Aboriginal peoples are the first peoples of Western Australia. The Government has obligations to Aboriginal people both as citizens and as the Traditional Owners of Western Australia.

Empowerment and self-determination are essential for Aboriginal people's wellbeing. Policy decisions about Aboriginal people cannot be made without Aboriginal people.

- *For decisions with high potential impact or opportunity for Aboriginal people, this means partnership and/or shared decision-making.*
- *For other decisions, it means genuine engagement with affected Aboriginal people at a level proportional to the potential impact or opportunity.*

(Western Australian Government. 2021. Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy, p.13)

Aboriginal Health Impact Statement and Declaration Policy Implementation Guide

1. Purpose

This implementation guide is designed to assist health entities in delivering the Aboriginal Health Impact Statement and Declaration policy (policy). It sets out:

- Responsibilities of the system manager and health entities
- Mandatory elements that must be included in the health entity's guidance materials for the Aboriginal Health Impact Statement and Declaration (ISD) process.
- Considerations for implementing the Aboriginal Health ISD process.

2. The Aboriginal Health ISD e-form

The Aboriginal Health Impact Statement and Declaration also referred to as the Aboriginal Health ISD or the ISD, is an online e-form used by WA Health to ensure the impacts on and needs of Aboriginal people are well considered and appropriately incorporated into WA Health initiatives and services. Information about identified impacts, cultural safety, consultation and considerations for equitable access and health outcomes are captured within an Aboriginal Health ISD e-form whenever a policy document, health program or strategy (initiative) is developed, amended, reviewed, or discontinued.

The ISD e-form is managed through the Department of Health's (the Department's) REDCap platform. This allows automation of e-form processes, including:

- Directing requests for exemptions to the relevant Aboriginal Health Strategy Unit (AHSU) or the Department of Health's (Department) Aboriginal Health Policy Directorate (AHPD).
- Notifying the line manager/sponsor of approval or non-approval of a request for exemption.
- Forwarding requests for approval of the ISD e-form to the author's line manager/sponsor.
- Notifying the e-form author of approval or non-approval of the ISD e-form.

Through completing an ISD e-form, the author can apply for an exemption from policy requirement 4.1 if the initiative and any foreseeable changes to the initiative are unlikely to impact Aboriginal people. [1]

[1] Health entity refers to WA health service providers (CAHS, EMHS, HSS, NMHS, PathWest, SMHS and WACHS) and the Department of Health's Aboriginal Health Policy Unit.

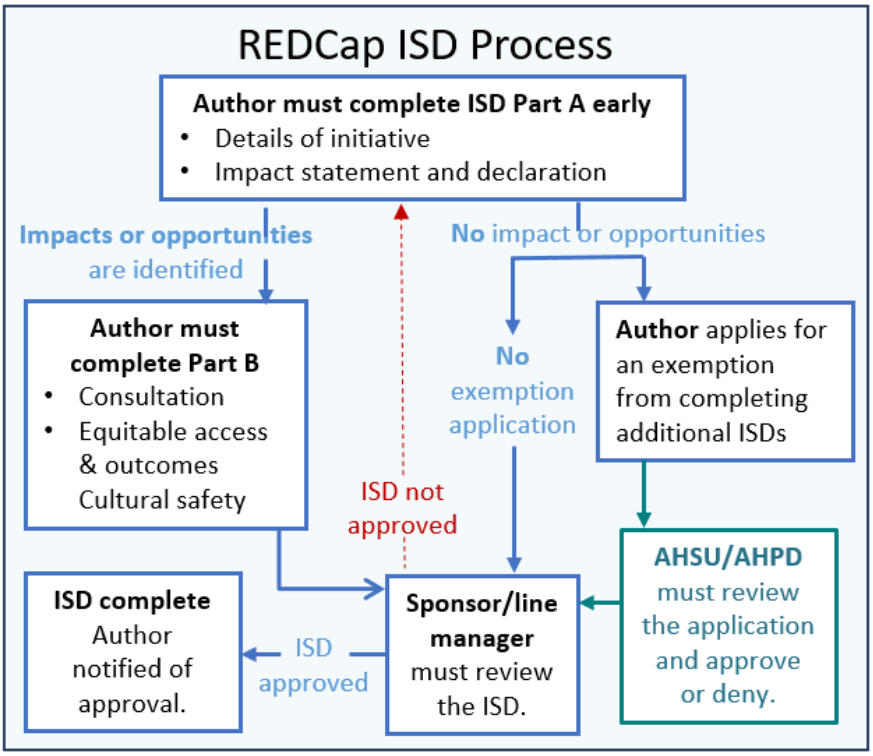
3. The Aboriginal Health ISD process

Aboriginal Health strategy or policy teams (AHSUs & AHPD) monitor ISD submissions and may provide advice for initiatives that have the potential to impact Aboriginal people. The **ISD author** must integrate the advice if relevant and feasible and provide documentation on request.

