



Whole-of-Government

# ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY-CONTROLLED ORGANISATION (ACCO) STRATEGY

for community services  
to Aboriginal people

STRATEGY  
SNAPSHOT

## ABOUT THE STRATEGY

ACCOs play a vital role in delivering community services, including health, mental health, housing, family support, disability support, justice, youth engagement, education, and child protection. They have strong connections to their communities that make them uniquely positioned to deliver culturally secure services to Aboriginal people.

The Whole-of-Government ACCO Strategy sets out the approach for WA Government agencies to fulfil the commitments of the [Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy](#) and the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#). It provides high-level strategic policy direction to guide and drive implementation across government to increase opportunities for ACCOs and improve outcomes for Aboriginal people.

The Whole-of-Government ACCO Strategy supports implementation of the [State Commissioning Strategy for Community Services](#). It outlines how the WA Government will work with ACCOs throughout the commissioning cycle to look beyond the procurement of services and focus on longer-term outcomes for Aboriginal people.

## VISION

Aboriginal people in Western Australia to be able to access place-based, community-led, culturally responsive and secure services that are planned, designed and delivered by strong and sustainable ACCOs.

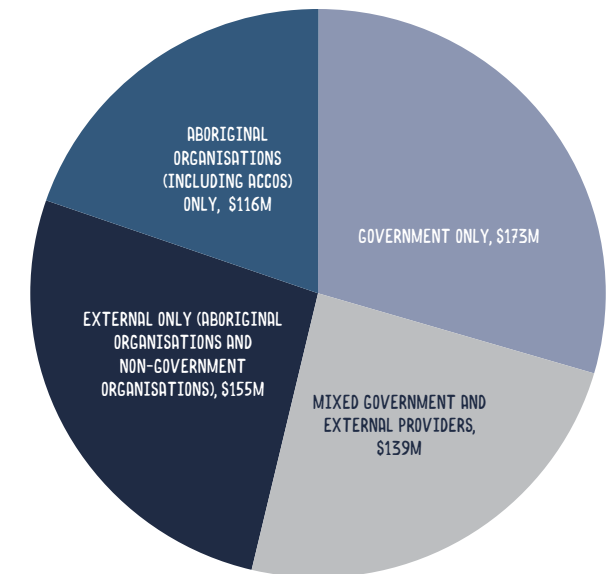
## OBJECTIVES

1. **Greater involvement of ACCOs in planning and designing services**
2. **ACCOs delivering more services to Aboriginal people**
3. **Strong and sustainable ACCO sectors**

## WHAT THE DATA TELLS US

In 2021-22 the WA Government invested \$583 million in Aboriginal-specific and Aboriginal-predominant programs.

Many of these programs are delivered by government agencies, or government agencies working with non-government organisations. Approximately \$116 million worth of programs are delivered by Aboriginal organisations, including ACCOs.



Source: WA Government  
Aboriginal Expenditure Review (2022-23).

**Note:** The AER defines Aboriginal-specific and Aboriginal-predominant programs as direct spending on programs where a large proportion of service users are Aboriginal people.

Some programs captured are delivered by multiple service provider types. Due to data limitations in the AER, the amount of funding provided to ACCOs for programs delivered under the 'Mixed Service Providers' could not be determined.

As required by the National Agreement, the AER is focused on the amount of funding provided to Aboriginal Organisations rather than explicitly focusing on ACCOs.

## THE RATIONALE FOR PRIORITISING ACCOS

ACCOS are critical to the delivery of community services to Aboriginal people. The benefits of ACCOS in planning, designing and delivering services are supported by academic research and lived experience. These benefits can be seen in:

