

**EXTERNAL  
PARTNERSHIPS:  
GUIDANCE FOR  
ORGANISATIONAL  
LEADERS**



## **Acknowledgment of Aboriginal people and communities in Victoria**

The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Aboriginal people as Australia's First Peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and waterways upon which we depend. We acknowledge Victoria's Aboriginal communities and culture and pay respect to their Elders past and present.

Aboriginal culture is founded on a strong social and cultural order that has sustained up to 60,000 years of existence. Victorian Aboriginal communities and peoples are culturally diverse, with rich and varied heritages and histories pre- and post- invasion. The impacts of colonisation — while having devastating effects on the traditional life of Aboriginal Nations — have not diminished Aboriginal people's connection to country, culture or community.

The Victorian Government recognises the long-standing leadership of Aboriginal communities in Victoria to prevent and respond to family violence, supported through self-determination and self-management, to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people and families, whilst also acknowledging the devastating impacts and accumulation of trauma across generations as a result of colonisation and the dispossession of land and children.

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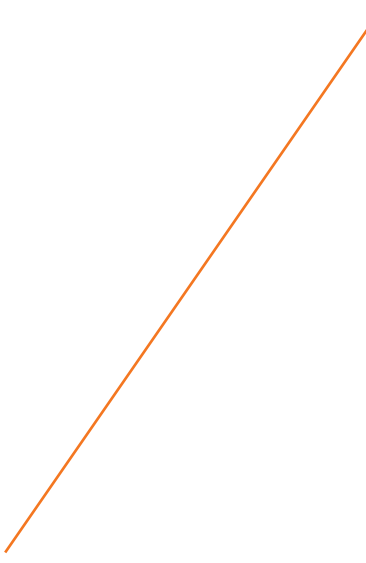
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### **Content Coordination**

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In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



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# 1. Importance of external partnerships and multi-agency agreements

The Royal Commission clearly identified the need for a coordinated community response to family violence. Effective coordination between services will keep victim survivors safe and keep perpetrators in view and held accountable.

Pillar 2 requires framework organisations to **strengthen formal and informal collaborative arrangements**. Pillar 4 requires organisations to enhance **collaboration with other services**.

These framework requirements are strongly reflected in responsibilities 9 and 10 of MARAM. Responsibility 10 notes that framework organisations should have the following:

- established strategies for working collaboratively with key partners within their local area to improve outcomes for victim survivors
- strong links with local youth services, multicultural services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, services that specialise in working with people with disability, as well as LGBTIQ specialist services
- formal partnerships built on a mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities and the shared goal of increased safety of victim survivors and families
- established mechanisms that delineate referral processes and pathways
- services regularly meet to discuss how to best support victim survivors and appropriately share information to enable comprehensive risk assessment and consideration of matters relating to the safety and wellbeing of victim survivors
- regular participation in interagency and network meetings and be part of community networks and partnerships.

Risk assessments can be more comprehensive by gathering information from multiple sources. Information sharing can take place smoothly with agreed processes.

Risk management activities can be supported by a coordinated response, rather than resting on one service in isolation.

## 2. Suggested steps

- A – Identify the service providers you may need to partner with in order to assist alignment with the Framework.
- B – Evaluate the status of the partnerships.
- C – Create an action plan to build collaboration with each external partner identified. You can include steps in your organisational implementation plan.

Make sure to also contact your local Family Violence Regional Integration Committee and Dhelk Dja Action Group (see below).

### A Identify services

Identify a list of services that are likely to be beneficial to responding to family violence, and group the potential benefits, which could be:

- critical partners for risk assessment / information sharing (for example, Victoria Police, Child Protection) (that is, likely in all cases of family violence)

- important partners for risk assessment / information sharing (for example, maternal and child health, alcohol and other drug services) (that is, subject to particular circumstances of victim survivor/perpetrator)
- essential for responding to individual identities by way of referrals and secondary consultations (for example, LGBTIQ services, Aboriginal organisations, disability services, multicultural services, children’s services)
- specialist advice (for example, specialist family violence services, men’s behavioural change services)
- training support for organisation (for example, services that can assist in training staff on critical issues such as cultural training, Aboriginal cultural safety training, Rainbow Tick accreditation).

You can then search for specific services in your area using [The Lookout website](http://www.thelookout.org.au/sector-info/service-directory) <http://www.thelookout.org.au/sector-info/service-directory>.

