

Indigenous Data Network



Introduction

The Indigenous Data Network will assist Indigenous communities in developing the technical capability and resources to enable them to manage their data for community advancement. By strengthening communities' agency in their data, the network will empower them to make informed decisions about their own development.

The Data Network is led by a Steering Committee, chaired by Professor Sandra Eades, Associate Dean (Indigenous), Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences at the University of Melbourne. The members are: Professor Marcia Langton (UoM), Professor Shaun Ewen (UoM), Dr Len Smith (ANU), Mr Craig Ritchie (AIATSIS), Associate Professor James Ward (SAHMRI), Professor Janet McCalman (UoM) and Dr Kristen Smith (UoM).

The University of Melbourne will provide a secretariat and administrative hub for the Indigenous Data Network. It is well-positioned to do so, given its breadth of experience in Indigenous scholarship and in digital social sciences and humanities for more than two decades, its outstanding capabilities in projects such as AURIN (the Australian Urban Research Infrastructure Network), PARADISEC (the Pacific And Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures) and the eScholarship Research Centre, and its longstanding working relationships with AIATSIS (the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, NCRIS (the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy) and ARDC (the Australian Research Data Commons).

The Network will bring together community, university, government, non-government and private sector partners to create an ongoing community of practice to address a range of shared concerns, such as:

- Identifying best practice in community data collection, management and access
- Assisting Indigenous communities to apply best practice in data management by providing technical and educational resources
- Developing specific strategies and approaches to make better use of data over which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have ownership
- Creating a directory of databases to increase awareness of existing data sets and how to access them integrating and archiving Indigenous datasets and preventing the orphaning of important datasets which would be detrimental to communities
- Negotiating with government and non-government organisations to ensure data activities are aligned with Indigenous priorities, and that data collected is available for sharing under appropriate conditions
- Working with the Indigenous Research Exchange to develop guidelines and best-practice case studies for research and data analysis in evaluation to improve Indigenous outcomes
- Coordinating educational programs to ensure the development of a critical mass of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with expertise in the data sciences
- Developing panels of experts who can provide advice and assistance on data issues.

Key priorities

The first priority for the Network will be to establish a working relationship with AIATSIS and other partners, and develop an overview of the domain, in order to answer basic questions such as:

- What are the key organisations that need to be involved? (eg land councils, community councils, health and legal services, land management organisations)
- What data do they currently have access to? What data is needed? How do they get access to it? What are the obstacles to obtaining access to data?
- Where are the models for best practice of the data management life cycle?
- Where are the gaps in available data? How can they be filled?
- What expertise and technical resources are required?
- What relationships need to be established with other organisations active in the field? (eg Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS), and Indigenous STEM networks)

Further actions to be undertaken are as follows:

- A series of consultations will be undertaken, leading to a detailed plan of action including resource requirements
- An expert panel will be established to provide advice and assistance on specific issues, including technical issues such as identifying appropriate data management protocols, software and platforms, and informing community data projects on best practice
- A best-practice governance framework will be established for the management of the Indigenous data life cycle, including the development of ethical and access guidelines
- A digital media profile will be established, including a website, newsletter, blog and social media presence
- Cloud resources and communication facilities will be mobilised to provide off-site backup, data management and software resources, and other crucial digital infrastructure as required
- A public directory of datasets will be created, in collaboration with data.gov.au and the Australian Research Data Commons, so communities know what datasets exist and how to access them
- Advice will be sought from data experts on the technical and administrative issues involved in establishing federated databases, drawing together information from federal, state, and non-government sources
- Priority will be given to identifying sources of data on Indigenous economic participation, which has been identified as a deficiency in the Closing the Gap framework. Key experts will be identified and consulted, and a specific strategy developed.

Partners

By collaborating with the institutions in our Indigenous Data Network and Indigenous corporations and communities, together, we will have the capacity and expertise to design and develop data systems to enable relevant, useful and innovative research to improve outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) is a key partner in the Indigenous Data Network. AIATSIS is the major national repository for documents, audio, visual and digital materials relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and societies. It provides research services and maintains a library and archives of materials. The AIATSIS digitisation program preserves important Indigenous cultural items in digital form on a variety of platforms so they can be used as a research resource to be shared with all Australians and the rest of the world. As a Commonwealth Statutory Authority, AIATSIS will play a lead role in data integration and in encouraging the collaboration of Indigenous, governmental and research entities in sharing data.

We will also work closely with the of the Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC) and the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS). NCRIS is developing the national research infrastructure to facilitate collaboration between the research sector, industry and government in Australia and internationally. It is developing the ARDC as an integrated data-intensive collaborative infrastructure incorporating physical infrastructure, policies, data, software, tools and support for researchers. The Indigenous Data Network will be a key contributor to that process. In this we will work closely with AIATSIS, which has a central role in the development of NCRIS engagement with Indigenous Australians.

Other important partners, with whom discussions are proceeding, include the Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective, the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI), the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), and the Australian National University (ANU). The ANU's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Archive will be a crucial component of the Network.