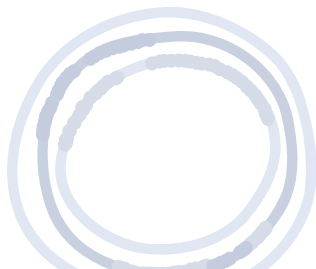
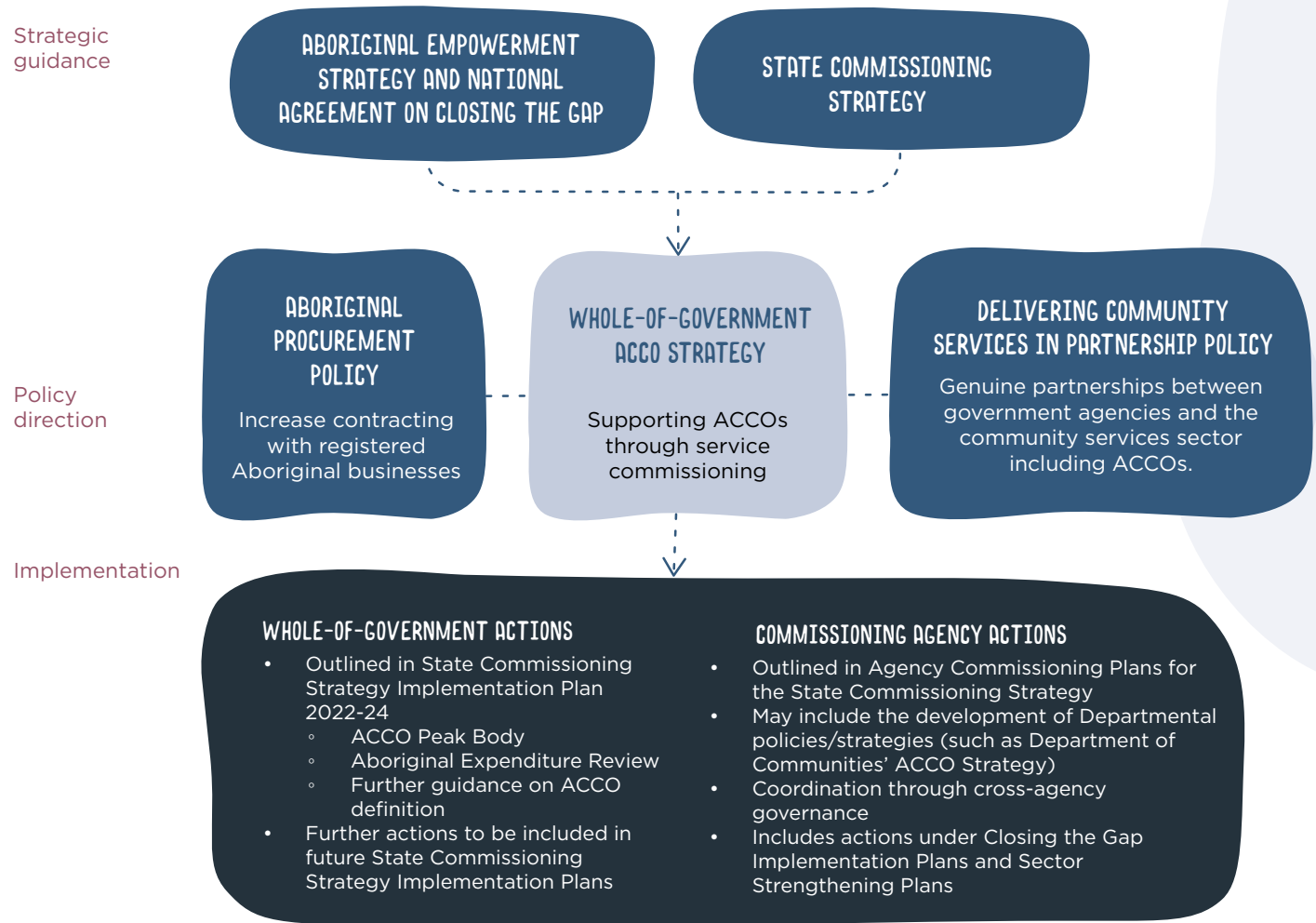
- higher rates of service engagement (both initially and over extended periods); and
- the outcomes for Aboriginal service users.