The system manager maintains a database of completed ISDs. The **Aboriginal Health Dashboard** provides a live summary of ISD data.

AHPD monitors compliance with the policy and reports non-compliance to the **Health Executive Committee**.

HSPs must report on their use of ISDs through the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Annual Report.



4. Developing guidance materials

Health entities are required to provide guidance and implement local processes to support the implementation of the Aboriginal Health ISD Policy (requirement 3.4). This includes:

1. The scope of activities for which an ISD must be completed. The scope must include policy documents, health programs and strategies (as defined in the policy) and any additional scope mandated by the health entity.
2. The process for developing and progressing the Aboriginal Health ISD e-form that includes any additional steps or authorisation required by the health entity.
3. The process for obtaining assistance to complete the ISD form including for:
   - completing the ISD form
   - accessing Cultural Governance
   - technical difficulties via email to DOH.AboriginalHealthISD@health.wa.gov.au
4. The period of time within which:
   - the line manager must approve or not approve the Aboriginal Health ISD
   - the AHSU/AHPD must approve or not approve requests for exemption[2].

[2] As AHPD will review requests for exemptions on behalf of HSS and PathWest, HSS and PathWest are not required to set the period of time for approval of exemptions.

5. Responsibilities

Area	Health entities responsibility	System Manager responsibility
Compliance	When a policy document, health program or strategy is developed, amended, reviewed, or discontinued, ensure staff comply with policy requirement 3.1.	Monitor and report on health entities compliance with the policy including reporting to the Health Executive Committee (HEC).
Support	Support staff to complete ISD e-forms including through provision of Cultural Governance.	• Provide training and support to HSP Aboriginal Health Strategy Units (AHSUs) around using the Aboriginal Health ISD dashboards for monitoring and reporting. • Support HSP and Department of Health staff experiencing technical difficulties.
Guidance	Develop and implement local processes (requirement 3.4) consistent with this policy.	• Maintain the Aboriginal Health ISD Support Page, including links to local support pages managed by health entities. • Provide guidance to AHSUs on monitoring and reporting on ISD data.
Reporting	• Internal reporting of the health entities use of ISD e-forms as required. • Reporting the health entities use of ISD e-forms via the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Annual Report, in line with requirement 3.4.	• Report health entity compliance with the ISD policy, including reporting of non-compliance to HEC. • Review and report system wide ISD data as required. • Review and report DOH data as required. • Review the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Annual Reports and report to the Director General of Health or HEC as required.
Exemptions	The AHSUs review and manage requests for exemptions from the ISD process for policies and initiatives developed by their HSP.	AHPD reviews and manages requests for exemptions from Department of Health initiatives.
Data Governance	Use and share data in alignment with the MP 0190/25 *Aboriginal Data Governance Policy.*	Use and share data in alignment with the MP 0190/25 *Aboriginal Data Governance Policy.*

Government [organisations] need to:

- *take time to properly listen to [Aboriginal] communities about their priorities (instead of consulting with communities on predetermined outcomes), and engage earlier and more often*
- *recognise the value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can bring to policy development and service delivery*
- *invest in partnerships with adequate time and funding*
- *transform their processes and systems to become better, more credible partners.*

(Productivity Commission. 2024. Closing the Gap Review – Fact Sheet)

6. Considerations for implementing the Aboriginal Health ISD Policy

Health entities will need to plan the implementation of the Aboriginal Health ISD Policy to ensure ISD e-forms are progressed smoothly aligned with the policy requirements. It is recommended HSPs consider the following:

Processes

- Processes for the development and approval of ISDs within the health entity, including how the ISD process can be integrated with existing mechanisms, such as the GEKO system and policy processes.
- How the AHSU/AHPD will review ISD e-forms, identify and flag ISDs of significance and provide advice to the ISD author.
- AHSU processes for reviewing requests for exemptions.
- How policy authors and program developers will check whether an exemption to ongoing ISDs has been approved for the initiative they are reviewing, amending or rescinding.

Support

- How ISD users will be supported to identify, embed and/or mitigate impacts, benefits and opportunities when developing an initiative.
- The availability of resources and guidance to support health entity staff to:
    - Identify and eliminate structural and institutional racism
    - Embed and practice meaningful cultural safety
    - Investigate and plan how services might be delivered in partnership with Aboriginal organisations, communities and people
    - Identify relevant Aboriginal stakeholders
    - Engage meaningfully with Aboriginal stakeholders.

Data use and Reporting

- How ISD data will be monitored and reported within the health entity.
- Ensuring completion of the Aboriginal Health Data Governance Training by those using, sharing and reporting on the ISD data.
- How the AHSU/AHPD will ensure the sharing and use of ISD data is compliant with the Aboriginal Health Data Governance Policy.