Cultural Responsiveness Framework – 2026-2029

Statement

As a PHN we are committed to working with the First Nations communities living in the ACT to achieve their health goals by increasing access to culturally safe health and wellbeing services.

We are committed to a whole-of-organisation approach to continually improving cultural competency in our organisation, primary care services, and our commissioned services.

We continuously strive to improve the ways we work with First Nations colleagues, consumers, stakeholders and communities, so that First Nations people's voices and needs are embedded in the foundation and delivery of services.

Definition

Cultural responsiveness is defined as an approach that acknowledges the importance of cultural diversity and seeks to integrate this understanding into policies, practices, and interactions. It goes beyond mere tolerance of differences; it involves actively engaging with diverse cultural perspectives and ensuring that all individuals feel valued and included.

Background

In April 2019, CHN partnered with Coolamon Advisors to co-design the original Cultural Competence Framework (CCF). The CCF identifies competencies that link back to the six domains that underpin culturally respectful health service delivery as outlined in the "Cultural Respect Framework 2016-2026 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health".

Since this initial framework was developed, CHN has taken steps to improve and implement the values, goals, and standards of the CCF across all levels and areas of our business. While changes have been made and some goals achieved, we have undergone a lot of growth and change as a PHN, with new structures, staff, business units, programs and projects. As a result, and with reflection on the original framework, we identified the need to complete a full review of the original CCF, to redesign and update this framework, and ensure that it is built for purpose for where we are today and where we see ourselves in the future.

Domains

The foundation of this framework is built upon four domains, each of which is interlinked with the others and touches all areas of the organisation and its activities. The four domains are; Working with Community, Improving Cultural Responsiveness, Embedding Voices, and Equity in Health. The activities, goals, and aspirations under each domain have been identified and developed in collaboration with all staff and organised in alignment with CHN's four strategic priorities. These activities, goals, and aspirations evolve over time, with the understanding that cultural safety and competency are not 'end goals' to be achieved, but rather an ongoing journey with no final destination.

Strategic Priorities	Working with Community	Improving Cultural Responsiveness	Embedding Voices	Equity in Health
Capacity Building	CHN will work with Indigenous communities, organisations and knowledge holders to create opportunities to build capacity within the community that addresses gaps/needs identified by the community.	CHN will provide continuous learning/training opportunities to all its staff, as well as individual and organisational evaluations to assess and improve cultural responsiveness on all levels.	CHN will use its position and resources to centre Indigenous voices and needs in external communications to local stakeholders and networks to improve awareness and responsiveness of the health care community.	CHN will utilise its position and relationships to work to provide and promote equitable and targeted resourcing.
Coordinating & Integrating Care	CHN will develop flexible, safe, responsive and reciprocal networks with local communities and organisations to enable greater integration of multidisciplinary services.	CHN will provide safe and responsive feedback mechanisms, engagement opportunities and education/QI activities to external providers to ensure local services are better able to meet local community needs.	CHN will build and maintain safe and reciprocal relationships with community leaders, organisations, and programs to better inform CHN's practices/projects and provide information back to community, closing the loop of communication.	CHN will work to better understand gaps/barriers to accessing care and at all levels seek opportunities to have these gaps/barriers addressed.
Commissioning for Outcomes	CHN will work with its commissioned services, local organisations and government to improve the safety and responsiveness of health care across the ACT.	CHN will provide further training and education opportunities to improve cultural responsiveness in the mainstream and seek opportunities to further support development of the local First Nations health workforce.	CHN will ensure that wherever possible, its services and projects are codesigned with local communities. This will include creating community led KPIs, outcome measures, program designs and the data and topics of focus in the health needs assessments.	CHN will develop flexible, adaptive, and culturally responsive commissioning policies/frameworks, procurement and tender processes to better ensure that the entire commissioning cycle is both equitable for potential service providers and responsive to community needs.
Organisational Excellence	CHN will ensure equitable representation, hiring practices, and advancement opportunities in all levels to guarantee First Nations knowledge, ways and needs are embedded in all its activities.	CHN will ensure that its internal policies, recruitment practices, Employee Value Proposition (EVP), leave procedures are culturally safe and that they recognise and appropriately remunerate the needs and expertise of lived experience SMEs.	CHN will develop and embed policies, practices and resources to ensure cultural governance and Indigenous Data Sovereignty are applied consistently.	CHN will improve the use of its tools, resources, relationships and data to better align with both local needs and government commitments.