ACCOS are uniquely positioned to deliver culturally secure services to Aboriginal people. This leads to better outcomes because:

1. **ACCOS are accountable to the communities in which they work.**
2. **Aboriginal people make the key decisions.**
3. **ACCOS are connected to their local communities.**

Where ACCOS lead the planning, design and delivery of services on behalf of their communities, Aboriginal people are empowered as decision makers. As the National Agreement (clause 44) put it “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control is an act of self-determination”. This has positive impacts not only for the service users, but the community more broadly.

## STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT



## FOCUS AREAS

The Strategy has four key focus areas that cover all stages of the commissioning cycle.

### Where do we want to be

#### 1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AGENCY AND ACCO SECTOR THROUGHOUT THE COMMISSIONING CYCLE

- **Know the ACCO sector:** Government agencies know their ACCO sector well in accordance with the agency's purpose and business.
- **Market stewardship:** Agencies understand and give effect to their systemic role in supporting and working with the ACCO sector relevant to their business. This role to be exercised in coordination with other agencies including Federal Government. Agency Commissioning Plans (ACPs) outline the proactive steps agencies will take to address market gaps in ACCO service delivery and provide ACCO sector supports.
- **Relationships:** Relationships between ACCOs and agencies are transparent, fair and open to support Aboriginal-led change.
- **Effective engagement:** Agencies collaborate when engaging with ACCOs, to ensure clear communication and minimise the burden on ACCOs.

#### 2. SERVICE PLANNING AND DESIGN AT THE START OF THE COMMISSIONING CYCLE

- **Partnership and engagement:** For services that primarily serve Aboriginal people, ACCOs are partners (or in appropriate cases, leaders) in the service planning and design from the inception. For mainstream services that are used by Aboriginal people, ACCOs are recognised as key stakeholders in planning, design and delivery.
- **ACCO-led proposals:** Where ACCOs develop their own service proposals, these are valued, and considered in service planning.
- **Resourcing:** ACPs reflect the resourcing implications for ACCOs (alongside other organisations) involved in service planning and design on an ongoing basis, and recognise the value of the expertise contributed by Elders and individuals with lived experience.

#### 3. STRATEGIC PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTING WITHIN THE COMMISSIONING CYCLE

- **Prioritisation:** ACCOs are prioritised as service providers to Aboriginal people, based on agencies' assessment of the relevant organisation's readiness to meet service delivery requirements. Restricted processes or direct approaches are used in procurement as appropriate to the particular case.
- **Maximising opportunities:** Procurement strategies consider how to maximise opportunities for ACCO involvement, such as early engagement, contract unbundling (to reduce the geographic scope of a contract) or allocating a dedicated proportion of funding to ACCOs.
- **Partnerships:** Where partnerships between ACCOs and CSOs are identified as appropriate service delivery structures, commissioning agencies take steps to ensure these partnerships are genuine.
- **Transition:** Commissioning agencies work collaboratively with central agencies to plan for the transition of services to new ACCO providers in future commissioning processes, while managing risks and minimising disruptions to service delivery.

#### 4. CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY - IN BOTH SERVICE DELIVERY AND COMMISSIONING

- **Government commissioning:** Government agencies have the capability and capacity to work with ACCOs and Aboriginal communities throughout the commissioning cycle.
- **ACCO sustainability:** In all parts of WA, and across the range of community services, there are strong ACCO sectors with the capability and capacity necessary to deliver services with sustainable funding models, consistent with the Strong Controlled-Controlled Sector Elements in the National Agreement (clause 45).
- **Supporting ACCOs:** Government agencies identify gaps in ACCO service capacity in their ACPs. In coordination with other relevant agencies, agencies identify opportunities to support existing or new ACCOs to fill the service gaps.
- **Planning investment in capability:** Agencies consider ACCO capability-building needs when budgeting and planning for commissioning, and where appropriate, link investments in capability building to future service delivery opportunities.
- **Peak representation:** ACCOs have effective peak body representation, which plays a key role in policy development, advocacy to government, and sectoral development initiatives.