GUIDE: The importance of culturally responsive service delivery

The aims of responsiveness to culturally diverse communities are:

- providing effective delivery of programs and services
- helping everyone to fully participate in our economic and social life
- a strong, inclusive, cohesive society.

Access and equity for culturally diverse communities should be a central element of policies, programs and services, not just an add-on. [1]
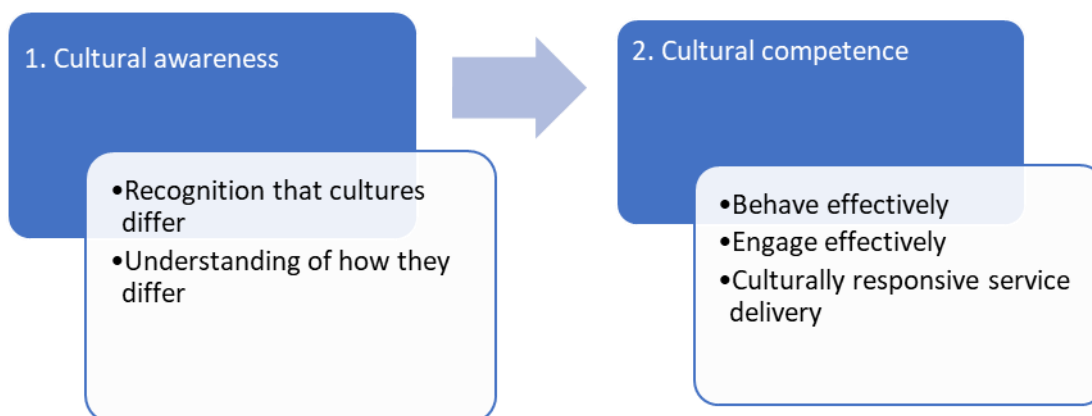
Effective delivery requires providing services that people need, in the way they would like and need to access them. This will vary according to culture. It is difficult to identify and understand how people from another culture may perceive or engage with a service without in-depth cultural knowledge.

This section includes an audit tool to help understand perceptions and reflect on how people from other cultures may have different approaches. 'Normal' assumption is different amongst cultures and must be acknowledged.

Culturally diverse communities need to understand what an organisation has to offer, how it addresses their needs, and ensure there is a foundation of trust. When reaching out to new communities, building trust in this way will take time, and is an ongoing process.

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[1] Australian Government (Department of Social Services) (2015) The Multicultural Access and Equity Policy Guide, p8
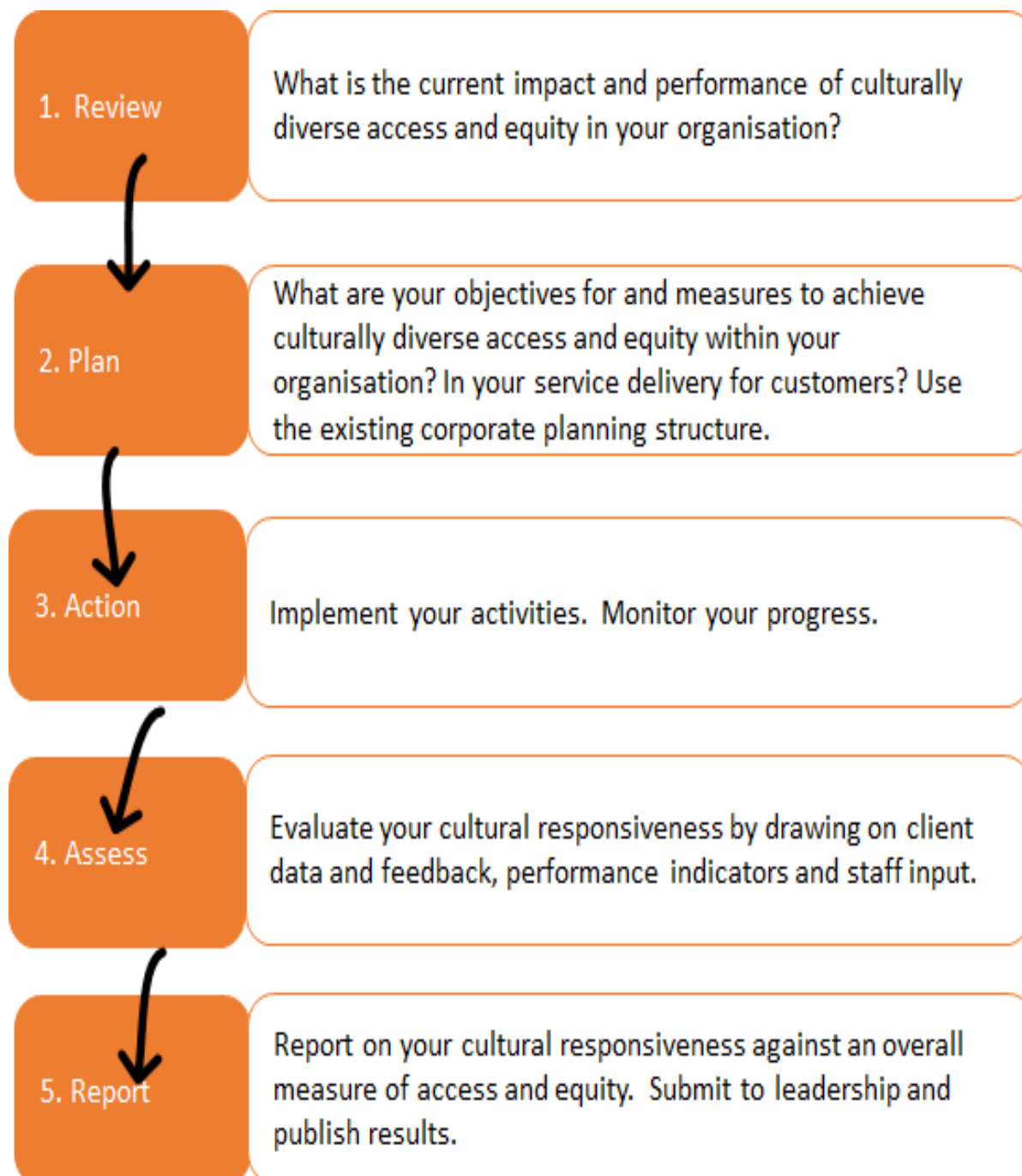
MULTICULTURAL NSW CULTURAL DIVERSITY TOOLS & RESOURCES

