Indigenous Story Guidelines

Indigenous Stories (or Performance Stories) are your stories about the changes to your country or communities that have resulted from the Australian Government funding of your Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) and/or Indigenous Ranger project.

These stories come from local people on the ground who have been closely associated with these projects, and are able to observe change over time.

Preparing an annual Indigenous Story has been listed as an activity to complete in your IPA and/or Indigenous Ranger Annual Project Plan.

## Your Indigenous Stories are important

Your IPA and/or Indigenous Ranger Management Plan or Strategic Plan reflect your community’s goals for managing your country. An Indigenous Story is a way to document how effectively these goals are being met, and to provide feedback to your Traditional Owners, Board of Management or Advisory Committee, as well as partners and other key stakeholders.

The stories are a way to measure your progress in a range of areas, and to look for ways to strengthen or adapt your management to get better results. The same story can be built upon each year so that over time, there will be a full story of all the changes, or you might decide to tell a different story every year – it’s your choice.

These Indigenous Stories will form part of a bigger (program level) ‘Performance Story Report’ which will help the IPA and Indigenous Ranger programs to measure and report how effective they have been in achieving their objectives around environmental, social, cultural and economic outcomes.

We hope to use some of these Indigenous Stories as case studies in our reports to the Australian Government, and to share them with other IPA and Indigenous Ranger projects as examples of best practice.

## How to prepare an Indigenous Story

The approach outlined below gives IPA and Indigenous Rangers project managers and coordinators some broad guidance as to how stories may be prepared – however, projects are encouraged to explore other innovative, culturally appropriate approaches.

1. **Remember who the Indigenous Story is for** – these stories are primarily for your project to talk about the changes that you’ve noticed, to report them, and to learn lessons that will assist you to improve what you do. They are also going to be used to help the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) to showcase the broader environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits of these important Indigenous Land and Water Management programs.
2. **Decide who pulls the story together** – this could be an experienced staff or community member with appropriate skills and knowledge of your project and the people involved, or an external consultant. Funds can be allocated from your project to do this.
3. **Decide what story you are going to tell** – identify an area of significant change that relates to your strategic management objectives (e.g. look among the top five things listed in your Management Plan). Your story might also address one of the Australian Government’s Indigenous Advancement Strategy objectives around adults in jobs, kids at school and safe communities. Don’t forget that change can be small or large, and ‘good’ or ‘not so good’. Sometimes it’s helpful to tell stories that show how a project has learned from its mistakes.
4. **Develop some key questions** – These can prompt people involved in the project when trying to capture the story. Consider how the questions may be translated and understood in local language/s. For example:
   * *How has the [area of interest] changed as a result of the IPA/Indigenous Ranger project?*
   * What evidence do you have of this change?
   * How has it benefited the community?

Make questions broad and open, and appropriate for your project and your community.

1. **Ask questions from a range of participants** – this could include Indigenous Rangers, Traditional Owners, and community members, and partners such as industry groups, government agencies, NGOs and researchers.
2. **Decide how the Indigenous Story will be presented** – stories can be written (including quotes), oral (e.g. through video), art based (through painting or a collection of images), or a recorded performance such as a dance. Innovative and culturally based presentations are also encouraged. Stories could include quantitative data as well as yarns (personal anecdotes).
3. **Review the stories and see how you can learn from them** – share the lessons with your Management Board or Advisory Committee, partners and local community. Use these lessons to inform your future planning.

## Key dates

NIAA are asking IPA and Indigenous Ranger projects to submit an outline of what they are proposing to develop for their Indigenous Stories in their annual project plan negotiations. Your NIAA funding agreement manager will provide feedback to help you prepare your final story, which is due along with your annual report.

## Your feedback is welcome

Any feedback on these guidelines would be very welcome:

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