

EMBER CONNECT

EMBER CONNECT TEAM SUBMISSION 2023

WIYI YANI U THANGANI FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION



Ember Connect wishes to acknowledge the many Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and we honour the deep continuing connection to land, sky, waterways, and community. We pay our deepest respects to our Elders past, present and emerging who illuminate our journey towards truth-telling, culture, and conservation, which burns brighter than ever.

Measuring Outcomes

We are interested in learning from your experience about what effective practices (data collection, measurement, and evaluation) look like in order to understand how to measure change outcomes across community, regional, state, national and global settings. We also recognise that there are approaches and methodologies grounded in First Nations women's knowledges and cultures that should be used when setting outcomes and measuring change, and we are keen to understand what these look like from your experience.

1. What change do you want to see for First Nations women and girls, in all their diversity, with their families and communities, to live their lives in the way they want? What would you feel, see, hear, sense, or collectively understand if this change were happening?

- I want our daughters and granddaughters to be at home in all our diversity. To be a part of a world that is so rich with difference that it is valued and revered across the country. I want to know the girls are free to pursue their dreams in a country that gives them equal opportunity to do so – this way they will not have to bear the burden of flying our flag in every endeavour – they will be free to just be in a life they have chosen for themselves. This can only change genuinely with the next generation I feel – for Australian schools to reframe the original cultures of this nation as a centre/starting point – not as a side note to Australian history.
- The reframing of our cultures, our values, way of doing and being throughout historical and contemporary society is imperative for our children to grow a powerful sense of self in the mainstream world in our efforts to grow agency in our young people. This approach also teaches young non-Indigenous people the true history of Australia, the impact of government policies and builds an appreciation and value for Indigenous culture, its people, and its collective beauty and resilience. I feel the change to be pushed is for us to feel included and respected. We would have a say in decisions, better chances for education and health and more opportunities to succeed and help their communities grow.
- Regional, rural, and remote women and girls having access to a variety of pathways to opportunities including online learning/classes/workshops/networks/mentoring. This would include coming together in person twice a year in a summit to establish relationships, networks, beginner course sessions and mentor connections.
- I would like to see meaningful economic, educational and career development opportunities for First Nations women. This would mean that First Nations women are at the helm of design, implementation, and distribution of these opportunities. I would also like to see the opportunity for National opportunity informed by local design, it is important now more than ever that we come together across the nation to create better opportunity, voice, and momentum for our future generations. I would also like to see measures in place to ensure genuine access, application, and review of programs for First Nations women and girls.

2. In your experience, what practices and approaches are most effective in collecting data, measuring and evaluating change?

- The approaches we have found most effective in M&E start with determining what is of value to those we are working with. Regardless of who it may be, KPI's and measures are often imposed on us, but our lived experience tells us those measures are not what makes the difference in our lives. For example, rather than measuring job opportunities or places, we would measure pathways, accessibility, and diversity of learning opportunities on those pathways, as well as the connections and social capital that exist on our journeys to achieve success. As a rigid rule and expectation, the feedback of results and impact is provided to participants, thus closing the loop on their contribution – reinforcing their voice has impact and they have been listened to. Given the trust established through genuine collaboration,

the determination of values and aspirations to be measured have a greater shared value. This then paves the way for collective face to face groups, one on one, or information seeking through digital means to enhance reach.

- We have found at Ember Connect that yarning about a concept is by far...the most effective method to develop our critical consciousness. By listening to others, challenging our own views, and reflecting on our needs, we can grow a more informed view of any subject area.
- Face to Face would be the best practice. They would need to be local to the area/region as making connections would add difficulty to gaining information/data.
- Mixed methods – in-person round tables, surveys, one on one, captured where possible by local consultants. Often out of town consultants are often not trusted. Outcomes/Information must be relayed to the community/attendees.

3. How do you want to see local change practices and data collection inform national priorities and achieve systemic outcomes, and how could this relate to the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality?

- Local change practices will play a pivotal role in informing national priorities. This approach is not only logical, but from my knowledge also reflective of how WYUT operates. We are currently testing how this can happen on our platform at Ember Connect – to ensure we can help inspire system change by helping address the root issues of injustice, while respecting the diversity and autonomy of our communities across the country.
- We must trust the information being collected is being used or discussed. I think the setup of local/regional groups that are aligned with the WYUT Framework could be good.
- Through consultation of each community advising what their priorities are aligning with national priorities. Funding/Structure/ongoing support for projects to start addressing local priorities, reporting progress
- Structures within community that can be used to inform a national approach and voice led from a local level. I believe that if we can design and implement and model this successfully it would have a tremendously positive impact for our future.

4. Do you have any additional thoughts, views or experiences about gender specific data and outcomes that could be included in the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality and the First Nations Gender Justice Institute's work?

- Make sure to prioritize intersectionality...this will also help bring us all along on this important space.
- Just ensure to involve the required individuals in the data collection process so that they know their voices are heard and their needs are accurately represented.
- It is important to capture specific data of different age groups as we all have unique needs at various times of life.

Ensuring a strong accountability and evaluation approach

An accountability and evaluation approach is necessary to ensure that the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality and First Nations Gender Justice Institute can be responsive to the changes that First Nations women and girls, in all their diversity, want to see in their lives and communities. As both the Framework and Institute are

independent of government, owned and designed by First Nations women and girls, this approach may be used to hold stakeholders to account if they have a role in realising outcomes.

1. Should government (and other stakeholders) be accountable to community determined outcomes? How can this be included in the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality?

