project recognises the value of Indigenous Cultural Knowledge, also known as ICIP. ICIP stands for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property and it is based on the right to self-determination. ICIP rights are based on customary law, which are not currently recognised by the Australian legal system.

1.8 Additionally, Interplay accepts that all social research can have unintended consequences, even research which is self-determined and explicitly aimed at supporting beneficial outcomes. This document is intended to define the means and mechanisms through which negative impacts can be reduced, mitigated and avoided, while positive and beneficial outcomes can be successfully and sustainably achieved.

1.9 Consistent with the FAIR Data Principles, this document is intended to facilitate the development of culturally valid wellbeing data that is useful, while ensuring ongoing accessibility and relevance in dynamic social contexts. These protocols are also intended to ensure that the data can be made available for future research and evaluation needs under culturally appropriate protocols and for the benefit of Indigenous people and communities.

1.10 The successful implementation of these protocols will help facilitate informed analysis and evaluation across areas and topics that are of importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities at all levels, enabling critical policy and program analysis and evaluation that is consistent with Indigenous peoples' interests and respectful of Indigenous values.

¹ Walter, M & Suina, M 2019, 'Indigenous data, indigenous methodologies and indigenous data sovereignty', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 233–243.

1.11 We commit to sharing of knowledge and findings in ways that are useful for communities, to help enhance 'evaluative thinking' and support Indigenous self-determination through strengthening communities' capacity to be effective evidence-based advocates for changes they prioritise as important.

2. Purpose

2.1 The Interplay Project seeks to achieve best practice in evaluation, research and data ethics, based on confidentiality, equitable benefit sharing and collaborative decision-making in managing research and evaluation data and in conducting and facilitating equitable data analysis, reporting and sharing of findings.

2.2 The ultimate goal of this is the achievement of an evaluation, research and data partnership, to empower communities through their genuine involvement in the design, measurement, evaluation and implementation of programs, policies and systems.

2.3 It is envisaged that this evaluation, research and data partnership will lead to the creation and development of a trusted and secure repository of culturally validated data about Indigenous wellbeing.

2.4 The importance of such a dataset, which is based on Indigenous values, perspectives, knowledges and ways of being is grounded in the opportunities it will provide for communities and organisations to contribute effectively to policy and program debates and decisions that directly impact on their own individual and community wellbeing.

2.5 In line with the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and under the oversight of The Interplay Project Governance and Advisory Groups, Interplay will work with its community partners in making decisions about how data may be made available to other partners. This will ensure the preservation, comparability, and interoperability of the data, thereby increasing the value, efficiency and impact of The Interplay Project's research and evaluation output. All decisions will be based on and consistent with Interplay's values.

3. Ethics

3.1 The Interplay Project researchers, employees and representatives will respect local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ethical protocols.

3.2. The Interplay Project will obtain ethical clearance from local Indigenous leaders, Elders and Traditional Owners, for all projects in which Indigenous people participate, and that involve Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous intellectual property, and other intellectual property.

3.3 The Interplay Project will meet appropriate ethical standards, consistent with those such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies (2012), the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007, updated 2015); and the Ninti One Protocol for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledge and Intellectual Property (2015)

3.4 Where requested by Indigenous knowledge holders and/or owners, the Interplay Project researchers will observe confidentiality of this and/or of Indigenous intellectual property. All Interplay Project researchers, employees and representatives will be made aware of and accept this requirement before engaging in any activity on behalf of the Interplay Project.

3.5 The Interplay Project will ensure that Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) processes are carried through for all projects that involve Indigenous people, and Indigenous knowledge and practices.

3.5.1 The Interplay Project understands FPIC to mean that participants in its research projects and evaluations have been fully informed about the project, and have a clear understanding of the purpose, methodology, and intended outcomes of the research and evaluation, including potential risks and uses.

3.5.2 Adequate opportunities and timeframes are provided for Indigenous participants to make their own decisions about the research and whether they will participate. This may be either as individuals or through their communities and organisations.

3.5.3 Consent is an ongoing engagement between the community and the Interplay Project researcher or representative. Subject to local circumstances, it can be suspended or withdrawn. The connection between FPIC and continual engagement is covered in greater detail in the section on Data Governance.