The search can be filtered by region and particular sectors.

**Example:**  
**A search on The Lookout website for men’s services in Bayside Peninsula in February 2020 returns six services, including the peak body (No to Violence), a dedicated counselling service (Mensline) and a Men’s Behaviour Change Program (Star Health).**

**Note:** This list can be used to create a resource for use by staff members for potential referrals and secondary consultations.

## **B Analyse the potential benefits and barriers**

Once you have identified the organisations, make sure you are clear on why your organisation needs to establish or build the relationship, and the potential benefits and barriers.

Example benefits include the factors listed above under ‘Identify services’.

Example barriers include:

- **no existing connections** with the service
- risk of **overwhelming services** through extensive secondary consultations
- different **organisational cultures**
- no commitment from **senior leadership**.

## **C Create an action plan**

Having identified and prioritised the external partnerships required, the final stage will be to create an action plan. An action plan should identify the intended outcomes of the relationship with the identified service, how to achieve that outcome, who holds responsibility and a timescale.

Example actions are included below, based on an AOD service having identified a need to prioritise multi-agency practice with specialist men’s services due to a high rate of perpetrator disclosures.

**Note:** this is an example action plan for connecting with a specific service. However, another way to develop and build strong external partnerships generally is to engage in local community forums and working groups that focus on family violence. See below for details on how local Family Violence Regional Integration Committees can assist.

### 3. Family Violence Regional Integration Committee

Local Family Violence Regional Integration Committees (FVRICs) are a vital part of Victoria's family violence system.

FVRICs bring together representatives from regional family violence services and other key sectors and services, including child and family services, child protection, mental health services, homelessness services, housing services, courts, police and Dhelk Dja Action Groups.

FVRICs play a key role in informing, enabling and supporting the implementation of family violence reforms locally, as well as achieving integrated service delivery across their regions. Each FVRIC is supported by a Family Violence Principal Strategic Advisor (PSA). Together, FVRICs and PSAs work to drive the local implementation of key family violence reforms in their area, **build partnerships and collaborate across sectors**, build workers' capability and provide insight into operations, issues, functions and opportunities in their region.

The Lookout website has [contact details for FVRICs and PSAs](#).

### 4. Dhelk Dja Action Groups

Dhelk Dja Action Groups are place-based, Aboriginal community-led groups that drive local action to prevent and address family violence through a partnership approach.

They have a pivotal role in developing and implementing community-led responses to family violence that educate, prevent, respond to and reduce family violence, ensuring they are responsive and culturally relevant in their local Aboriginal communities.

Each of the Dhelk Dja Action Groups are supported by a Regional Coordinator who is employed by DHHS at a local level.

We for more information see the [Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum](#) website.

## 5. Example template: external partnerships connections

Organisation	Potential benefits	Potential barriers	Desired outcomes	Recommended action	When	Who will action
Men's Behavioural Change Programme	<p>Secondary consultations</p> <p>Referrals</p> <p>Possible training</p>	<p>No existing formal connections</p> <p>Need to be cautious of building internal capacity to respond, and not simply relying on secondary consultations</p>	<p>Agreed process to seek secondary consults where a service user identifies as a user of family violence, with agreed process, timescales for responding</p> <p>Agreed process and forms for responding to any requests for information sharing that may be made by our service, or from MBCP to us about service users engagement</p>	<p>Contact the local PSA to determine whether they can offer support in connecting with MBCP services</p> <p>Prepare information-sharing request forms and secondary consultation forms and seek MBCP input on content to make sharing easier</p> <p>Identify key individuals within each service for contact on this developing relationship</p>	<p>Within one month</p> <p>TBC subject to discussion above</p>	Project manager
Local communities of practice and family violence forums / working groups	<p>Secondary consultations</p> <p>Referrals</p> <p>Information sharing</p> <p>Communities of practice</p>		<p>To become more fully engaged with the community services and sector and be directly involved in existing and emerging communities of practice</p>	<p>Contact the local PSA to discuss what is happening in the region and where our involvement could potentially benefit in responding to family violence</p>	<p>Within one month</p>	Senior management
Specialist family violence service	<p>Secondary consultations</p> <p>Referrals</p> <p>Information sharing</p>		<p>To provide a consistent response to victim survivors</p>	<p>Establish agreement with specialist family violence service on secondary consultations and referrals</p> <p>Possible memorandum of understanding</p>		

