



## First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group: Roadmap Submissions

To the FNDIAG team

Please find following Land on Heart's paper for the Roadmap submissions. We hope we have provided ample information on how our organisation and charity are currently undertaking and planning to address the need to increase digital literacy for our people across Australia.

Our passion is to not only address digital literacy issues in communities, but to provide employment and economic opportunities for mob on country – so the same opportunities in the tech industry can be experienced regardless of where you live.

Further, it is our belief that as the oldest living culture in the world, the cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can provide an innovative and competitive edge in the global industry of technology.

Our efforts since commencing our journey have been on building lasting partnerships, and collaborating with many in the tech industry (both global and local), as well as educational institutes and training organisations. We are excited to be showcasing our model of service delivery and partnerships with the recently funded Digital Connectivity project which we are about to implement. We hope to share the learnings with you as we continue through the 3-year project.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a paper for your consideration. If you have any further queries, please contact me on [Lisa.Sarago@landonheart.com](mailto:Lisa.Sarago@landonheart.com).

Yours sincerely

Lisa Sarago

**CEO & Co-Founder**

**Land on Heart Pty Ltd**

**Land on Heart Foundation Pty Ltd**



## First Nations Digital Inclusion Plan – Submission from Land on Heart

Land on Heart (LOH) is an Aboriginal owned and operated tech company, created to provide employment and economic opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (particularly in remote and regional areas) in the tech industry.

Our vision is to two-fold:

- Create innovative tech tools which increase the cultural capability of non-Indigenous Australians to reach the ultimate goal - Reconciliation.
- Supporting Indigenous tech talent across Australia to create innovative tech tools and apps with a cultural lens and increase Indigenous representation in tech.

LOH understands that the number of Indigenous tech talent within Australia is still extremely small, and even more so for Indigenous women. LOH is headed by Aboriginal female leader, Lisa Sarago, as the CEO and Women in Digital's Indigenous Leader of the Year (2022), who ensures the priority for LOH is to build the pipeline of Indigenous tech talent through:

- creating programs which address digital literacy in communities;
- market the tech industry as a prime employment opportunity;
- creating a culturally inclusive ecosystem within the tech industry; and
- establish Indigenous tech skills hubs across Australia.

To achieve these goals, LOH undertakes the following activities:

- delivering community-based digital literacy and tech skill development programs, co-designed with community;
- building meaningful partnerships with tech companies (both global and SMEs);
- collaborating with government and non-government agencies within the eco-system on tech projects to ensure cultural sensitivity and appropriateness;
- creating multiple pathways into tech through learning, education, training and upskilling (ranging from employment-based training through to upskilling guided by expert mentors);
- assisting tech companies and other corporates to implement culturally inclusive practices in Indigenous employment, creating a pipeline of Indigenous tech talent into their organisation.

LOH's key broad services then include:

- creation and delivery of innovate digital cultural education tools;
- providing professional services to Corporates and organisations to increase their cultural safety (through RAPs, Indigenous Employment Strategies, Cultural Immersion projects) in preparedness to increase the number of Indigenous employees; and
- establishment and delivery of Indigenous tech skills hubs, including the installation of our mobile kiosk program (formerly known as "Hitnet").



### **Land on Heart Foundation**

*Land on Heart Foundation* was established by the Advisory Board of *Land on Heart* as the charitable arm of *Land on Heart Pty Ltd*. The primary purpose is to provide and further enhance opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to learn, participate and prosper in the digital economy. The organisation will provide unique opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to develop digital skills through training and employment pathways, therefore enabling an increase in representation of Indigenous people participating in the digital sector. Specifically, to provide resourcing for:

- Education to employment pathways which are developed for, and delivered to Indigenous talent
- Access to such programs in regional and remote locations
- Addressing digital literacy barriers such as access to hardware and connectivity
- Increasing the cultural safety and capability of education and training programs being delivered to Indigenous talent.

The **Key Projects** will include:

Addressing barriers to participation in the digital sector through the **Digital Access Program**:

- Community-driven digital literacy program
- Digital infrastructure to support digital inclusion initiatives in remote and rural areas
- Development and implementation of Indigenous tech skills hubs across Australia.

