RISE Safety Protocols and Principles Template

Introduction

The RISE project aims to break down systemic barriers and provide direct pathways for culturally and racially marginalised (CARM) women to reach senior leadership positions within Australian organisations. This template suggests some key principles of racial and cultural safety for the RISE project and helps you identify the safety protocols in your organisation that may be relevant during the implementation of the RISE project – it also provides a space for your project team to set out how your organisation will build and maintain safety throughout the project. As this project focuses on CARM women, it is critical to ensure the racial and cultural safety principles outlined in this document are implemented consistently throughout all stages of the project and that safety protocols incorporate trauma-informed principles.

We advise that your project team uses the information in this template to:

1. Identify racial and cultural safety principles – circulate a draft of these principles to participants and then finalise after their feedback.
2. Put in place safety protocols for staff in the RISE project.
3. Create a list of contacts and support services that CARM participants can reach out to

1. Identifying racial and cultural safety principles

This template draws on conceptualisations of cultural safety in the work of Māori scholar Irihapeti Ramsden and racial safety from Diversity Council Australia research. It recognises Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples' sovereignty and acknowledges their leadership and resistance against continuing colonialism, racism, and discrimination in Australia. It recognises that there can be no genuine workplace inclusion and equity in Australia while First Nations people are still being subjected to racism and cultural discrimination.[1]

We encourage you to:

- Use this template in your project team to identify cultural and racial safety principles for the implementation of the RISE project in your organisation.

- Share it with CARM women participating in the project so that they can contribute their understandings of racial and cultural safety, experiences with good practice and advice on maintaining safe spaces.
- Once you have incorporated feedback from CARM women participating, we would advise finalising and circulating Racial and Cultural Safety principles to everyone participating in the project from your organisation. This is to ensure a genuine centring of voice, and a continuous process of improvement throughout the implementation of RISE.

Please note this project uses the term, culturally and racially marginalised (CARM), to refer to women who are not white. Research indicates that this group experiences racial marginalisation in the workplace.[2] This group includes women who are Black, Brown, Asian, or any other non-white group, who face marginalisation due to their race and culture. Our category of CARM women is intended to be inclusive of cis women, trans women, as well as non-binary and/or gender diverse people who identify (or are identified by others) as CARM women.[3] Part of ensuring cultural safety may include inviting CARM women to identify with whichever label or identity that most empowers them within the project – the RISE team welcomes a plurality of identifications and communities among participating staff.

What is racial and cultural safety?

Racial safety refers to:

> "The creation of a work environment where Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, Black, Brown, and other racially marginalised people who experience racism, feel socially, culturally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually safe, and where they feel, their racial identity is not used to exclude, marginalise, problematise, harass, and/or assault them."[4]

Cultural safety refers to:

> "An environment that is spiritually, socially, and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault, challenge, or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge, and experience of learning together."[5]

Creating racially and culturally safe spaces requires building trust and a shared understanding of how race plays out in workplaces.[6] Ramsden proposes that culturally safe practice can be reached through three progressive steps:

- cultural awareness, defined as understanding that differences exist.
- cultural sensitivity, defined as accepting the legitimacy of difference and reflecting on the impact of your life experience on others.
- cultural safety, defined differently for each circumstance, by listening to the needs of participants.[7]

The following guidelines have been drafted to ensure a safe environment is facilitated throughout your organisation's engagement in the RISE project, in which CARM women feel comfortable and safe to participate and engage with all project elements. The RISE project is a celebration and acknowledgement of the racial, cultural and gender diversity in the Australian workforce. The variety of experiences and expressions of identity, family, career, and community allow for many sources of knowledge to be utilised, and the RISE project seeks to foster spaces in which staff work cooperatively to understand and incorporate different perspectives.

What are the key racial and cultural safety principles that will guide your organisation's RISE journey?

We would advise discussing and adding to the principles below and sharing with the CARM women who nominate for this project – for their feedback and input.

Centring the voice of CARM women

- Value and prioritise the perspectives of CARM women, who bring lived expertise to the project.
- Work together to recognise and support the unique needs of each CARM woman.
- Listen empathetically and be willing to learn from and validate CARM women's stories.
- Engage in peer-led listening sessions that are facilitated by CARM women with lived experience who feel safe to tell their stories of being on the receiving end of racism.
- Create respectful and empowering spaces for engagement and activities during the project.

