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Guidance for prospective partners to discuss deployment opportunities for RRAP technology with Traditional Owners of sea Country.

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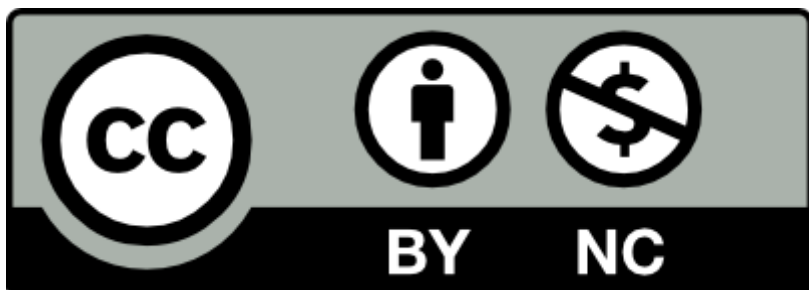
The authors of the Guidance document have published it for access and use by researchers, consultants and government who wish to discuss options with Traditional Owners for deployment of RRAP technology (and other projects/research) on their sea Country. It is designed to assist these individuals and groups with suggested activities that might be considered prior to initial discussion with a Traditional Owner group, in follow up meetings, in early days of agreement making and as part of the ongoing review process of the potential partnership.

The Guidance document includes a summary overview of the Biocultural is Framework. The Framework is designed to assist the Traditional Owners of the Great Barrier Reef to undertake an assessment of the biocultural risks and opportunities of Reef Restoration and Adaption Program (RRAP) research and development work or any other proposals. It must not be used by others, including researchers, consultants or government, to undertake an assessment of biocultural risk and opportunities. The intention of the Framework is to promote meaningful, early and ongoing collaboration with Traditional Owners in proposals relating to the Great Barrier Reef. Any use of the Framework without engaging with Traditional Owners falls short of ethical research standards and industry practice and would adversely impact future relationships. The Framework may only be read by researchers, consultants or government to help them understand the wide range of considerations that are important to Traditional Owners of the Great Barrier Reef.

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The RRAP partners acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the first marine scientists and carers of Country. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the places where RRAP works, both on land and in sea Country. We pay our respects to elders; past, present, and future; and their continuing culture, knowledge, beliefs, and spiritual connections to land and sea Country.

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would not have been possible without each and every one of them. All those who gave their consent to be listed as a co-author, are listed as such, see also Table 1.

Further thanks to four workshop participants who contributed their expertise but declined to be named as co-authors. We also acknowledge Drs. Emma Woodward and Samantha Stone-Jovicich (both CSIRO) for reviewing an earlier version of this report; their comments greatly improved the final report.

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AIMS, CSIRO and all authors acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's first scientists. We pay our deepest respects to Elders past, present and future, and the custodians of the land and sea country on which we work.

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Table 1 Biocultural project team and workshops participants who gave their consent to be named in workshop and final reports

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Carl Grant	Biocultural project team (AIMS)
Dion Devow	Biocultural project team (AIMS)
Kirsten Maclean	Biocultural project team (CSIRO)
Cath Moran	Biocultural project team (CSIRO)
Libby Evans-Illidge	Biocultural project team (AIMS)
Kelli Schmitt	Biocultural project team (CSIRO)
Bruce Taylor	Biocultural project team (CSIRO)
Charmaine Koroi	Eastern Kuku Yalanji, Ngaro
Sesoni Koroi	Eastern Kuku Yalanji, Ngaro
Kini Koroi	Ngaro
Chrissy Grant	Eastern Kuku Yalanji
Alison Liddy	Lama Lama
Elaine Liddy	Lama Lama
Seppi Bassani	Lama Lama
Johnson Chippendale	Wuthathi
Christabel Warren	Bromley Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC / Wuthathi
Norma Hobson	Kuuku Ya'u
Greg Pascoe	Kuuku Ya'u
(the late) Mr Fourmile	Gimuy Walubara Yidinji
Barbara Fourmile	Gimuy Walubara Yidinji
Thudu Thompson	Dingaal - Walmbaar

