Centre for Inclusive Employment

Cultural responsiveness checklist

A practical resource for employment practitioners

Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability

Good intentions are a start, but they are not enough. To work well with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jobseekers, you need to look honestly at your own practice. Ask yourself three things. Is the way I work culturally safe? Do I respond to what each person needs? Do I answer to community for what I do?

These checklists will help you plan, deliver and reflect on the employment support you give to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability. They can show you what is working, where there are gaps and what you could do differently. You can use it on your own or with your team. Come back to them often as your practice grows.

Checklist 1: Working with a jobseeker

Use this checklist while you work with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jobseeker. Tick what you have done today. Tick in the “Focus next time” column the things you want to do differently or incorporate into the next meeting. You do not need to tick everything. The “Focus next time” boxes show you where you may want to focus the next time you meet.

Remember, this checklist is a guide for you. It is not a test for the jobseeker, and it is not a form for them to fill in. Each person knows their own needs best, so ask and follow their lead. If you are not sure about something, talk with your team or ask for cultural supervision or mentoring, where this is available.

Safety and respect	Done today	Focus next time
Ask where and with whom they feel comfortable talking, as well as who else they might like to be present.	☐	☐
Check how they want to communicate. Take time to yarn first, use plain language and allow plenty of time to think.	☐	☐
Acknowledge, name and respond to racism and judgement if it shows up.	☐	☐

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Checklist 1 · Working with a jobseeker (continued)

Relationships and continuity	Done today	Focus next time
Make one clear promise at the end of the appointment and make sure to follow through.	☐	☐
Reduce re-telling. Use warm, clear and up to date handover notes and ask permission before sharing information.	☐	☐
Ask who should be involved from family or community and invite their participation if the jobseeker wants it.	☐	☐
Fit the service to the person		
Plan around cultural obligation, including caring roles, health, Sorry Business and so on.	☐	☐
Offer flexible options for time, place and communication method rather than requiring fixed attendance.	☐	☐
Agree the next step together, reflecting the jobseeker's pace, priorities and supports and write it in their words.	☐	☐
Source work that is safe and worth keeping		
Check job quality and safety, including cultural safety, not just 'job start'.	☐	☐
Plan for staying in work, including work adjustments, flexible hours, check-ins and helpful supports.	☐	☐
Monitor and track job quality and jobseeker wellbeing, not only placements.	☐	☐

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Checklist 2: Reflect on your practice

Use this checklist to reflect on your practice as you work with a person. Read each statement. Tick the box if it is true for how you usually work.

If a statement is not true for you yet, leave the box empty. Pick one thing to try the next time you work with a jobseeker. This page is for learning, not for scoring yourself, so be honest.

You can use this page on your own or talk it through with your team. Sharing ideas can help you find new ways to work. Come back to it often, because your answers may change as your practice grows.

Cultural safety

- [ ] I check what helps the person feel safe, including place, privacy, who is present and how they prefer to communicate.
- [ ] I avoid deficit language and document barriers and service adjustments instead.
- [ ] I respond to racism, judgement or disrespect when it occurs.

Trust and continuity

- [ ] I build trust by taking time, using plain language and not rushing straight to compliance.
- [ ] I offer continuity and follow through on what I say I will do.
- [ ] I ask who should be involved from family or community and support their participation if the person wants that.

Flexible and responsive delivery

- [ ] I plan around cultural obligations, family responsibilities, health and community events without penalty.
- [ ] I adapt times, locations and contact methods to what is practical and respectful.
- [ ] I expect non-linear pathways and adjust the plan rather than treating stop-start participation as failure.

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Checklist 2 · Reflect on your practice (continued)

Shared decision-making

- [ ] I ask what meaningful work looks like for the person and what supports or pathways matter most to them.
- [ ] I seek feedback and adjust the service approach in response.
- [ ] I make options clear and support informed choice about work, training, employers and supports.

Workforce and organisational support

- [ ] I reflect on my own practice and assumptions and seek cultural supervision/mentoring where available.
- [ ] I escalate system barriers (rigid rules, unsafe environments, lack of privacy) rather than expecting the person to 'fit the system'.
- [ ] I support stable relationships (warm handovers if staff change; minimise repeating the person's story).

Employment outcomes and retention

- [ ] I assess job quality and safety (including cultural safety) as part of 'job readiness'.
- [ ] I plan for sustaining work over time (workplace adjustments, flexible hours, check-ins, supports around life events).
- [ ] I track progress as ongoing participation and wellbeing (not only job start/exit).

One thing I will try next time