Increasing the pipeline of Indigenous talent in the digital sector:

- Education and training scholarships (including stipends)
- Mentoring programs to increase the retention of Indigenous students (including digital literacy programs) and employees
- Indigenous Trainer development program
- Pathway programs including digital hubs

Developing and strengthening strategic partnerships with Corporate, tech industry leaders and community to address the gap in Indigenous tech talent:

- Ambassador program
- Signature philanthropic events
- Promotion and awards focused on Indigenous tech talent achievements

### **Land on Heart – Background on Capability and Experience**

LOH's capability to deliver the various programs encompasses the collective skills and experience of CEO, Lisa Sarago, Chairperson and Co-Founder Steven Gray. Lisa Sarago, is a Yidinji/Yalanji woman from Far North Queensland and holds vast experience working in and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities over the past 3 decades – across remote, rural and urban areas. Her experience includes the development and delivery of many new services, particularly in Queensland – ranging from sport and recreation to violence prevention initiatives, as well as employment and economic development projects. Lisa is considered a leader in service development and delivery and



has brought this experience and expertise to the tech sector. Thus, incorporating these skills into LOH services which develop digital literacy programs through their Indigenous Skills Hubs and mobile kiosks. Through most of her work conducted in the remote locations, digital connectivity was sparse, and at times not an option, which then required other means of communication and “work arounds.” Therefore, working with limited tech connectivity is something LOH is familiar with and has a range of alternatives to assist. Lisa’s leadership capabilities and expertise has been recognised with her attaining the Women in Digital Indigenous Leader of the Year (2022) Award, and recently named in Cosmos’ top 40 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander STEM leaders (2024) during NAIDOC week.

Co-Founder and Chairperson of LOH services, Steven Gray has 3 decades’ experience in the tech space and is the Managing Director of Utilitise IT, a tech support company which is co-located with LOH services’ first Indigenous Skills Hub. Utilitise IT has been operating for over 10 years, and through their partnership with LOH Services, provides technical expertise and advise to LOH services and operations.

### **Land On Heart’s Mobile Kiosk Program**

LOH purchased the tech company Hitnet, which began operating over 20 years ago. Hitnet had developed and distributed kiosks with WiFi hotspots, across Australia, reaching some remote locations, to initially address access to health promotional materials in Indigenous communities. Over the years, Hitnet has expanded its operations, providing communities with a diverse range of activities to encourage the engagement with tech, including the development of the portal “My Place.”

Recently, LOH has been granted funding from the Department of Social Security (DSS) to deliver the kiosk program which includes the installation of the mobile kiosks, it’s digital content and digital literacy programs. This funding has provided the opportunity to build upon the Hitnet kiosk program as a starting point for the LOH Indigenous tech skills hubs program in the 21 selected locations in the Northern Territory (with a possibility to extend to 31). This project will include building the capability of these selected Aboriginal communities with digital skills. The LOH team will focus on community engagement activities from the initial community visit (installation phase), during the project and including evaluation processes.

As the project progresses, key community members will be identified to increase their digital skills, with the aim to becoming LOH employees, providing tech support and maintenance to the kiosks. Progressive engagement and evaluation will also enable the program to continually improve and enhance the digital skills learnt by community members, therefore, building the pipeline of Indigenous tech talent in community.

For each site:

- The LOH Kiosk Wi-Fi portal page can be branded specific to the local community
- Mobile landing page menu can be customised to the community’s preference of websites and apps (co-designed with the community and annually reviewed)



- Content filtering – the community can decide their level of content access to ensure safe web browsing
- Control the amount of data per user per day to ensure fair use among your community users
- Decide on what times the Wi-Fi is available each day
- Usage reporting.

#### Key features of the kiosks:

- Community based kiosks that provided tailored content that is specific to each community.
- Content ability to be published in language.
- Adaptable content tailored to the changing needs and priorities of community.
- High performance devices, that have specifically designed for the harsh conditions of Remote Australia, which includes IP66 rated design and components to with stand, dust and moisture to reduce failure rates.
- Remote management capabilities to allow for automate content updates, support and management, reducing down time and manual intervention.
- Remote monitoring to provide real time health and alert monitoring if any characteristic of the kiosk change, eg temperature and pressure changes within kiosk, light sensors, GPS tracking and more.
- Environmentally conscious packaging for shipping to remote communities, with easy transportation and set up to reduce the risk of damage and component failure.
- Easy Part replacements to minimise the need for technicians to attend site for part replacements.
- Each kiosk utilises modern Microsoft Management technologies and is secure by design.
- Ability to extend the content for forms based interaction not just video viewing.

#### Portal Features include:

- Easy access for content creators to be able to upload and manage their content and track usage statistics.
- Easy access for Community manager to configure their content and select from the menu of content available, including tracking usage statistics.
- Consistent management of content for Kiosks and Mobile platforms (My Place).
- Seamless content updates to kiosks.

Through our educational tools that are targeted towards Corporates and large organisations, the kiosks also provide community with the opportunity to on-sell their community-specific products. Such as digital movies that portray a significant cultural story. In adherence to Indigenous Data Sovereignty, community information and digital content is only accessible within that community, however, if the community chooses – they can share it as a commercial venture.