Name	Clan group or Role in project
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Melisa Anderson	Nywaigi
Alkere Forester	Nywaigi, Lama Lama
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John Cassady	Manbarra
(the late) Mr Devow	Manbarra
Dion Devow	Manbarra
Dante Devow	Manbarra
Ebenese Oui	Manbarra
Mick Eggmolesse	Bailai
Desmond Purcell	Taribelang Bunda
Kelvin Rowe	Taribelang Bunda
Howard (Joe) Butler	Gooreng Gooreng
Meaghan Cummins	Woppaburra
Debra Witteman	Woppaburra
Danielle Sheehan	Woppaburra
Julie Blair	Woppaburra
Bob Muir	Woppaburra
Malcolm Mann	Darumbal
Roeina Edmund	Darumbal
Gavin Bassani	Lama Lama
Lachlan Bassani	Lama Lama
Manuwuri Forester	Lama Lama
Natasha Spratt	Lama Lama
Uncle Paddy Bassani	Lama Lama
Schascle Bassani	Lama Lama
Sharelle Spratt	Lama Lama
Cheryl Prestipino	Executive Office YAC
Brian Johnson	Wulgurukaba
Sherill (Dawnie) Harrigan	Eastern Kuku Yalanji
Della Gibson	Wulgurukaba, Woppaburra
Eddie Savage	Bindal
Phillip (Phil) Rist	Nywaigi
Robert Muir	Woppaburra
Virginia Wyles	Wulgurukaba
Harry (Sonny) Van Issum	Woppaburra

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1 The intention of this guidance for prospective partners

The guidance document is for people who wish to discuss options with Traditional Owners for deployment of RRAP technology (and other projects/research) on their sea Country.

The guidance includes:

- Background to, and intention of, the Biocultural Framework (hereon referred to as the Framework) as the key tool that Traditional Owners will use to inform their decision making about potential partnerships.
- A high-level overview of the Framework, with some explanatory text, that prospective partners may find useful as they begin to consider potential partnerships, and initial activities in development of a partnership
- Suggestions re: activities that might be considered prior to initial discussion with a Traditional Owner group, in follow up meetings, in early days of agreement making and as part of the ongoing review process of the potential partnership.

The origin, creation and development of the Framework is outlined in Section 2.

2 Background to the RRAP Biocultural Risk and Opportunity Assessment Framework

2.1 Origin of the Biocultural Framework

The *need for the Framework* was identified by Traditional Owners (TOs) who attended the Reef Trust Partnerships Traditional Owner workshop at AIMS, May 2019 where they articulated:

“Traditional Owners think of the reef differently – it’s a cultural landscape not a ‘biology’ landscape. Conversations are needed to build this understanding. Traditional Owner knowledge from the past needs to be brought forward. Deep engagement is needed with Traditional Owners to build a strong mutual understanding of risks and benefits, and respect for biocultural ethics. Governance needs to ensure Traditional Owners are at the heart of decision making for this component.”

RTP Traditional Owner Workshop, Summary Report (2019):25-26.

2.2 What does ‘biocultural’ mean?

The concept of ‘biocultural’ builds on what is articulated above in the words of TOs, reflects well known Indigenous Australian philosophy of ‘healthy Country, healthy people’ that illuminates the links between caring for people, Country, as well as familial relationships with and responsibility to care for places, animals and plants. The concept links biophysical, human, spiritual, cultural, social and economic worlds. This concept draws on work done previously by Traditional Owners, dating back to Sea Forum (1997) and beyond. Sea Forum evolved from the GBR-wide meeting of Reef Traditional Owners convened by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to review management for dugong and turtles. At this meeting Traditional Owners identified the need to discuss the management of sea Country from a holistic point of view (for more information see www.reefto.au).

2.3 How was the Biocultural Framework developed?

The Framework was developed via a research partnership, that used principles of collaborative design and collaboration production, between CSIRO social researchers and the AIMS Indigenous Partnerships team. The team was guided by the Reef Restoration and Adaptation Science & Crown of Thorns Starfish Technical Working Group (TWG) of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation. The research was *funded by the Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program*. The project was approved by the CSIRO Social and Interdisciplinary Science Human Research Ethics Committee¹ and the AIATSIS Research Ethics Committee².

