

Chapter 3

Strengthening ACCHO Workforce



This resource is a chapter from: The Centre of Research Excellence in Aboriginal Chronic Disease Knowledge Translation and Exchange (CREATE). (2020). Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations in practice: Sharing ways of working from the ACCHO sector. Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity Theme, South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute, Adelaide.



Strengthening ACCHO workforce

Summary

ACCHOs are one of the largest employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are critical to the foundational principles and operations of ACCHOs since they bring lived experience and community knowledge, community connection and engagement, and capacity across a range of professional disciplines and leadership roles. The ways in which ACCHO workforce can be strengthened is through targeted recruitment strategies, valuing and support, training and capacity building, and leadership pathways.

Programs to promote wellbeing, respect, team building, connection and equal opportunity also create a harmonious workforce and ACCHO environment. These strategies benefit the ACCHO (e.g. staff retention, maintained organisational culture and knowledge), the community (e.g. holistic health needs are met according to both cultural protocols and clinical standards), and the workforce (e.g. employment and capacity building opportunities, culturally safe working environments). ACCHOs face a range of challenges in relation to growing their workforce, particularly in relation to time, resources and funding.

The content within this chapter was drawn from two in-depth case studies including with a large remote ACCHO and a small regional ACCHO. The content was refined by collective input from the CREATE Leadership Group to include perspectives from the ACCHO sector nationwide.

What we cover in this chapter:

- Introduction to ACCHO workforce
- Values and principles underpinning ACCHO workforce strategies
- Strategies that strengthen ACCHO workforce
- Benefits of workforce capacity building and leadership strategies
- Enablers of workforce capacity building and leadership strategies
- Challenges to workforce capacity building and leadership strategies
- Recommendations
- Discussion
- References
- Reflection Tool

Introduction to ACCHO workforce

ACCHOs are a leading employer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They strive to strengthen their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and also respect and value their non-Indigenous staff who play an important role in providing services to their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. ACCHOs aim to provide a safe working environment for everyone and to provide opportunities for ongoing employment, training and development.

A strong ACCHO workforce includes the following elements:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members with lived experience and community connection and also those with strong cultural knowledge coupled with an understanding of Western systems (i.e. ability to walk in two worlds). These elements are protective factors that enable resilience within the workforce.
- Non-Indigenous staff members with cultural understanding and competence who are passionate about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and are prepared to learn, listen, support and engage with communities.
- Stability (i.e. long-term retention of workforce).
- Staff with multi-disciplinary skills and capacity across roles (e.g. clinical, community programs, administration, leadership).
- Respectful relationships between ACCHO staff and clients, and between ACCHO staff and partner organisations (e.g. professional networks).

Values and principles underpinning ACCHO workforce strategies

For community, by community

ACCHOs recognise that no one can serve their communities as well as local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who understand the historical context and its impact in contemporary life. This enables them to understand the lived experiences of their clients. ACCHOs value local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff for both their cultural and professional knowledge and understand the benefits they bring to the organisation in increasing the cultural safety of programs and services. Many ACCHOs find that their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce increase engagement with community leading to increased uptake of services (e.g. health checks, immunisation rates).

Social transformation through self-determination and empowerment

ACCHOs strive to provide targeted employment and capacity building opportunities to empower local peoples. These include providing local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the opportunity to gain employment, to grow and develop, to make decisions about their career pathways and to be empowered in their professional and personal lives. ACCHOs further support their local workforce through trust, respect, valuing, acknowledgement and investment. In this way, social transformation is achieved through empowerment and self-determination.

Strategies that strengthen ACCHO workforce

There are four key strategies that enable a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ACCHO workforce to be achieved; as depicted in Image 3.

Image 3: The ACCHO Workforce Capacity Building and Leadership Model



This model was developed through the CREATE project based on case studies with the ACCHO sector and consultations with the CREATE Leadership Group.

1. Attract and recruit local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

ACCHOs attract and recruit local people through numerous strategies including engaging with local schools and employment agencies. ACCHOs provide work experience opportunities and traineeships to expose local people to ACCHOs and the range of careers available. Work experience programs are a good way of getting young people in the door and interested in working in health. Offering traineeships within the ACCHO also enables recruitment of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to the service.

At Remote ACCHO they start the recruiting process early. This involves going to schools and talking to students about the benefits of completing their education and the opportunities that are available to them within the ACCHO and other local businesses. Students are offered work experience and traineeship opportunities which can provide skills that are essential to develop both personally and professionally in any career.

