

Respectful Engagement with Indigenous Communities

Best Practices

Support meaningful engagement with American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities by honoring sovereignty, respecting culture, and fostering collaborative partnership.

Honor Sovereignty

- Tribes are sovereign nations, not stakeholders
 - Engage government-to-government
 - Obtain free, prior, and informed consent
 - Follow tribal laws, protocols, and leadership
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Know the Context

- Acknowledge historical trauma and resilience
 - Learn each community's unique culture and governance
 - Respect and uplift Indigenous knowledge systems
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Build Trust

- Commit to long-term relationships
 - Show up consistently (in person when possible)
 - Partner with Indigenous-led organizations and leaders
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Respect Culture

- Use community-preferred language
 - Follow cultural and ceremonial protocols
 - Do not use sacred knowledge or symbols without permission
 - Practice respect in all interactions (including gift-giving where appropriate)
 - When using cultural knowledge (stories, art, practices), collaborate, give credit, and ensure fair compensation
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Engage Community

- Elders: Seek guidance and honor their role
 - Youth: Support future leadership and opportunity
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Communicate Clearly

- Be transparent about goals and limitations
 - Listen first, speak second
 - Keep the community informed throughout—consistent updates and transparent data sharing build trust; respect data sovereignty
 - Ask questions and avoid assumptions
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Co-Create Solutions

- Involve communities from the beginning and ensure meaningful roles in decisions
 - Support community-driven priorities
 - Build capacity for long-term sustainability
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Support Culture & Strengths

- Promote language and cultural revitalization
 - Highlight resilience, strengths, and contributions
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Practice Accountability

- Lead with humility
 - Acknowledge and repair mistakes
 - Be responsible for commitments and outcomes
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