The Framework was collaboratively developed from the combined knowledge and expertise of the research team (CSIRO, AIMS) and Traditional Owners from the northern, middle and southern GBR at three workshops held in 2022-23 (see Maclean et al, 2023a, b, c).

Members of the TWG suggested that workshop invitees be Traditional Owner groups who had already worked with the AIMS Indigenous Partnerships team as part of a Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process for RRAP. Members of these Traditional Owner groups had prior knowledge of one or more RRAP technologies and the RRAP program in general because they had already had discussions with RRAP scientists in relation to the conduct of RRAP-related research on specific areas of their Country. It was anticipated that these Traditional Owner groups would then be able to draw on their knowledge and experience to consider the potential risks and opportunities associated with deployment of RRAP technologies on their Country and more broadly in the GBR.

¹ CSIRO Social and Interdisciplinary Science Human Research Ethics Committee application number 058/21

² AIATSIS Research Ethics Committee application number REC-0183

The workshops ran for at least two days and included information sharing sessions about the various RRAP intervention technologies being tested in the laboratory and the field including: to do with corals, for cooling and shading, rubble stabilisation and cryopreservation. Workshops were designed to create space for Traditional Owners to question and explore the technologies. They were also intended to increase understanding of the current status and potential future applications of RRAP. While the sequencing and emphasis of the discussion topics above varied across the three major workshops - each were explored and informed the development of the Framework themes through the process of qualitative analysis and synthesis or workshop notes and other records. These key insights from the workshop were then checked back with Traditional Owner participants.

The Framework was further tested and improved at two workshops held in 2024 with Lama Lama People (April 2024, see Lama Lama people et al, 2024) and the Deadly Reef Ecological Adaptation Murri Scientists' (DREAMS) team³ (September 2024, see Cummins et al, 2024).

2.4 Who owns the Framework, where is it located and who can use it?

The Framework is *owned by the Traditional Owners of the GBR who contributed to the development of the Framework (see Table 1)*. It is intended as a decision-making tool to be used only by Traditional Owners, to assess the potential risks and opportunities of prospective partnerships for the future deployment of RRAP technologies to sea Country and people. It is separate but equally important to other tools being developed within RRAP, for example prioritisation of reefs for deployment of interventions. The full Framework can be found here ([weblink to finalised](#)). As highlighted by workshop participants, it is a *strengths-based framework*: the key focus is on opportunities that could evolve from deployment partnerships and future research.

Although it is intended to only be used by Traditional Owners, TOs also understand that other people, agencies or organisations would find it useful to get a better understanding of the holistic way in which they value and care for the GBR. See Figure 1 for a high-level overview of the Framework. The full Framework includes a comprehensive list of detailed questions and key strategies, tools, and resources.

³ In the Biocultural Project November 2023 Milestone Report the Biocultural project team provided 'indicative considerations for RRAP' (see Maclean et al, 2023b:32) including advice to support the Operation of a Traditional Owner Working Group for RRAP 2.0. Subsequently, AIMS managed an EOI process for this working group and the recently named 'Deadly Reef Ecological Adaptation Murri Scientists' (DREAMS) team held their first meeting, 20 June 2024.

Important to note and as per the deed of assignment of copyright (see verso of Report):

1. The Framework **may be used by other First Nations people** in Australia and overseas to assist them to develop their own protocols for collaborative research and development.
2. The Framework **must not be *used* by others**, including researchers, consultants or government, to undertake an assessment of biocultural risk and opportunities.
3. The Framework **may only be *read*** by others, including researchers, consultants or government to help them understand the wide range of considerations that are important to Traditional Owners of the Great Barrier Reef.

The intention of the Framework is to promote meaningful, early and ongoing collaboration with Traditional Owners in proposals relating to the Great Barrier Reef. Any use of the Framework without engaging with Traditional Owners falls short of ethical research standards and industry practice.