2. Support, value, promote and recognise ACCHO staff

The social, physical, emotional and cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff is important to ACCHOs. Strategies to support staff include debriefing opportunities, mentoring and buddy programs, flexible working arrangements, cultural leave policies, employee assistance programs, team building activities and salary sacrifice opportunities.

At *Remote ACCHO* new staff are assigned a cultural mentor to work with. Staff relationships are strengthened through team building events, strategic planning days and staff lunches. The service also has a wellbeing program to promote respectful relationships between staff.

Programs to promote wellbeing, respect, team building, connection and equal opportunity create a harmonious workforce and ACCHO environment. ACCHOs support and value their staff by encouraging them to attend community events. At these events, staff engage with community to promote programs and services (e.g. health checks) and also promote the organisation's employment opportunities (e.g. traineeships, work experience and placements).

ACCHOs recognise the important role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in all health roles as they bring cultural and community expertise including an understanding of local communities, families and kinship relationships. ACCHOs value and promote the scope of practice and vital contribution of Aboriginal Health Practitioners and Aboriginal Health Workers who have wide ranging responsibilities.

At *Metro ACCHO* the CEO speaks with non-Indigenous staff about the important role of Aboriginal Health Practitioners and Aboriginal Health Workers who are valued for their cultural ways of working and are recognised for both their clinical and cultural expertise.

3. Strengthen the capacity of ACCHO staff

ACCHOs strive to support the growth of ACCHO workforce at all levels of the organisation through professional development courses, core competency training (e.g. cultural safety training, First Aid training) and mentorship. Staff mentoring can play a significant role in increasing sustainability and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. It can also help to minimise staff turnover and loss of corporate and cultural knowledge. For an ACCHO to be successful in developing its workforce every staff member should be offered the opportunity to progress in the organisation and develop both personally and professionally.

The *Remote ACCHO* believes in growing their workforce. If a local person comes in to the organisation and has the desire to better themselves they will be supported to train and gain professional qualifications so they can progress in the organisation.

The *Regional ACCHO* has a 'Shut Down week' where they limit clinical service provision and concentrate on training and development of staff and organisational improvement. A range of team building activities and training is provided to staff to connect, learn and share. This provides staff with time to refresh their knowledge and skills and reflect with one another about their learnings. The cultural safety of the organisation is also promoted through cultural awareness training sessions.

4. Nurture emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders

ACCHOs recognise the crucial skills, experiences and cultural knowledge local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce bring to the service and the important role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders. ACCHOs actively encourage and nurture the members of their workforce who are aspiring to be leaders via mentoring and long-term succession planning. Mentoring programs link junior and experienced staff together to transfer knowledge and provide junior staff with support. Careful succession planning is undertaken where less experienced staff work alongside leaders to gain knowledge and skills to take over management roles in the future. Aspiring staff can be rotated through various roles within the organisation, with senior members of the team acting as mentors along the way. This is also supported by professional training opportunities in management and leadership skills.

The *Remote ACCHO* provides a supportive and culturally safe learning environment where local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can work with and be supported by other community members through formal and informal mentoring. The organisation has established succession planning for key leadership positions and periodically rotate staff members between various roles within the organisation to provide staff with a holistic understanding of how effective leadership is achieved.

Benefits of workforce capacity building and leadership strategies

For the ACCHO:

- Staff retention leading to maintained organisational culture and knowledge.
- Cost savings in relation to recruiting and training new workforce.
- Competent workforce with a diversity of skills and capacity.

The *Remote ACCHO* has a targeted strategy to employ and develop local people. This has created a stable workforce where the organisations' corporate and cultural knowledge is maintained, and quality culturally safe care is provided to community. This results in cost-savings in relation to recruiting and training new staff and providing travel and housing for fly-in fly-out staff.

- Strong links with community can lead to increased community engagement which further benefits the organisation through increased MBS income.
- ACCHO staff who are also community members provide valuable feedback to the service to ensure improvements are made to tailor service delivery to better meet community needs.
- Training and capacity building of staff supports continuous quality improvement in relation to policies, procedures and practices.
- Stronger engagement by community through attendance at AGMs and by providing informal feedback to ACCHO staff (which then positively influences the tailoring of programs and services).