Undertaking critical self-reflection

- Start with yourself – reflect on the following key questions: How does racism affect my life? How does other people's racialisation affect their lives?[8]

- Develop a mindset that is conscious of racism – this means recognising how racialisation impacts each of us, our family, and communities, and committing to standing up to and challenging racism when and where we encounter it.[9]
- Be aware of the privileges you may have and biases you may hold and how, if left unchecked, these can create a lack of cultural and racial safety for CARM women at work.
- Encourage racial humility in racially privileged people – as they have never experienced racism, they have never needed to deeply engage with it and so are less likely to understand it.
- Actively challenge unsafe practices and interactions such as stereotyping, discrimination, and racist, sexist, transphobic, ableist or other demeaning and harmful comments.

Championing anti-racist and strengths-based education

- Recognise the continuing impact of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and seek to learn from Aboriginal and international First Nations' approaches to ensure inclusive and respectful dialogue.
- Recognise how our history has created systemic racism and other forms of discrimination and that anti-racism efforts are about dismantling and undoing this system of racial inequality.
- Take a strength-based approach to educational initiatives – emphasise that racial and cultural diversity is a strength.
- Invest in racial literacy and antiracism training to ensure that development opportunities are culturally appropriate and psychologically racially safe for CARM women.

Embracing intersectionality

- Raise awareness of intersectionality and of the way that multiple forms of discrimination and marginalisation (including gender, race) can limit a CARM women's leadership journey.
- When collecting, analysing, and reporting on workforce gender data ensure your organisation is not treating all women as one homogenous group.

Ensuring a practice of debrief and reflection

- Create access to counselling, psychological support, and opportunities for CARM women to debrief after discussions about instances of racial or cultural discrimination.
- Ensure CARM women have safe ways to withdraw from the project if they experience distress and provide contact numbers for participants to access internal and external support services.

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Are there any guiding principles you would like to add?

What key actions, policies and processes does your organisation have to maintain racial and cultural safety, as well as wellbeing for CARM women in your organisation?

Are any additional actions, processes, and policies necessary for racial and cultural safety in the RISE project?

2. Putting in place safety protocols

Experiences of systemic barriers, racism, gender discrimination and other forms of discrimination cause long-term trauma for CARM women and other employees from marginalised groups. Acknowledging that trauma exists and applying trauma informed principles in workplace activities can build a safe environment for participants and mitigate the risk of retraumatisation. This template draws on trauma informed principles of safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment (see this fact sheet for more information) and is also focused on the safety of all participants.

Putting in place safety protocols can embed trauma-informed principles into project activities and help project teams, other staff and external facilitators to plan for any instances where a participant within your organisation experiences distress, discomfort or requires support during and after the RISE project.

We encourage you to:
- Use this template to identify existing and additional safety measures and protocols in your organisation.
- Communicate and share these protocols with all members of the project team, staff leading project activities and any external facilitators for project activities.

What are the safety policies and protocols for staff in your organization?

Please enter in any policies that you think apply within your organisation:

Suggested steps – building safety in project activities.

Events, workshops and other activities during your Action Plan implementation

- Sharing information on support services and breathing and mindfulness activities both before and after the activity.

- When planning venues for activities, providing green spaces outside or safe spaces for participants to take time out during an activity.

- Where possible including a check-in and check out time with an experienced activity facilitator or supervisor with CARM background in activities to encourage participants to be mindful of their emotional responses and the way the material affects them.

- Including a slide or information on safety in presentations, listing options if people are feeling uncomfortable or distressed during the activity.

- Providing the number of a facilitator or support worker from a partner organisation for people to call during the activity and creating a facilitator support protocol.

- Offering to have follow-up conversations with participants and giving time after activities for people to talk to facilitators directly.

Responding to stories of lived experience:

The following steps outline actions the project team or other facilitators of activities can take to respond to stories of lived experience shared during the RISE project, where they may contain traumatic material. Project activities may give people a chance to share stories if they would like to, but it is best not to prompt for stories and to clarify that people can share only if they would feel comfortable to before activities.

- When a story of lived experience is shared, thank the participant and validate their experiences and their right to be heard.

- Recognise the emotional, psychological trauma in the story and connect the experience back to the context for the activity (i.e. name the forms of interpersonal and systemic issues, including racism and other forms of discrimination, highlighted in the story and the work the project is hoping to do to address those).