3 Summary overview of the Biocultural Framework

The Biocultural Framework (Figure 1) is organised around the central concept of Lore and six linked themes:

Lore: The central organising concept of the Framework in the context of the potential deployment of RRAP technologies on sea Country is Lore. In this context, Lore relates to and is the foundation of cultural obligation and responsibilities to care for the Reef; customary heritage, connections, knowledge; caring for Country and values. Lore underpins and influences decision making and management approaches and practices. Key to Lore is the concept of ‘healthy Country healthy people’: if Country is healthy then so are its people. Some examples of how Reef Traditional Owners have developed agreements and protocols to support Lore for the development of prospective partnerships include for example [Woppaburra Traditional Owner Heritage Assessment Guidelines](#), [Lama Lama Research protocol](#). Prospective partners might find it useful to view publicly available agreements and protocols.

Six linked ‘themes’: A set of six themes (see Figure 1) were derived from the rich discussions shared at the three workshops. Each of these themes are accompanied by a set of probing questions to be used by Traditional Owners to inform their decision making about prospective options for deployment of RRAP technologies on their sea Country. The themes are:

- **Working together.** Some technologies may be deployed over or within more than one area of sea Country. As such, neighbouring Traditional Owner groups might be in the position to enter partnerships together with RRAP scientists/agencies. Further, relationship-building with potential partners is of central importance. This includes building trust, having confidence that partners will operate in culturally appropriate ways and have high cultural competence. Integral to assessing potential deployment opportunities, is the assessment of future partners and anticipated partnership working relationships (including via protocols and agreements).
- **People on Country.** Future opportunities may further enable Indigenous communities to return to Country, acquire meaningful employment and generate pathways for self-determination for healthy Country and healthy people. Traditional Owner groups may be interested to use the discussion topics and questions related to this theme to identify and assess the potential longer-term opportunities and benefits that they would like to see generated from any future partnerships for science and deployment.
- **Transition capacities.** There are many opportunities that could result from entering deployment partnerships for RRAP technologies. There is a key focus on ‘future proofing’ for future generations, including via training and employment pathways and the kinds of skills that young people will need to develop to be able to grasp such opportunities. Traditional Owners groups will likely be interested to identify and assess the kinds of skills and capacities they would like to see generated from these opportunities. Such capacities are at the heart of self-determination for healthy Country and healthy people.
- **Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property.** Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC, and related processes) need to acknowledge and protect Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP). ICIP and FPIC will be central to any protocols and/or agreements that may be developed.
- **Technology and Innovations** (past, present and future). It is important to recognise how past practices interact with the present and future. Once they have sufficient information to inform their decision making, Traditional Owners may wish to identify preferred technologies they would like to see deployed in partnership on their sea Country. Traditional Owners may also like to identify, assess and

discuss (with potential partners) the other potential outcomes and benefits that could be generated from such deployment on their sea Country.

- **Information for decision-making.** Many Traditional Owners have questions about the science of specific technologies. As such, it is important that Traditional Owners have access to information for risk and opportunity assessments, and to feel confident that they are making informed decisions. It is essential that Traditional Owner become familiar with the science, the technologies and are confident that they are in touch with the correct people to answer their questions. It is important that they are able understand the potential biological, cultural, linked biocultural and other possible impacts of these technologies to Country, reef health and people.

