

Building a Strong Organisational Culture for Landcare Groups, Networks, and Regions in NSW

A thriving organisational culture is the backbone of effective and sustainable Landcare groups. It unites volunteers and staff, strengthens community engagement, and enhances your group's impact. Landcare is a people movement and it is the relationships that sit at the heartbeat of our success. By fostering a culture of trust, respect, and collaboration, your group can inspire and retain passionate individuals dedicated to protecting and restoring our natural landscapes, moving forward sustainable agriculture practices and connecting our communities in an environment of well-being.

Key Elements of a Strong Organisational Culture

Shared Vision, Mission and Values

- **Define your purpose:** Clearly and often articulate your group's vision, mission, values, and priorities. A strong purpose attracts like-minded individuals.
- **Strategic planning through collective decision making:** Engage volunteers and staff in defining your group's vision, mission and values, ensuring inclusivity and buy-in. It is the process of getting here (to a completed strategic plan) that is just as important as the outcome. Using a collective decision making process around these key elements for your organisation will galvanise the group together in cohesion and have you all walking forward, united together with shared purpose.

Effective Communication

- **Transparency:** Share updates, successes, and challenges openly with both staff and volunteers.
- **Two-way dialogue:** Create opportunities for volunteers and staff to provide feedback and share ideas through regular meetings (group and one on one), surveys, or suggestion boxes.



Mutual Respect and Inclusivity

- **Acknowledge contributions:** Recognise and celebrate the unique skills, perspectives, experiences and efforts of both volunteers and staff.
- **Cultural awareness:** Draw inspiration from First Nations leadership by embracing long-term thinking, reciprocity, and community-centered approaches. Respect diverse perspectives and practices. Take the time needed to prioritise and build relationships.

Well-Defined Roles and Expectations

- **Clarity:** Outline clear roles and responsibilities for staff and volunteers to avoid duplication or conflict.
- **Support:** Provide the training and resources that empower individuals to perform effectively in their roles. Landcare NSW has many resources and approved supplies available to you through the Shared Services Hub.

Recognition and Appreciation

- **Celebrate achievements:** Host recognition events, send thank-you notes, or highlight accomplishments in newsletters.
- **Tailored rewards:** Consider how each individual prefers to be recognised—some may value public acknowledgment, while others appreciate quiet, personal recognition.

Steps to Cultivating a Winning Culture



Practical Tips for Landcare Groups

- **Onboarding:** Provide a welcoming and thorough induction for new volunteers and staff to integrate them into your culture from day one.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Address disagreements promptly and constructively, using shared values as a foundation for finding solutions.
- **Sustainability:** Avoid burnout by setting realistic expectations and encouraging a healthy work-life balance for both staff and volunteers.

Lessons from First Nations Leadership

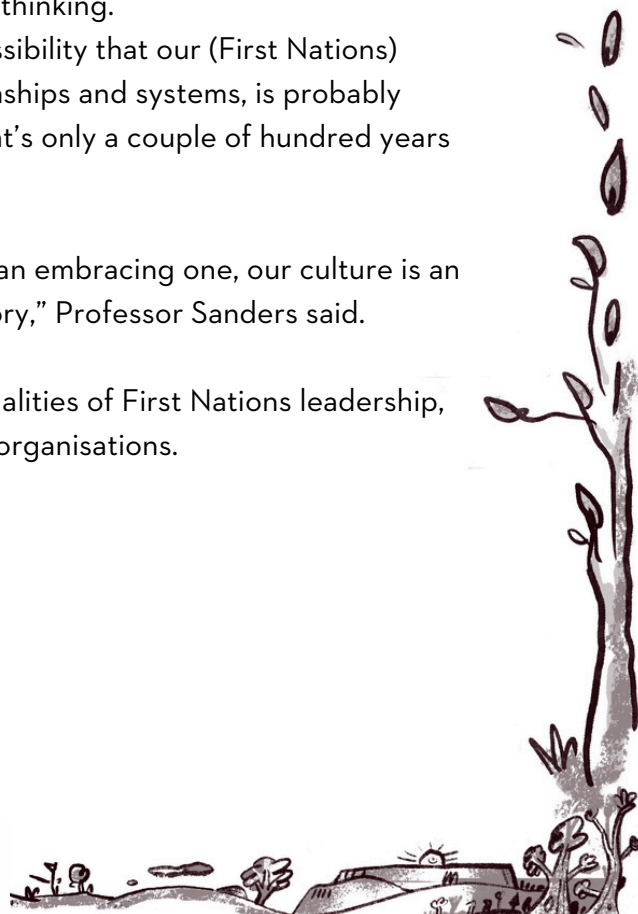
First Nations communities offer valuable insights into building strong organisational cultures. By prioritising relationships, mutual respect, and sustainability, they demonstrate the power of long-term thinking and reciprocity. Landcare groups can apply these principles to foster resilience, inclusivity, and a deep connection to place.

Our First Nations leadership offers powerful insights that can transform modern workplaces. Taking inspiration from and platforming First Nations leaders not only benefits Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities but also enriches the entire organisation by fostering a culture of respect, collaboration, and long-term thinking.