Cultural awareness is the first step, cultural competence is the aim

1. Cultural awareness
- Recognition that cultures differ
- Understanding of how they differ

2. Cultural competence
- Behave effectively
- Engage effectively
- Culturally responsive service delivery

Organisations need to service the entire community, not just one portion of it to deliver to the whole community and maximise market share and reach**.**

A serious risk to future sustainability is continuing to create products and services based on legacy concepts of what the community was, without addressing the realities of changing population demographics. It is important to ensure a well-informed organisation has mechanisms for understanding culturally diverse community needs and practical strategies to maximise the efficacy and reach of service delivery.

MULTICULTURAL NSW CULTURAL DIVERSITY
TOOLS & RESOURCES

Multicultural NSW

These simple steps to follow will support the organisation's effort towards culturally responsive service delivery:

1. Review	What is the current impact and performance of culturally diverse access and equity in your organisation?
2. Plan	What are your objectives for and measures to achieve culturally diverse access and equity within your organisation? In your service delivery for customers? Use the existing corporate planning structure.
3. Action	Implement your activities. Monitor your progress.
4. Assess	Evaluate your cultural responsiveness by drawing on client data and feedback, performance indicators and staff input.
5. Report	Report on your cultural responsiveness against an overall measure of access and equity. Submit to leadership and publish results.

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2 Based on Ibid, p15

MULTICULTURAL NSW CULTURAL DIVERSITY TOOLS & RESOURCES

The Queensland Council of Social Services provides a comprehensive list of considerations for culturally responsive service delivery:

Key elements

- do not lump all groups together just because their first language is not English
- do not ignore differences within ethnic and racial groups
- provide information in languages other than English (the most predominant languages in your immediate community)
- recognise that programs which ignore specific customs are inaccessible
- identify structures and processes which discourage participation
- culture and ethnicity are not static and customs change
- never underestimate the effects of racism in people's daily lives
- be flexible and adapt your work practices to suit client needs
- develop strategies at service level to eliminate bias and discrimination.

Staffing considerations

- provide regular training for staff to develop their knowledge of cross-cultural practice and cultural sensitivity
- encourage staff to engage in cultural consultation when working with CALD clients
- employ bilingual staff or ethnic-specific workers to provide bilingual/bicultural services and improve knowledge of cross-cultural practice
- create an open atmosphere for staff to bring up their concerns.

Organisational strategies to eliminate discrimination

- train staff in cultural diversity for effective communication. Discrimination can happen when one culture does not understand another
- provide facts, statistics or information that enables people to seek help or learn about other cultures (informed decision-making)
- develop an anti-discrimination policy
- set up advisory boards with cultural representatives
- an advisory group could plan events to highlight discrimination
- ask local media (such as a local newspaper or radio station) if they will promote a greater awareness of discrimination

- foster mutual respect in the workplace

- spend time getting to know people from cultural backgrounds that are different to yours

- create environments that allow for a great deal of exchange among participants

- know how to establish and encourage positive and appropriate relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds

- be aware of your own values and do not impose them on others

- use correct terms when referring to a person from a cultural background that is different to yours

- challenge abusive or derogatory terms

- establish a standard of conduct.

It's not realistic nor possible to 'know everything' about diverse cultures. It is helpful to know what's cultural and what's not and be able to tell the difference. That is where specialist advice can be useful, but also where organisations often have underused talent – their own multicultural workforce. Cultural competence at an organisational level requires everyone to understand how to dotheir job in a way that maximises results for the customers they are servicing. In culturally diverse communities:

- frontline staff need good cross-cultural communication skills

- managers need to know how to supervise culturally diverse staff and ensure service delivery is appropriate

- leaders need to drive results through effective strategy.

Cultural competence requires effective communication with people who speak languages other than English and have different communication styles and preferences. A commonly challenging element of service delivery to culturally diverse groups is effectively understanding and managing data related to naming protocols. Many cultures around the world order names in different ways, and they do not always comprise of a first, middle and family name. Practical tools here provide some tips and techniques on four of the most widely used languages other than English in NSW and their naming protocols.

Reference
https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/about-us/our-portfolios/multicultural-affairs/about-multicultural-affairs/access-and-equity#:~:text