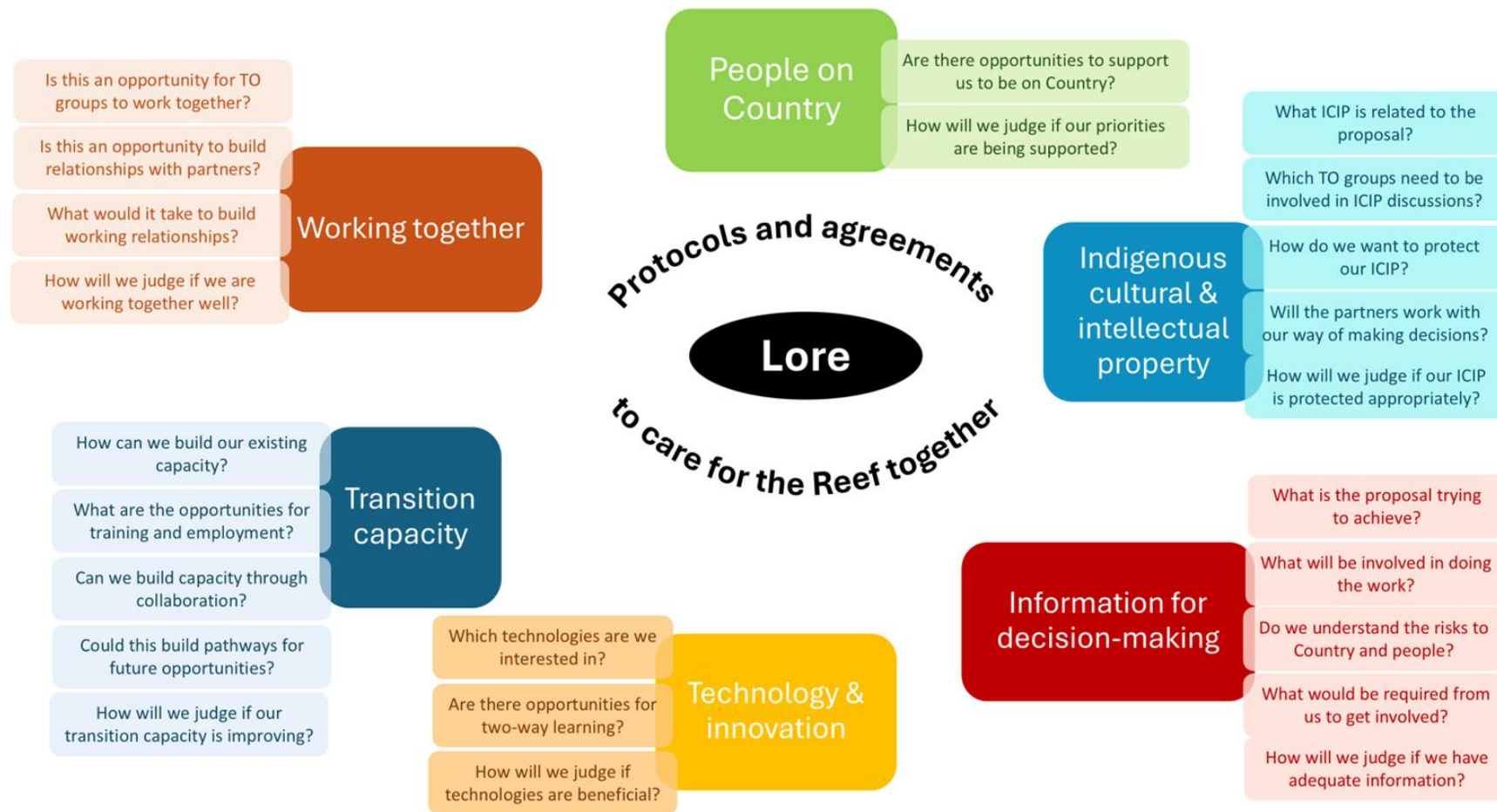


Figure 1. The Summary Biocultural Framework showing linked themes and discussion topics. The Framework shows the central importance of Lore to decision making by Traditional Owners and the crucial role of protocols and agreements to care for the Reef together in implementing the Framework. Within each discussion topic, Traditional Owners identified sets of specific questions to help groups to probe more deeply into the matter, together with strategies, tools and resources that could support groups in their deliberations. The full Framework with explanatory text can be found at [\(weblink to be finalised\)](#).

4 Suggested activities for prospective partners

4.1 Before the initial discussion with Traditional Owner group

Prospective partners have:

- ☐ Completed cultural competency training [name of course].
- ☐ In-depth/sophisticated understanding of the policies and protections for Indigenous cultural and intellectual property in their organisation.
- ☐ Interest in cultural competency training offered by the Traditional Owner group.
- ☐ Reviewed the publicly available information about the Traditional Owner group to find out if their interests align (e.g. the organisation's website, existing and past work, research priorities, Country based plans) and can articulate how they do.
- ☐ Considered what it would mean to them/the partnership to enter a co-design partnership with the Traditional Owner group.
- ☐ Given early thought to development of an 'Indigenous engagement strategy' and what it might include (e.g. the key items under 'initial discussions').

