APAM FIRST NATIONS POLICIES & ACCOUNTABILITIES
Updated May 2023

- These policies and processes[1] arise from and put into action APAM's First Nations Framework, and are developed in collaboration with, and approved by, APAM's First Nations Advisory Group (FNAG).
- These policies deliver on the Framework's principles and intent to respect the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Australia Council for the Arts' Protocols for Producing Indigenous Performing Arts, and the Victorian Government's Aboriginal Advancement Framework.
- Approved by the FNAG, and without discounting the FNAG's role and accountabilities, it is intended that these policies and processes will empower APAM as an organisation and its staff to proceed to deliver its First Nations programs and projects with greater confidence, certainty, effectiveness, and efficiency, without a constant reliance on the FNAG for direction.
- These policies and processes acknowledge that each community is unique, and a case-by-case approach is warranted to acknowledge the rich and diverse relationships that exist between Traditional Owners, other First Nations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) residing on Country, and the roles of Elders across these relationships.
- Accountabilities articulated through the Framework are the starting point for those noted here.
- To maintain an alignment with best practice, these policies and processes will be reviewed annually and/or whenever the Framework is amended.

1. CULTURAL PROTOCOLS

APAM has made a commitment to have appropriate cultural protocols in place, and this includes a concurrent commitment to the lead time and the resources required to consult and plan for this across all APAM activities. Remuneration for consultations and cultural protocol ceremonies is built into every project budget.

Respectful and authentic engagement with Traditional Owners is the key foundation and this should be approached by APAM in a way that empowers Traditional Owners as self-determined hosts of any Gatherings of significant numbers. A Local Engagement policy has been created to set out the approach in detail (see below). APAM's approach is relationship-based. APAM works with Elders or other people nominated by that community, through consultation, as their preferred representatives. This may include land councils, prescribed body corporates, representatives of family groups, or nominated individuals.

APAM acknowledges the rich and diverse relationships across Australia between Traditional Owners and other First Nations Peoples (both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) that may reside on their Country. As such a case-by-case approach to communities should be taken to respect, reflect and positively support those relationships, including the role of Elders.

Welcome to Country
Ceremony is an important part of every APAM Gathering or Platform event and our aspiration is to have appropriate cultural protocols.
- Wherever possible, APAM only engages Traditional Owners to conduct Welcome to Country.
- APAM acknowledges that in some communities Traditional Owners may have special relationships or delegations relating to the delivery of the Welcome to Country ceremony. APAM will be guided by Traditional Owners in this regard and respect those relationships.

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[1] The public-facing version of this document is the APAM First Nations Policies and Accountabilities, which does not include internal organisational processes.

- Welcome to Country will take place at the commencement of every APAM Gathering and other major events run by the APAM Office, in digital or live form, or both. The form/s of the Welcome will be determined by the Traditional Owners and facilitated by APAM.
- Connection of international First Nation participants to local First Nations Traditional Owners and participants is an important part of cultural exchange and international diplomacy. APAM will create an opportunity before Gatherings for all First Nations participants to come together with Traditional Owners for observance of their respective relevant cultural protocols. The form of these international cultural protocols will be determined by the Traditional Owners through consultation with respect to Lore and local exchange protocols.
- APAM will communicate effectively to visiting international First Nations delegations what protocol and ceremonies are planned, consult on reciprocal protocols that delegations may wish to observe, and communicate effectively back to Traditional Owners.
- Ceremony is not separate to business — it is an important and essential part of business. It is for reciprocity, country, and participants.
- There is a distinction between ceremony and the work in the program — Showcases, Profiles, Local Player — which is the work APAM serves through the activity. APAM's interface with ceremony is to enact protocol in the appropriate ways self- determined by the local hosts. This ensures a culturally safe environment for all First Nations delegates as they undertake their work.

Closing ceremony

A Closing ceremony may be held at the conclusion of every APAM Gathering to complete the process of cultural safety for participants. The holding of and form of the Closing will be determined by Traditional Owners and facilitated by APAM, as part of the hosting arrangements. (See also Local Engagement). APAM acknowledges that in some communities Traditional Owners may have special relationships or delegations relating to the delivery of the Closing ceremony. APAM will be guided by Traditional Owners in this regard and respect those relationships.

Presence of Elders

APAM will work with Traditional Owners to honour Elders and senior cultural leaders, and faciliate meaningful connection with the Gathering and its participation. The form this arrangement takes will be determined by the Traditional Owners. Ideally it will support the presence of Elders in the Gathering in key sessions including Blak Lounges, the building of international relationships, and assistance with managing any situations where an Elder's presence would be beneficial.

Acknowledgement of Country

An Acknowledgement of Country is given by the official host/MC at the beginning of all APAM public events, both live and digital. This acknowledgement is given individually, and will be personalised to have meaning for the host/MC.