The *Remote ACCHO* found that increased employment of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples increased their communities' engagement with the service. The more the service was known for employing and supporting local people, the more the community trusted and engaged with the service.

For community:

- ACCHO staff understand the historical trauma and lived experience of their clients, including kinship structures and cultural obligations, and the expectations from their communities.
- Client's health needs are met according to both cultural protocols and clinical standards.
- Staff provide culturally safe and responsive care to community which may extend to using local language.

A strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce enables the ACCHO to be a safe space for community where they can receive culturally safe care. At *Remote ACCHO*, some services are provided in local language. Staff act as translators between cultural ways of knowing and doing and biomedical ways of knowing and doing. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff also provide cultural mentorship to non-Indigenous staff which strengthens their knowledge about cultural ways of working and increases the cultural safety of care provided to community by all ACCHO staff.

- Community members are confident to attend the service leading to increased health checks, GP Management Plans, immunisations and support to navigate other services and systems.
- Community are more likely to act on the advice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.
- Community self-determination through empowerment of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
- Improved health outcomes.

The *Remote ACCHO* found that upskilling and investing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within the ACCHO led to increased engagement from clients and improved cultural safety and service delivery. This, in turn, resulted in improved health outcomes, such as increasing immunisation rates within the local community.

For workforce:

- Opportunities to gain secure employment within the ACCHO.
- Opportunities to expand skills and knowledge leading to further career progression.
- The wellbeing and mentoring programs promote respectful relationships between colleagues.
- The lived experiences of staff are well understood by the organisation and staff are supported to fulfil both their work and cultural obligations.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce feel their cultural knowledge is valued and respected and the responsibility to advise on cultural matters is shared across the organisation.
- Two-way learning between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and non-Indigenous staff provides opportunities to strengthen both cultural and professional knowledge in the ACCHO workforce.

At *Regional ACCHO* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous staff benefit from spending time together for training and development. This provides opportunities for two-way learning, particularly in relation to increasing cultural understanding. Staff also co-develop policies and procedures around respectful relationships which further strengthens knowledge, respectful behaviours and equitable relationships across the ACCHO.

Enablers of workforce capacity building and leadership strategies

Effective cultural governance and strategic governance

A strong ACCHO workforce is supported by effective cultural governance and strategic governance which means that the service is led by community, for community (for information on ACCHO Governance, see **Chapter 2**). This includes representation of different family groups on the ACCHO Board so that there are strong connections to the local community. This representation gives local people confidence to apply for jobs within the ACCHO as they feel they will be given a fair chance at gaining employment within the organisation. If an ACCHOs Board has a Rule Book that is followed and abided by, it instils confidence in the organisation and the workforce. Some Boards are involved in the selection and appointment of ACCHO staff.

Supportive organisational culture

ACCHOs establish practical initiatives which provide for the physical, emotional and cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. Such initiatives include special leave to fulfil cultural obligations, organised debriefing sessions in safe environments to promote peer support, and activities to rejuvenate the spirit and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff (e.g. smoking and healing ceremonies, reconnecting with Country, yarning sessions, workshops).

Clear and supportive policies and procedures

ACCHOs benefit from clear policies around duty of care, flexible working arrangements, cultural leave, professional development opportunities, mentorship opportunities, performance reviews and career planning. These policies provide safe and equitable working conditions and opportunities for all staff in the ACCHO.

Funding for capacity building and professional development

Funding is essential for formally and informally developing ACCHO workforce capacity. This includes funding for traineeships, mentoring programs, professional development courses, vocational training and pathways to university. It is also beneficial, especially in larger organisations, to have a designated person that supports staff to undertake career planning and identify pathways and opportunities for gaining qualifications (e.g. scholarships).

Strong partnerships with schools, peak bodies, registered training organisations and universities

ACCHOs engage with schools to identify students with an interest in working in the ACCHO sector, and to provide work experience opportunities. ACCHOs also develop partnerships with their state/territory peak body and registered training organisations to identify opportunities for building staff capacity. Some ACCHOs can also develop relationships with universities to look for pathways for their staff to gain clinical and management qualifications.

Use of culturally appropriate recruitment and interview processes

Western styles of recruitment do not align with the cultural values of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies. Where possible and appropriate, ACCHOs are flexible in their approach to recruitment to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have the lived experience and knowledge to work with community and bring value to the organisation. Examples include having an informal approach to interviews, having language speakers on panels so that interviews can be conducted in language, and seeking multiple referees in order to gain an understanding of the lived experience and capacity of applicants.