4.2 For initial discussions with Traditional Owner group

Prospective partners to compile and provide:

- ☐ Information about past and/or existing partnerships with other TO groups (e.g. who, where, funders, project aim and origin, outcomes, benefits for the TO group).
- ☐ Information about experience and/or interest in co-design.
- ☐ A short video or flyer to introduce the prospective partnership team
- ☐ *Proposed* aim of the partnership, including information about funding sources, options for co-design with the Traditional Owner group.

Prospective partners to be prepared to:

- ☐ Identify the appropriate approach for each group, with the awareness that each group will have different governance arrangements (e.g. via the Corporation, enterprise, native title body).
- ☐ Consider the option to work with a 'research/partnerships broker' to assist in organising meetings, ensure they include the right people (attending to local cultural governance and related protocols for engagement).
- ☐ Take the time to sit with Rangers, Elders, and the community, as the first point of building relationships, understanding that initial engagement should be through appropriate governance structures.
- ☐ Listen to stories, show respect for cultural protocols that may be shared.
- ☐ Develop communication materials and send them back to the community in a form that they can use and understand (no jargon).
- ☐ Discuss how they will resource the community for their time, knowledge, expertise and use of existing resources (e.g. boats, equipment).
- ☐ Understand that the core business of the Traditional Owner group includes an annual work plan, and thus any partnership work is in addition to that work plan.
- ☐ Understand that a decision to develop a partnership or not will take time and will need to proceed according to Traditional Owner governance structures.

- ☐ Listen to the other priorities of the Traditional Owner group and consider pathways to support other options.

4.3 Suggested iterative development of partnership agreement to work together

Prospective partners to have considered and be prepared for discussions about:

- ☐ The development of a partnership agreement, considering existing formats for agreements (e.g. a cultural research/partnership agreement).
- ☐ The *proposed* roles and responsibilities of:
 - the partners
 - the Traditional Owners (e.g. Organisation/Corporation/Enterprise, Rangers, Elders, others).
- ☐ *Possible* benefit sharing opportunities, some examples might include:
 - training and mentoring for Rangers
 - meaningful involvement in deployment activities (including anticipated roles, tasks, mentor, hours)
 - on-country training for Junior Rangers (during school holidays).
 - two-way knowledge sharing, e.g. co-authorship and joint presentations.
- ☐ *Proposed* processes to acknowledge and protect Indigenous cultural and intellectual property, some examples might include:
 - Australian Institute of Marine Sciences Free and Prior Informed Consent Process (*at a minimum*)
 - Ongoing negotiation and consent processes to ensure that the existing ICIP arrangements and consents are still appropriate for those involved (e.g. annual check-in and ICIP arrangements).
 - Data management actions (e.g. collection, storage, use) and data sovereignty (e.g. ownership, access, rules for collection and use).
 - Understanding that any knowledge or ideas shared by TOs during the partnership is owned by them, not to be used or shared by the partners.
 - Responsibility taken by all to use RRAP IP Register for potential IP shared/developed by TOs during the partnership.
 - Processes that respect Traditional Owner governance arrangements, and
- ☐ Whether the partnership will require Human research ethics approval:
 - Will the partnership include collection, documentation of social, cultural and traditional knowledge, information, and data?
 - Will partnership activities include monitoring and evaluation of the partnership; and learning and improvement for future partnership development?
 - If yes, then this will require Human ethics approval, what are the next steps and who will lead those?
- ☐ Other things to consider include:
 - payment for the time and resources of Traditional Owners.
 - ensure all HSE is done to cover all individuals involved (e.g. work cover, public liability insurance).
- ☐ The need for a set of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) criteria that will be used by Traditional Owners and partners to assess the partnership at set intervals.
- ☐ Options for negotiation and/or withdrawal if agreements not met.

4.4 Implementation, monitoring and review of the partnership to be discussed together

- ☐ Creation and completion (including sign off) of partnership agreement and/or contract.
- ☐ Agreed frequency and M&E process for agreement and/or contract to ensure partnership is developing as agreed, with options for negotiation and/or withdrawal if agreements not met.

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