3.6 In line with the ethical principle of Beneficence and Benefit-Sharing, any Interplay Project research with Indigenous people and communities must produce direct benefits to Indigenous people and reinforce their self-determination. This will be achieved through their full and ongoing active participation and negotiation in the decision-making process for research and evaluation planning and implementation according to local priorities.

3.6.1 Benefit sharing is an ongoing process of negotiation and is embedded in the processes of Free Prior Informed Consent. Indigenous people have a right to expect that research conducted on their lands and in their communities will be of benefit to them. The precise terms of benefit-sharing will be determined by negotiation, in accordance with the principles of free prior informed consent by all participants on mutually agreed terms initially and as the project develops.

4. Data Sovereignty

4.1 These Cultural Data Protocols are designed to uphold the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty. Interplay understands Indigenous Data Sovereignty as the right of Indigenous peoples to govern the collection, ownership and application of data about Indigenous peoples, lands, resources and wellbeing.

4.2 The following sections on Data Governance, Data Management and Handling, and Data Access and Use outline in detail the manner in which the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty will be applied by The Interplay Project.

5. Data Governance

5.1 The Interplay Project's Data Governance practices are based on Indigenous leadership and governance in establishing and setting priorities for how data is to be collected, handled, stored, analysed, published and disseminated.

5.2 The Interplay Project will establish an Indigenous Cultural Data Governance Group and an Indigenous Research and Evaluation Advisory Group to provide consultation and direction on data governance issues, as well as other relevant issues more broadly.

5.3 The Interplay Project considers Data Governance to encompass questions of Ownership, Control, Accessibility, Quality, Consistency, Transparency, and Security of the

storage of the data. Interplay considers Ownership and Data Governance to be about empowering cultural views, values and control of data.

5.4 Questions about the Accessibility of the data are dealt with in the section on Data Access and Use. The principle of Accessibility means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must have access to the information and data that is held about themselves and their communities. Similarly, combined with the principles of Ownership and Control, it means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations must be able to decide and control how others can access their collective information.

5.5 Ensuring excellent Data Quality is essential to high quality evaluation of policies and programs affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Achieving this requires culturally appropriate data collection methods, with data available as accurate small area data along with the concordance of data at varying levels of aggregation and disaggregation. The ability to be spatially relevant at different levels will facilitate improved service planning and delivery, and community and organisational insights.

5.6 Appropriate data quality includes the development of success indicators, to ensure that social research empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' critical engagement with diverse policy, program and political contexts. The development of success indicators will contribute to dismantling the effects of deficit discourse, ensuring appropriate comparisons and measurements of progress towards self-determined goals.

5.6.1 The Interplay Project will oversee continued improvement in all aspects of data quality, with the ultimate priority being that all data, whether in discrete or combined datasets, is fit for these purposes. This quality assurance process will require ongoing, periodic, or targeted assessment of information accuracy, completeness, timeliness, relevance, transparency and consistency.

5.7 The Interplay Project's management of data consistency will have a significant beneficial impact on social research outputs, whether at the discrete community and project level or at the aggregated normative data-set level. The consistency of data will facilitate increased data linkages as well as the sharing of data between communities, organisations, jurisdictions, service providers and key stakeholders. Effective community control of this data and the aggregated datasets will contribute to equalising power and data disparities and

inequities between communities and government authorities.

5.8 Transparency in all aspects of data governance is essential to building trust between all relevant stakeholders, including communities, government, social researchers and The Interplay Project. Interplay's 'shared space' model of working promotes transparency in data governance, being both ground-up (or 'grass roots') and top-down, ensuring strong links between all of the relevant science, community development and policy impact stakeholders.

5.8.1 The Interplay Project's 'shared space' team includes Indigenous experts in community engagement and policy advocacy, academics and evaluators and is based on repeated and ongoing research with participating community members.

5.8.2 Working at a grass-roots level The Interplay Project builds shared knowledge, understanding and capacity. Some examples of how this is done include yarning circles, focus groups and other conversations.

5.9 The Security of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing, social research and evaluation data is of the utmost priority to The Interplay Project. Security is ensured through best-practice data collection and ethically determined sharing of data, encompassing the responsible access and use of data by other agencies, organisations, and researchers. These aspects are dealt with more thoroughly in the section on Data Access and Use.