- Yes – a central part of the framework should include an accountability measure that guarantees the involvement/participation and alignment of decision-making processes to the aspirations of our communities.
- Absolutely YES, they do. It could involve them setting up clear guidelines that directly reflect what our communities want to achieve and feeding back the information to the communities.
- Yes: a series of local engagement sessions: Initial – what is it we want. Middle – How are we going/what can we do to keep progressing: Second half – Outcomes. Final – What we achieved and the impact it has made.
- Yes, I believe that all monitoring and evaluation outcomes and data should be reviewed by First nations peoples. For example, if organizations outside of first nations should have require input or review from first nations women prior to applying for funding or reviewing their programs to ensure fidelity and authenticity

2. What does the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality and First Nations Gender Justice Institute need to do to incorporate diverse lived experiences and to ensure that no one misses opportunities to contribute to and hear this work?

- Practical solutions:
- Virtual hubs/spaces to contribute and access information where accessibility options are limited.
- Reduce the financial burden of participation/contribution by covering costs where possible for those that need it.
- Collaboration, connection, partnerships with local and national organizations to promote the work, hold workshops, awareness campaigns and assist to foster greater contribution within regions.
- Diverse avenues for contribution/participation - not just in person...but also online through safe yarning circles.
- Mobile friendly resources to allow greater engagement and broader distribution of information and participation.
- Storytelling initiatives that allow women/girls to have their stories/voices amplified to a wider audience.
- Regular loop on feedback and how our contribution has been used – WYUT already does an excellent job on this one.
- Community ambassadors across the country to do the work in bridging gaps between people, communities, and organizations.
- I think offer training and support to enable our mob/individuals from diverse backgrounds get to contribute effectively. Just ensuring everyone is included and being heard.

- It would be fantastic to see the institute partner with First Nations led organizations and offer training and support for mob.

3. *We recognize that the process to implement change is just as important as achieving outcomes. How would you want to see implementation processes evaluated over time?*

- We absolutely acknowledge that the journey toward implementing change in this realm is an ongoing process that must be guided by community engagement and a commitment to meaningful outcomes. Evaluating the implementation processes over time should reflect the unique needs and aspirations of our communities. I envision the evaluation process to be:
- **Led by communities** - prioritize mechanisms that actively involve women and girls (impacted by initiatives) giving feedback and insights. This will also ensure relevance and cultural respect is demonstrated throughout the process.
- **Aspirational Indicators that mean something to us** - move far beyond colonial metrics and incorporate holistic well-being indicators that align with *our* values. This might include cultural and language preservation, land regeneration, etc.
- **Sustainability** - do initiatives have lasting positive effects?
- **Agility** – evaluation processes being able to adapt to changing community needs and priorities. The above points will help ensure this is possible.
- **Growing others** – examine whether our women and groups have gained the skills, knowledge, *and confidence* to participate in, and lead, gender justice initiatives.
- **Communication** – continuing the excellent approach WYUT has taken in transparent and open communication throughout the evaluation process. This includes sharing progress, challenges, and lessons learned with the community, fostering a sense of **collective responsibility and ownership** over gender justice initiatives. Continue to share and celebrate successes, learnings, and plans with everyone.
- Go back to the community. Face to Face consultations. This would be the best way to see if things are working.
- Continual yarning with First Nations women from across the nations in partnership with First Nations organizations to ensure the above points

4. *Do you have any additional thoughts, views or experiences about accountability practices that could be included in the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality and the Institute's work?*

- Ensure transparency and increased community engagement for accountability.

Protecting and strengthening data sovereignty and governance

The First Nations Gender Justice Institute will continue the engagement, storytelling and sharing of women's and girls' voices that has been a core practice of Wiyi Yani U Thangani. These experiences, strengths, issues, and aspirations that women and girls share will be used to form part of a living database to help us understand what is working, what needs to change, and what success looks like.

1. What are your hopes and aspirations for what the First Nations Gender Justice Institute's database on First Nations women's and girl's lived experience and voices could look like?

How can we ensure safe and considered access and use of the database?

- Diversity of voices and experiences that incorporate the narratives of different regions, backgrounds, life circumstances, experiences, etc.
- Culturally responsive metadata that reflects our valued identifiers, keywords and categorizations that can adequately capture the diverse and nuanced experiences shared on the database.
- Ensure safety through access protocols, and importantly, *informed* consent and ownership guidelines so women understand how their information will be used.
- My first thought would be to ensure the database is easily accessible and user-friendly. Then approach community networks to support individuals to use the database.
- We would like to see a database that is user-friendly and reflective of our ways of storytelling. We would need to ensure that our community is aware of who will own the knowledge and how it is shared responsibly among us all.

2. How do we ensure that this living database is used and owned by First Nations women and girls?

- Accessibility, ease of use and identifiably First Nations driven.
- I think the involvement of First Nations women and girls throughout the development and the governance of the database will be important. We will be able to say it is a genuine resource that we own and use for our development and empowerment.

3. How can the First Nations Gender Justice Institute support First Nations women and girls to access, contribute to and use the database? How can this help women and girls to make decisions about their own local priorities to measure what works on the ground?

- Tailor resources and training – must be user friendly and easy to access.
- Identity of database must reflect diversity, but also reflect connections we have in common as women and girls.
- Partnerships with local First Nations led organizations and engagement programs.
- Community ambassadors

4. Do you have any additional thoughts, views or experiences about strengthening data sovereignty and government that could be included in the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality and First Nations Gender Justice Institute's work?

- WYUT continues to ensure that data is managed ethically and with respect for our rights, our norms and in promotion of our communities' autonomy.
- Just ensure the communities have authority over how their data is collected, accessed, and used.
- Regular forums or opportunities to ensure that the data is reflective of the story within our communities.