- Share your own experience if appropriate but remember to centre participants' voices

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- Refrain from interrupting participants or asking too many questions about what has happened to them as this may be retraumatising.

- Remind all participants of safety options (taking time out from the activities and mindfulness or grounding exercises) and support services.

- Refocus the discussion on solutions by asking what kinds of support or strategies could help address racism in that situation?

- Offer to stay behind for a few minutes after the discussion.

- Offer to follow up individually with the participants who shared stories with details of support services and the offer of a following conversation.

Project team support protocol

In the event that a project team member is contacted by a participant who has concerns about the safety of a particular project activity during the RISE project, they can follow the steps below:

- Have an offline conversation with the participant.

- Listen to their concerns and thoughts and acknowledge their experiences.

- Take the participant through a mindfulness or breathing exercise if needed.

- Acknowledge your role if needed (including limits to what you can do).

- Refer them to relevant support services.

- See if they would like to return to the activity where appropriate or remind them they have the option to leave or just listen.

- Take any action that may be advisable during the activity to address concerns (e.g., re-structure a discussion or activity, change groups involved in the activity, give all participants more information about support services).

- Follow up after the activity with the contact details of support services and mindfulness exercises.

- Offer a follow-up conversation.

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- Debrief with the team/other employer support services about any issues that were raised and seek guidance from partner organisations as needed.

- Access EAP services to support your own wellbeing as needed.

For the RISE project team and facilitators of project activities:

- Schedule in regular debriefs with the project team or the RISE team about issues raised, prioritise self-care, attend to vicarious trauma (for example, see this information on <u>vicarious trauma for family violence workers</u>) and access EAP services, where needed.

Are there any additional protocols or processes you would like to see your organisation adopt in the RISE project?

3. Creating a list of contacts and support services

It is important to circulate internal contacts for programs that staff may already have access to as well as external support services to all staff participating in the project and to re-circulate these contacts during specific project activities.

What are the relevant contacts for employees for -

Employee Assistance Programs:

Wellbeing programs:

Workplace health and safety representatives:

Reporting and complaints processes

What are the reporting protocols and processes for experiences of:
- Gender discrimination
- Racial discrimination
- Sexual assault and/or harassment

(Please fill in information on the reporting pathways and processes for these forms of discrimination and harassment)

External services

We would also advise putting together a list of external organisations and sharing them with registered participants through the RISE project.
Relevant lists of support services include:
https://itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au/take-action/support-services
https://www.anrows.org.au/support-directory/

Codes of conduct and staff protocols

In addition to safety protocols, it is expected that staff in your organisation will follow your organisation's specific codes of conduct for staff and any breach of these codes will be escalated according to your organisational protocols.

Are there any specific Codes of Conduct or protocols you would like to highlight?

Endnotes

[1] Diversity Council Australia (Anderson, P., Mapedzahama, V., Kaabel, A. and O'Leary, J.) *Racism at Work: How Organisations Can Stand Up To and End Workplace Racism*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2022.
[2] Diversity Council Australia (V. Mapedzahama, F. Laffernis, A. Barhoum, and J. O'Leary), *Culturally and Racially Marginalised Women in Leadership: A Framework for (Intersectional) Organisational Action*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2023.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Diversity Council Australia (Anderson, P., Mapedzahama, V., Kaabel, A. and O'Leary, J.) *Racism at Work: How Organisations Can Stand Up To and End Workplace Racism*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2022.
[5] Williams, R. (1999). Cultural safety: What does it mean for our work practice? *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 23(2), 213-214.
[6] I. Ramsden. "Cultural safety: Kawa Whakaruruhau ten years on: A personal overview", *Nursing Praxis in New Zealand*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2000: 4-12; Diversity Council Australia (Anderson, P., Mapedzahama, V., Kaabel, A. and O'Leary, J.) *Racism at Work: How Organisations Can Stand Up To and End Workplace Racism*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2022.
[7] I. Ramsden, *Cultural Safety and Nursing Education in Aotearoa and Te Waipounamu* (PhD Thesis, Victoria University Wellington, 2002) 117.
[8] Diversity Council Australia (Anderson, P., Mapedzahama, V., Kaabel, A. and O'Leary, J.) *Racism at Work: How Organisations Can Stand Up To and End Workplace Racism*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2022.
[9] Ibid.