5.9.1 Security of the data is also ensured through periodic security, risk, audit and compliance assessments.

5.9.2 These assessments will inform the ongoing effective performance and improvement of information and data management, identifying, evaluating and mitigating the risks around data and managing threats to its integrity, security, availability, longevity and useability in different environments and service offerings.

5.9.3 The Interplay Project conducts internal audits and may contract external audits to assess the integrity and performance of specific data management processes, services or environments. Compliance assessments monitor adherence to mandatory legislative or other obligations, including requirements for information creation and retention, information access, or privacy protections for personal and health information.

6. Data Management and Handling

6.1 All data will be held in accordance with relevant legal, ethical, and Indigenous community and cultural guidelines, including the Information Privacy Principles contained in the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).

6.2 All data will be stored and/or archived in appropriate and sensitive ways, in consultation with, and with the free prior informed consent of relevant Indigenous people.

6.3 As part of this The Interplay Project's stewardship of its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing data includes a responsibility for long-term care of its valuable digital assets, facilitating further social research projects and evaluations, whether on a standalone basis or in conjunction and combination with newly created social research data.

6.4 Through committing to these standards and protocols, The Interplay Project will ensure the ethical production, storage, maintenance, and use of its data.

7. Data Access and Use

7.1 The Interplay Project enables participating individuals and communities to set access and use conditions to protect their own interests, while also facilitating the interests of its Indigenous research and evaluation associates and other organisational interests.

7.1.1 Restrictions on access to and use of the data can be for diverse reasons, including that the restrictions are consistent with Indigenous cultural protocols specified by the participating individual, community, or organisation.

7.1.2 Participants may specify certain data and datasets to be unrestricted. These will have open access and unrestricted use, without the requirement for specific authorisation. Unrestricted data and datasets may comprise of anonymised and de-identified data sourced from the restricted datasets.

7.2 Once stored and/or archived, all data will be accessible upon request by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people with interests and rights in the data.

7.3 Subject to legal or ethical requirements, data will be destroyed on the request of the providers of the information or on the request of those who according to traditional law have the authority to make that decision or when specifically required to do so by a properly constituted Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

7.4 The Interplay Project data will not be published in any form that allows for identification of the Indigenous persons or communities involved without the specific written approval of the Indigenous persons or communities involved.

7.5 Under certain conditions, whether specified in advance or in response to novel circumstances, The Interplay Project's collaborators may request access to restricted datasets, with these requests to be presented in writing to the participating individual, community or organisation, or to a nominated representative of the Interplay Project's Indigenous Data Governance or Advisory Groups, which can provide advice on whether access should be granted and in what manner.

7.6 The Interplay Project reserves the right to apply additional Access and Use conditions to the dataset(s).

7.7 The primary purpose of The Interplay Project's data is to empower community voices through collecting data that represents their policy and program priorities; success in which will ultimately assist community members to experience optimal wellbeing from the safety and strength of their own culture.

7.7.1 The sharing of data and research is an essential means of achieving The Interplay Project's ultimate aims of building scientific understanding about different ways of knowing and being and building inclusive societies that afford all people the opportunity to thrive.

7.7.2 The shared use of evaluation and social research data is a vital means of ensuring the validity and impact of The Interplay Project's wellbeing data, with interested social researchers and evaluators being able to confirm, verify and extend the data through their own research and evaluation projects.

7.7.3 In line with this aim of broad research and evaluation impact, The Interplay Project may

make its data, survey instruments and methods available, on a licensing basis, to other researchers and organisations for their own research projects.

7.7.4 The Interplay Project can facilitate the collaboration of diverse academics, researchers, communities and organisations, helping these to partner with each other in developing and implementing research and evaluation projects and analyses that are consistent and inter-operable with The Interplay Project datasets.

7.7.5 In line with The Interplay Project's values, any ensuring research and publications will have Indigenous governance, leadership and authorship. Such research and publications must also be consistent with The Interplay Project's core value of empowering community voices.

Works Cited

Peersman, G & Rogers, P 2016, 'Addressing equity issues in monitoring and evaluation' Evidence and practice in an age of inequality. *Development Bulletin*, vol. 77, pp. 37-42

Productivity Commission 2020, *Indigenous Evaluation Strategy Draft*, Canberra.

Walter, M & Suina, M 2019, 'Indigenous data, indigenous methodologies and indigenous data sovereignty', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 233–243.