Challenges to workforce capacity building and leadership strategies

Building an awareness of the need for targeted capacity strengthening

There can be misunderstandings about the opportunities provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. It is critical that ACCHO management are transparent about the key role that ACCHOs play in building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce capacity including growing emerging leaders. Non-Indigenous staff have an obligation to support and share their knowledge with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within the ACCHO. Managers can encourage all staff to support the appointment of emerging leaders with cultural strengths and experience.

Attracting funding for workforce training and capacity building initiatives

It is challenging for ACCHOs to resource workforce initiatives and to allocate dedicated personnel to:

- 1) identify workforce initiatives,
- 2) develop relationships with potential funders (e.g. government departments, universities, peak bodies, PHN's, private industry and philanthropic organisations),
- 3) prepare funding submissions for cadetships, traineeships and student placements through available programs.

Resourcing training and capacity building is particularly challenging in regional and remote locations where travel is required. In some jurisdictions, ACCHOs who are registered training organisations find it challenging to secure funding to support training of Aboriginal Health Workers and Aboriginal Health Practitioners.

Lack of training for ACCHO managers

ACCHO managers often face barriers to identifying and accessing suitable management training.

Inadequate funding of ACCHO programs resulting in non-competitive staff salaries

Government funding agreements that do not reflect the real costs of comprehensive service delivery force ACCHOs to make sacrifices. These sacrifices can include non-competitive salaries for ACCHO workforce.

The ACCHO sector is insufficiently funded for workforce capacity strengthening and mentoring activities

ACCHOs invest considerable time and resources in capacity strengthening and mentoring staff. Succession planning and mentoring programs take time to establish and sustain which creates an additional burden for ACCHO staff, especially if they are the mentors. The sector needs adequate resourcing for capacity building, succession planning and mentoring activities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce supply shortage

Due to a workforce supply shortage, ACCHOs can find it difficult to recruit and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce in roles such as clinical positions (e.g. GPs, registered nurses) and specialist roles. The shortage of trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counsellors and psychologists limits the professional support ACCHOs can provide to their staff. This is a key challenge in providing culturally safe counselling services to support staff to manage the stresses of their roles.

Workforce stress including the 24/7 nature of work

Staff are members of both the organisation and the community. In many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities everyone is linked through families connections or kinship structures. As a result of these close connections there is little, if any, downtime for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ACCHO workforce who are juggling family and work commitments and cultural obligations. There are expectations placed on ACCHO staff that they are available to community 24/7 and that they are seen to "practice what they preach". This can lead to workforce stress and burn out, if staff aren't adequately supported.

Recommendations

Recommendations for ACCHOs

- For some ACCHOs, a good representation of family groups within the Board and workforce can promote connection with community and a welcoming work environment.
- Consider an annual skills audit that identifies the training needs of all staff, with a focus on local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
- Seek opportunities to demonstrate value and support for staff including a supportive Employee Assistance Program with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counsellors and/or psychologists. Allocate funding for workforce capacity development and training from your core funding or MBS income, where possible. Look for subsidised opportunities for cadetships and workforce capacity building (e.g. through state/territory peak bodies, PHNs and government departments).
- Formalise policies and procedures for succession planning for key leadership positions including developing structures for reviewing potential leadership candidates.
- Ensure all workforce within the ACCHO have a commitment to strengthening the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. This can be enabled by listing 'Commitment to developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the organisation' within the Job Description (and related performance agreement) and by asking applicants to describe their approach during interviews.
- When recruiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples into the ACCHO, culturally responsive processes should be used. These may include informal interview approaches (e.g. bringing a mentor or advocate to the interview, a gender balance and language speakers in the interview panel) and using referees to gain an understanding of the applicant's lived experience and capacity.
- Establish professional mentoring and cultural mentoring programs within the organisation.
- Develop and maintain strong partnerships with schools to attract and recruit young local people to the organisation.
- Develop and maintain strong partnerships with registered training organisations and universities to identify opportunities for formal studies for your staff (e.g. diplomas, university degrees).