Accountability

- FNAG – responsible for input into and approve the protocol arrangements for each Gathering and / or Platform; support the appropriate international diplomacy activity as agreed for each Gathering.
- First Nations Lead (FNL) producers — responsible for delivery of events in accordance with agreed protocol arrangements; consultation with FNAG if changes are required.
- APAM staff — responsible for APAM's agreed protocols to be observed at all APAM events.

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2. LOCAL ENGAGEMENT

APAM has made a commitment to facilitating the self-determined involvement of Traditional Owners and local First Nations people on Country where APAM Gatherings take place, and this includes a concurrent commitment to the lead time and the resources required to consult and plan for the Gatherings. APAM acknowledges that there are many rich and diverse relationships across Australia between Traditional Owners and other First Nations Peoples (both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) that may reside on their Country. As such a case-by-case approach to communities should be taken to respect, reflect and positively support those relationships, including the role of Elders.

APAM works with Elders or other people nominated by the community as representatives. This may include land councils, prescribed body corporates, representatives of family groups, or nominated individuals.

Traditional Owners
- Traditional Owners will be invited to host APAM Gatherings, from Welcome, to involvement throughout, to Closing. Permission to host a Gathering on Country will be sought from Traditional Owners before settling festival partnerships.
- APAM will work with Traditional Owners to facilitate their self-determined choice of how and to what extent they wish to host, and what program elements that includes (see also Processes, below).
- APAM works with Elders or other people nominated by that community, through consultation, as their preferred representatives.

Local First Nations artists
- APAM will have a proactive strategy to connect with local First Nations artists and work with them in advance on different opportunities at APAM.
- APAM will create opportunities that bridge their engagement with this gathering of international performing arts community, and facilitate connections and relationship development.
- In the distributed programming model of Gatherings, APAM will put a local engagement lens across Profile, Showcase, Local Player, Exchange (see also Processes, below).

Accountability
- FNAG – responsible for input into the evolving hosting program; approval of APAM First Nation program through the programming and cultural risk management plans provided pre-Gathering.
- First Nations Lead producers — responsible for creation of cultural risk management plans, liaison with Traditional Owners, delivery of events in accordance with agreed arrangements; consultation with FNAG if changes are required.
- APAM staff —responsible for support delivery of events in accordance with agreed arrangements and in consultation with FNL producers.

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3. CULTURAL SAFETY

APAM is committed to creating a culturally safe and secure environment for all participants in APAM programs, including staff.

Cultural safety has been defined as:
"An environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning… together with dignity and truly listening."[2]

Ongoing debate around cultural safety has led to concepts of **cultural security** which the Australian Human Rights Commission Social Justice Report 2011 defines as *"the obligations of those working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure that there are policies and practices in place so that all interactions adequately meet cultural needs."*[3]

The Social Justice Report further states, from the perspective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders:

> *The role for government and other third parties in creating cultural safety is ensuring that our voices are heard and respected in relation to our community challenges, aspirations and identities. In this way cultural security is about government and third parties working with us to create an environment for a community to 'exert ownership of ourselves'.*[4]

Around Cultural Security, the Social Justice Reports defers to the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), a leader in advancing the concept of cultural safety. VACCA states:

> *Cultural security directly links understandings and actions….(and is)… built from the acknowledgement that theoretical 'awareness' of culturally appropriate service provision is not enough. It shifts the emphasis from attitudes to behaviour, focusing directly on practice, skills and efficacy. It is about incorporating cultural values into the design, delivery and evaluation of services.*[5]

APAM acknowledges that in addition to their First Nations culture, an individual's culture can include, but is not restricted to:
- Age or generation
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Socioeconomic status
- Religious or spiritual belief
- Impairment (we recognise that disability is a societal barrier)

APAM recognises that culture is not simplistic and ultimately culture is determined by the individual. APAM acknowledges intersectionality of the above aspects of cultural identity.

First Nations Lead partnership and systems
APAM's First Nations Lead partnership, and the systems and processes of APAM and ILBIJERRI are the foundation of cultural safety.
- APAM's core principles
- ILBIJERRI's leadership as a First Nations-led organization, its policies and Code of Conduct.

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[2] Cultural Safety – What does it mean for our work practice, Robyn Williams, 1998, p3. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 23(2), 213-214.

[3] Cultural Safety – What does it mean for our work practice, Robyn Williams, 1998, ibid

[4] Social Justice Report 2011, Cultural Safety, 4.2 Defining cultural safety and cultural security

[5] R Frankland, M Bamblett, P Lewis and R Trotter, This is 'Forever Business: A Framework for Maintaining and Restoring Cultural Safety in Aboriginal Victoria, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (2010),

- APAM's HR policies with Auspicious Arts Projects Inc.
- APAM's other First Nations Policies and Processes will contribute to creating a culturally safe and secure environment: Appropriate Cultural Protocols; Local Engagement; Cultural Risk Management; Feedback.

