Introduction

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is an independent statutory authority, whose vision is to inspire improvement in the learning of all young Australians through world-class curriculum, assessment and reporting.

ACARA and stakeholder engagement

Our stakeholders are varied and include people who may be affected by or have an interest in what we do including teachers, principals, parents and students as well as the broader community.

Stakeholder engagement is carried out by many people at ACARA every day through a variety of interactions and channels. We seek out a broad range of perspectives and strive to involve stakeholders who may be hard to reach.

ACARA is committed to genuine, two-way communication and engagement that are underpinned by a shared understanding of the purpose of the engagement and clear expectations of how stakeholder contributions are being used. In this way we seek to build relationships characterised by goodwill and collaboration that allow differences to be acknowledged and respected.

In setting the educational expectations and standards for all young Australians, ACARA maintains a rigorous national engagement framework to ensure our decision-making and practices are collaborative and continuously informed by views from across the Australian community and latest evidence internationally, as well as aligned with strategic directions set by COAG’s Education Council.

Collaboration with stakeholders including state and territory authorities and the non-government education sector in pursuit of the national education agenda is a key strategic priority in ACARA’s Charter and Corporate Plan.

Key deliverables include:

- A published advisory structure that produces strong satisfaction ratings from stakeholders.

- A set reporting process that produces a continual series of high-quality progress reports and advice delivered on time to the ACARA Board, Education Council and/or Australian Education Senior Officials Committee (AESOC) each reporting period.
• An evidence-base of stakeholder contact showing high levels of interactivity with government and non-government groups and contact communication with international bodies.

Purpose of the framework

The Stakeholder engagement framework provides a structure to support capability and delivery of stakeholder engagement across ACARA, ensuring stakeholders’ needs and input are considered in ACARA’s work and decision-making in a consistent, transparent manner.

The framework sets out a strategic approach to stakeholder engagement that includes:

• principles that guide our engagement approach
• a model for conducting engagement activities
• a guide to levels of engagement to ensure tools and strategies are tailored and appropriate.
Our engagement principles

Our principles for engagement reflect our core values and are the benchmarks we aspire to in building collaborative, open and respectful relationships with our stakeholders:

**PURPOSEFUL**
While our engagement is driven by our strategic priorities, we will work to ensure our stakeholder interactions begin with an understanding of what is the purpose of the engagement, its scope and what we want to achieve. We will focus on issues material to ACARA and our stakeholders.

**RESPECTFUL**
We value stakeholders, the diversity of their views and the value they bring to ACARA’s work; we recognise and accept our diverse backgrounds and different points of view. We recognise that engagement is a two-way process that involves talking, listening, acting and collaborating, as well as responding to issues in a timely manner.

**INTEGRITY**
We are honest, ethical and fair in our dealings with one another, our stakeholders and our partners in broader community.

**COMMITMENT**
We work closely with our partners and stakeholders to communicate clearly, share information, and work together towards achieving our vision.

**INCLUSIVENESS**
We are committed to seeking out stakeholders and involving those interested in our work including those who may be harder to reach for reasons such as language, culture, age or disability, and creating opportunities for dialogue.

**TIMELINESS**
We will involve stakeholders early and agree on how and when to engage. We will ensure our engagement process is clear and that key dates and response times for feedback are specified upfront.

**TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**
We will work in a way that provides assurance to both the ministerial council and our stakeholders that our priorities are in the national interest and informed by a wide range of views.
Additional engagement principles relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations

As per our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), ACARA has four specific principles in place to guide engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. They help us operate in a culturally responsive way and promote the values of reconciliation in everything we do.

**Principle 1: We acknowledge the history**
ACARA recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of Australia and respects their enduring connection to Country/Place. We acknowledge the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, languages and cultural practices, which inform our understandings of history, culture, science, technologies and the environment.