Recommendations for policy makers

- The Commonwealth Government recognise the key role ACCHOs play in developing the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.
- The ACCHO sector requires long-term sustainable funding for culturally-centred training of the Aboriginal Health Practitioner workforce through an in-service traineeship model. This model ensures that graduates are equipped with both theoretical knowledge and practice-based skills in ACCHO ways of working.
- The Commonwealth Government could support training organisations (including registered training organisations and universities) to develop and deliver regionalised courses which strengthen the capacity of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working in ACCHOs.
- The Commonwealth Government could provide greater investment to strengthen the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce across disciplines and particularly those with critical workforce shortages (e.g. counsellors, psychologists) which impacts the culturally responsive support services that can be provided by ACCHOs.
- The Commonwealth Government could provide long term funding to enable ACCHOs to strengthen the capacity of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to take on leadership roles within ACCHOs.
- The Commonwealth Government could develop a locum service that ensures appropriately skilled staff are available to backfill local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff attending professional development activities external to the ACCHO.

Discussion

ACCHOs have positively influenced the employment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce over many decades. They have intentionally increased the number of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed within services as well as provided formal pathways to support staff to take on the leadership of clinical and community programs and the management of services. Aboriginal health services employ over 7,000 full-time equivalent staff. Just over half of these staff identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016, p.118). A significant number (13%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are employed as Aboriginal Health Workers or Aboriginal Health Practitioners (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016). These staff bring a significant amount of cultural knowledge to the health care service in addition to their clinical skills and knowledge.

Employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in these services has several benefits. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are often able to identify the community's health needs (including those that are associated with the social determinants of health) and may speak the local language (Freeman, Edwards et al, 2014). They are valued by Aboriginal clients for their Aboriginal identity, respectful and non-judgemental behaviour, and trustworthiness (Gomersall et al, 2017). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers also provide an important link between the health service and community (Kelly and Luxford 2007, Poroch and Service 2007, Freeman, Edwards et al, 2014), ensuring a high level of community engagement that may not be achieved by non-Indigenous staff (Taylor, Dollard et al., 2001) thereby increasing community members' access to health care services (Murphy and Best 2012, Freeman, Edwards et al, 2014).

In recognition of the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, ACCHO leadership pathways enable local peoples to develop into leaders within organisations that recognise the crucial skills, experiences and cultural understandings they bring to the service. This is particularly important as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health providers often face unique challenges in carrying out these roles. When employed within mainstream services, they are more likely to face issues relating to racism and isolation (Gwynne and Lincoln, 2016). Other challenges for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

staff include a lack of defined career pathways and insufficient opportunities to develop skills and qualifications needed to progress into leadership positions (Roche, Duraisingam et al, 2013). ACCHO leadership models overcome these challenges by providing supportive employment and training environments whereby local peoples can work with and be supported by other community members.

In summary, ACCHOs are one of the largest employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia. A strong ACCHO workforce includes strength across a range of attributes including strength in numbers, strength in cultural knowledge and cultural identity, strength in cultural safety, strength in capacity across a range of disciplines and roles, and strength in community connection and engagement. A strong workforce is important because when ACCHO staff are predominantly local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, community members are more confident to attend the service since they trust that they will be respected, and their health needs will be met according to both cultural and professional clinical standards. The ways in which a strong ACCHO workforce can be achieved is through targeted recruitment strategies to attract local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, support for and valuing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, capacity building, and leadership pathways including mentoring programs and succession planning. These programs have wide-ranging benefit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, the ACCHO and the community it serves. A strong ACCHO workforce is enabled by strong cultural governance and strategic governance, supportive organisational culture, clear and supportive policies and procedures, funding for capacity building and professional development, and strong partnerships with schools, peak bodies, registered training organisations and universities. To achieve a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, ACCHOs must overcome challenges such as in relation to funding workforce training and capacity building activities, investing time and resources in mentoring staff, recruiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce in specialist roles and managing workforce stress.