Commitment to First Nations-only time, space and programs
APAM has committed to creating dedicated time and space for First Nations participants at APAM events to ensure their cultural safety while doing their work. This includes:
- Protocol arrangements as set out in the Cultural Protocol policy.
- Involvement of Elders in the Gathering program beyond protocol ceremonies.
- The First Nations Industry Program, which brings together a strong cohort of experienced to emerging First Nations participants prior to and during each Gathering.
- Blak Lounge – A space hosted by Australian First Nations community for international First Peoples. This First Nations-only space will be set aside within each APAM Gathering. Blak Lounge also exists in its ongoing digital form as an international First Nations network and and discussion space.

Code of Conduct
FNAG has led the creation of a Code of Conduct for APAM Gatherings, which covers both in-person and digital participants. APAM reviews and adapts its Code of Conduct, for each APAM Gathering. The Code of Conduct is designed to help ensure participants' cultural, emotional and physical safety during the event. It will always begin with a commitment to respecting the laws, protocols and people of the Country the Gathering is occurring on, and will be taken to Traditional Owners for consultation and input each time.

The Code of Conduct is agreed to by all participants prior to a Gathering, and is reinforced regularly by the Gathering MC/Host.

It includes a contact for participants to initiate a feedback process if an issue arises — see Section 4 for more details.

Traditional Owner cultural awareness consultation
APAM will organise and pay for a cultural awareness and education session for all its staff with Traditional Owners in the leadup to each Gathering. The session may cover sharing of Lore, protocols, conduct on Country, conventions around ceremony and/or Sorry Business, or any other considerations Traditional Owners wish the staff to account for in their work.

Cultural risk management
APAM assesses cultural risks in the lead up to each major event. Detailed cultural risk management plans are provided to FNAG in time for appropriate actions to be taken or changes made to ensure cultural safety is maintained for all participants, staff and FNAG.

Accountability
- FNAG — Responsible for approving and monitoring policies and processes; approving project and cultural risk management plans for each Gathering; and evaluating programs to ensure continuous improvement.
- ILBIJERRI — Responsible for the HR processes for staff; and guidance as First Nations Lead.
- APAM — Responsible for HR processes (via Auspicious Arts Projects); and securing appropriate resources for agreed programs and initiatives.
- FNL producers and APAM staff — responsible for delivery of programs in accordance with agreed plans.

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4. FEEDBACK

Through its commitment to long lead-time consultation and collaboration, cultural protocols, local engagement and cultural safety, APAM aspires to create a well-considered, positive and safe environment at all its programs. APAM fosters robust dialogue and welcomes the respectful expression of differing views.

This Feedback Policy allows a person with a more serious issue about an APAM Gathering or program to formally give feedback in a way that is heard and responded to. The Policy provides a general guide to APAM to provide a process to deal and where possible resolve any issues of major concern. While there is no guarantee of resolution, APAM aspires to put in place a transparent and fair process which protects and affords natural justice to all parties and captures any necessary learnings for the future.

Accountability
- FNAG — Responsible to approve the Feedback policy; at least one FNAG member to participate in the feedback process; FNAG will discuss the issue, identify any learnings and implement actions arising if necessary.
- ILBIJERRI — As First Nations Lead, ILBIJERRI's Artistic Director will participate in the feedback process.
- APAM — the Director of the APAM Office will participate in the feedback process, if requested.
- FNL producers — will participate in the Feedback process as appropriate and agreed.

5. APAM PROGRAM

Australian First Nations first
APAM's First Nations program is first and foremost for the benefit of Australian First Nations artists, companies and producers and the self-determined work they produce.

- Whether a program is for Australian First Nations only, or is also open to diaspora and or international First Peoples artists, will be stated in the description of the program.
- Subsidies or bursaries will only be offered to Australian First Nations artists and producers, except where other international stakeholders have specifically funded places for their First Peoples.

Partner festival for Gatherings
In keeping with APAM's Principle of 'First Nations as central', APAM will involve FNAG in decision making around which festivals are chosen as Gathering partners. This will include a meeting by festival leadership with FNAG for the purpose of understanding the festival's commitment to programming self-determined First Nations work, and to appropriate cultural protocols.

Accountability
- FNAG — Responsible for approving and monitoring policies and processes; providing feedback on proposals for major partnerships and First Nations programs and activities presented to them by the FNL Producers and APAM Director; evaluating programs to ensure continuous improvement.
- ILBIJERRI — Responsible for providing ongoing feedback and guidance as First Nations Lead.
- APAM — Responsible for allowing appropriate time and resources for consultation and planning for the programs and initiatives.
- FNL producers and APAM staff — Responsible for delivery of programs in accordance with agreed plans.

6. REVIEW

To maintain an alignment with evolving best practice for the engagement and empowerment of First Nations people and their human rights, these policies and processes will be reviewed annually, and amendments approved by the FNAG. The policies and processes also activate the principles of the Framework. As such, they should be also reviewed upon any changes of the Framework. If APAM develops new or amends overarching organisational policies that may Intersect or nullify these policies, that should also trigger a review of these policies to reflect that Interaction.