Professor Deen Sanders OAM tells us to “Entertain the possibility that our (First Nations) knowledge system, 100,000 years of science about relationships and systems, is probably pretty useful in contrast to a Western rationalist system that’s only a couple of hundred years old.”

“Our leadership model is an embracing one, our country is an embracing one, our culture is an embracing one. Everybody can be part of this particular story,” Professor Sanders said.

By understanding, nurturing, and celebrating the unique qualities of First Nations leadership, we can create more inclusive, sustainable, and responsible organisations.

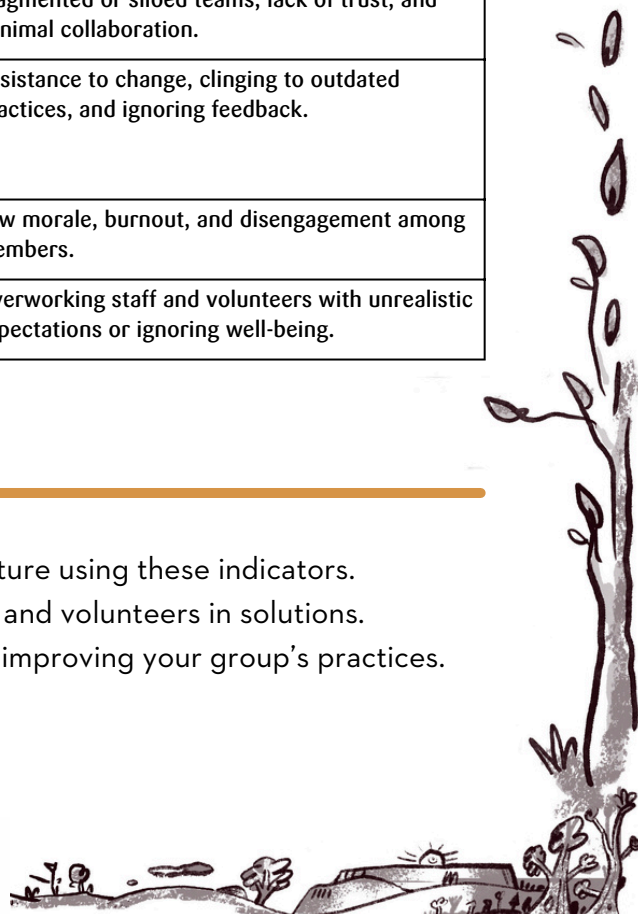


Indicators of Healthy vs. Unhealthy Organisational Culture

Aspect	Healthy Culture	Unhealthy Culture
Vision Mission and Values	Clear, shared & memorable vision, mission & values that aligns staff and volunteers together for purpose.	Lack of clarity or disagreement about purpose and goals. People all have different answers to the question “what do we do?” or “where are we heading?”
Communication	Open, transparent, and two-way communication channels. People feel free to speak their mind. Giving and receiving feedback is a regular practice.	Limited, inconsistent, or one-sided communication. People are afraid or anxious to speak up.
Inclusivity and Respect	All voices are valued, and diverse perspectives are embraced.	Exclusive decision-making and lack of respect for differing opinions.
Role Clarity	Clear understanding of roles, responsibilities, and expectations for both staff and volunteers.	Ambiguity in roles leading to duplication, conflict, or inaction. People operate in silos without consultation or bringing others on the journey.
Recognition	Regular acknowledgment of contributions in varied and meaningful ways.	Contributions are overlooked or taken for granted.
Conflict Resolution	Issues addressed promptly with mutual respect and shared problem-solving. People are willing to disagree with kindness.	Conflicts ignored or poorly handled, leading to resentment and division.
Leadership Style	Inclusive, supportive, and collaborative leadership.	Top-down, autocratic, or disconnected leadership.
Team Dynamics	Strong sense of camaraderie and teamwork among staff and volunteers.	Fragmented or siloed teams, lack of trust, and minimal collaboration.
Adaptability	Willingness to innovate, accept feedback, and embrace change. It is known that we live in ever shifting landscapes, land use, politics and communities and we adapt as required.	Resistance to change, clinging to outdated practices, and ignoring feedback.
Volunteer and Staff Morale	High levels of enthusiasm, commitment, and satisfaction among staff and volunteers.	Low morale, burnout, and disengagement among members.
Sustainability Practices	Balance between achieving goals and maintaining well-being of team members.	Overworking staff and volunteers with unrealistic expectations or ignoring well-being.

Using This Table:

- **Self-assessment:** Regularly reflect on your group’s culture using these indicators.
- **Action planning:** Address gaps by engaging both staff and volunteers in solutions.
- **Feedback:** Use this as a guide for conversations about improving your group’s practices.



Sources for this document and resources for further support

- [Building a Healthy Volunteer Culture](#)
- [Importance of Culture in Volunteer Organizations](#)
- [5 Steps to Creating a Winning Culture at Your Nonprofit](#)
- [Lessons from First Nations Leadership](#)

For tailored advice, speak with your Local Landcare Coordinator or Regional Landcare Coordinator.

Landcare NSW is here to support you.

For additional guidance or resources, visit www.landcarensw.org.au or contact us directly via Shared Services Hub sharedserviceshub@landcarensw.org.au