References

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2016). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health organisations: Online Services Report—key results 2014–15*. Canberra, Australia, AIHW.
- Freeman, T., T. Edwards, F. Baum, A. Lawless, G. Jolley, S. Javanparast and T. Francis. (2014). "Cultural respect strategies in Australian Aboriginal primary health care services: beyond education and training of practitioners." *Aust N Z J Public Health*, 38 (4): 355-361.
- Gomersall J, Gibson O, Dwyer J, O'Donnell K, Stephenson M, Carter D, Canuto K, Munn Z, Aromataris E, Brown A. (2017). What Indigenous Australian clients value about primary health care: a systematic review of qualitative evidence. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 41: 4.
- Gwynne, K. and M. Lincoln. (2016). "Developing the rural health workforce to improve Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes: a systematic review." *Australian Health Review*, 41 (2): 234-238.
- Kelly, J. and Y. Luxford. (2007). "Yaitya tirka madlanna warratinna: exploring what sexual health nurses need to know and do in order to meet the sexual health needs of young Aboriginal women in Adelaide." *Collegian (Royal College of Nursing, Australia)*, 14 (3): 15-20.
- Murphy, E. and E. Best. (2012). "The Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Service: a decade of achievement in the health of women and babies in NSW." *New South Wales Public Health Bulletin*, 23 (3-4): 68-72.
- Poroch, N. and W. N. A. H. Service. (2007). *You do the crime, you do the time: best practice model of holistic health service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates of the ACT prison*, Narrabundah, ACT: Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service.
- Roche, A. M., V. Duraisingam, A. Trifonoff, S. Battams, T. Freeman, A. Tovell, D. Weetra and N. Bates. (2013). "Sharing stories: Indigenous alcohol and other drug workers' well-being, stress and burnout." *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 32: 527-535.
- Taylor, J., J. Dollard, C. Weetra and D. Wilkinson. (2001). "Contemporary management issues for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services." *Australian Health Review*, 24 (3): 125-132.

Strengthening ACCHO Workforce: Reflection Tool

ACCHOs are a leading employer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce is critical to the success and operation of ACCHOs since they bring lived experience, community knowledge, community connection and community engagement. ACCHOs recognise that no one can serve their communities as well as local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who understand the lived experience of clients.

ACCHOs strive to provide targeted employment and capacity strengthening opportunities to empower local peoples. There are four key strategies that can build, support and grow a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ACCHO workforce. This Reflection Tool is designed to assist ACCHOs to reflect on these four key strategies.

Step 1. Consider the activities your ACCHO currently practises under the four key strategies.

Step 2. What other workforce focused activities could your ACCHO consider in the future and what partnerships will be needed to achieve this?

The ACCHO Workforce Capacity Building and Leadership Model



Attract and recruit local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

- We engage and build relationships with local schools and employment agencies to create pathways in to the organisation.
- We provide work experience and traineeships to expose local people to the range of careers available in ACCHOs.
- We promote employment opportunities within the ACCHO at local community events.
- We use culturally responsive processes for recruitment (e.g. including language speakers and a gender balance on interview panels, enabling interviewees to bring a mentor to support them during interviews).

Support, value, promote and recognise ACCHO staff

- We recognise the important role of Aboriginal Health Practitioners and Aboriginal Health workers.
- We value the cultural and community expertise (including an understanding of local communities, families and kinship relationships) that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce bring to the service.
- We promote staff wellbeing with cultural mentoring, buddy programs, debriefing sessions, flexible working arrangements, cultural leave policies and an Employee Assistance Program (with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counsellors and/or psychologists where possible).
- We host team building sessions and encourage staff to attend community events where staff can engage with community and promote the organisation's employment opportunities.
- We ensure all staff recruited to the ACCHO have a commitment to strengthening the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Strengthen the capacity of ACCHO staff

- We conduct an annual skills audit to identify the training needs of all staff, including a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
- We develop and maintain partnerships with registered training organisations and universities to identify opportunities for staff to gain formal qualifications (e.g. diplomas, university degrees).
- We allocate funding for workforce capacity development and training where possible.
- We seek subsidised professional development and training opportunities and look for cadetships and other government-funded workforce capacity strengthening initiatives.
- We provide core competency training (e.g. cultural safety training, first aid training, occupational health and safety training).
- We offer professional development courses so that every staff member can progress in the organisation.
- We ensure professional mentoring opportunities are provided for staff to share professional and clinical skills.

Nuture emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders

- We recognise the crucial skills, experience and cultural understandings of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and the important role of leaders with the organisation.
- We encourage and nurture Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff who are aspiring to be leaders via mentoring programs that link junior and experienced staff and provide opportunities to share knowledge.
- We provide long-term succession planning opportunities where aspiring staff are rotated through various roles within the ACCHO to work alongside senior managers and gain relevant knowledge and skills for effective leadership.
- We have policies and procedures for succession planning including structures for reviewing potential leadership candidates.
- We seek out professional development opportunities for staff in management and leadership skills.