**Principle 2: We encourage and support and promote enterprise**
ACARA will enhance opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprises to provide, participate or contribute to ACARA’s commercial acquisition of goods and services. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples businesses will be actively supported by procurement practices with the aim of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses competing on equal footing with other suppliers.

**Principle 3: We are culturally responsive**
ACARA aims to be a culturally responsive organisation that respects the individual and collective cultural protocols of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and recognises the value these protocols bring to the workforce and to our work. By developing and fostering an appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contemporary social dynamics, we aim to be culturally competent individuals who actively embrace the diversity and contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities.

**Principle 4: We actively collaborate**
ACARA recognises the need to understand, engage with and identify with members from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and aims to do this in an open, transparent and collaborative way. We aim to connect with individuals and community early in the engagement process, seek input and act on feedback, and commit time and resources to relationship-building and developing trust. We will ensure community concerns are responded to in a timely, open and effective manner.

ACARA’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group has reviewed these principles.
Engagement objectives

Our engagement program aims to:

• build awareness and support for ACARA's work program
• ensure ACARA's decision making and activities are informed by stakeholder views and there are opportunities for stakeholder involvement and input
• understand and address areas of stakeholder concern
• create a positive engagement experience to strengthen stakeholder trust, confidence and relationships.

Our approach

Our engagement is guided by the Accountability AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard, the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) values and spectrum for public participation and the needs of our stakeholders.

Our formal advisory structure is the foundation of our engagement program, it includes a number of reference, advisory, specialist and information-sharing groups.

We also use a range of networks and channels to share information, consult and collaborate with our stakeholders including meetings, forums, workshops, surveys and traditional and digital communication tools.
Our stakeholder engagement framework

The framework brings together key initiatives and activities within three pillars:

1. **Policy and Process** – Delivering engagement which is aligned with ACARA’s strategic priorities and industry standards.

2. **People** – Building organisational capability and support for engagement planning and delivery.

3. **Practice and Performance** – Enabling best practice implementation through planning, resources, systems and evaluation.

Initiatives within this framework are either in place currently or in development.
Levels of engagement

Just as there are many stakeholders, there are many different approaches to engaging stakeholders and usually a mix of approaches will be needed.

The tables below outline different levels of stakeholder engagement and the tools and methods that are used to facilitate the engagement process.

At various times engagement will be occurring across ACARA at all of these levels using many or all of the methods outlined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Inform</th>
<th>Consult</th>
<th>Involve</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>Empower</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One-way communication to stakeholders; may be no invitation to reply</td>
<td>Limited two-way engagement; organisation asks questions, seeks feedback; stakeholders provide answers</td>
<td>Two-way or multi-way engagement; learning on all sides; stakeholders and organisation communicate to ensure views and ideas understood</td>
<td>Two-way or multi-way engagement; the organisation and stakeholders are developing agreed solutions and actions. There are learning, negotiation and decision-making by each</td>
<td>Stakeholders play a role in shaping the organisational agenda and decision-making on particular issues</td>
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**Methods**

- **Inform**
  - Emails,
  - Newsletters,
  - Factsheets
  - Reports
  - Websites
  - Media releases
  - Speeches, articles

- **Consult**
  - Surveys
  - Focus groups
  - Meetings with selected stakeholder(s)
  - Workshops
  - Online feedback

- **Involve**
  - Multi-stakeholder forums
  - Advisory groups
  - Briefings and workshops
  - Consultative committees
  - Focus groups
  - Online engagement tools

- **Collaborative**
  - Reference groups and Taskforces
  - Working groups
  - Joint projects and ventures
  - Partnerships
  - Multi-stakeholder initiatives

- **Empower**
  - Integration of stakeholders into governance, structure


Evaluating and reporting our engagement

We understand the importance of proactive and open stakeholder engagement and are focused on regularly reviewing and evolving our approach.

This includes regularly seeking feedback from our stakeholders on our performance.

In doing so, we use a range of indicators and methods including our biannual stakeholder survey and corporate reporting.