LOH sees the implementation of the digital kiosks as a starting point to our broader strategy, continually building upon the digital literacy skills through further community-led digital projects and eventually moving towards employable skills. LOH is building tech skills hubs across Australia, with the intent to deliver a range of IT support and other digital services from these hubs, which will employ Indigenous tech talent, as well as support Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses.



## **Community-led Design**

Wherever we install our technology solutions, they are led by the local community to inform the information and services available. Our community engagement starts from the beginning, with initial site visits to assist with the installation of the kiosks and training of identified community members. Our team will be focused on building a rapport with community, with return visits at least annually to evaluate the program, seek qualitative feedback from community, and further identify and workshop future tech projects.

The community designs:

- the local videos and images that are uploaded onto the 'My Place' channel and screensaver, available on the touchscreen (My Place is consistently the most watched channel in each community and is integral to effective community acceptance of and engagement with the kiosk)
- the other interactive content that is available on the touchscreen, drawing from a large catalogue of health, social and cultural content
- the Wi-Fi hotspot use (optional extra); level of content filtering, hours of operation, amount of data per user, length of time of use each day
- the mobile landing page (optional extra); the categories displayed on the menu, and the websites and apps that are relevant to them.

To maximise the benefit that this project can bring to community, particularly in the digital space, LOH will ensure that community engagement is core to all our activities, continuing to build a relationship in a meaningful way. We propose to conduct community engagement activities to:

- Increase the community buy-in and ownership of the digital literacy project and kiosk;
- Choose meaningful digital projects that aim to build on the digital literacy skills and continue the momentum in community to further develop an interest in tech as a potential employment and economic opportunity; and
- Start building a pathway into developing an Indigenous tech skills hub.

The local community members that were initially engaged and trained in the hardware and operation of the software, will also be provided with support through LOH IT support services to assist with troubleshooting. These members will also be able to provide qualitative feedback to LOH staff regarding which content is suitable to the community. They will also act as a "digital literacy mentor" to other community members.

## **Land on Heart's Indigenous Tech Skills Hubs**

Our ambitious goals are to develop 10-15 Indigenous Tech Skills Hubs across regional and remote Australia, our first being co-located with our headquarters in Geelong. Through these hubs, we create a pool of Indigenous talent.

For our more remote locations, our hubs are established to address the key barriers to digital literacy:

- Access – our kiosks have Wi-Fi hotspot ability, providing community with ongoing access to the internet and hardware.



- Affordability – we provide the hardware (beginning with our kiosks and then moving onto equipment as the skill development requires). Further through our partnerships with tech companies and other Corporates, providing hardware such as laptops to support the program and support further development of digital skills in the community.
- Digital Ability – our kiosks will be supported through face-to-face delivery and digital content on online safety, digital literacy and will be kept current with the latest tech information to stay safe (ie. Scammer alerts etc).

Once there is momentum in developing digital skills and an interest in tech as a potential employment opportunity, the program can be extended to include:

- commence building a pipeline of potential Indigenous tech talent – creating employment and economic opportunities for local talent in community;
- implementing the various training and upskilling programs that LOH has to attain career-entry roles in tech;
- engage collaborators and partners of LOH to provide mentoring and support to tech talent in community as part of LOH's program; and
- Identify further opportunities for the creation of innovative tech solutions from community (ie. Software solutions).

LOH are currently working with tech companies to identify ways to partner and support the creation and sustainability of the Indigenous tech skills hubs.



## Responding to the First Nations Digital Inclusion Measures

**Closing the Gap - Target 17:** *People have access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives.*

Outcome: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives.*

Target: *By 2026, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have equal levels of digital inclusion*

### **Measure 1: Free community Wi-Fi in remote communities through a contestable program**

**Recommendation 1.3:** *Explore alternative technologies beyond traditional terrestrial solutions*

Land on Heart has explored how we can establish digital literacy programs within remote communities where there may be no mobile coverage. Firstly, we are pursuing Starlink to be accepted onto their partner program. Starlink has proven successful in filling the gap where there is no mobile coverage in other areas of Australia.

Further, our mobile kiosks also have a Wi-Fi hotspot ability, which will enable access to the internet for external devices. It is simple to use for mobile device users as the access has no log-ons, and an easy-to-use mobile landing page to guide inexperienced users to curated websites and apps. Thus, lack of internet or mobile connectivity will not preclude any remote community from accessing LOH's digital literacy programs and services.

### **Measure 2: First Nations digital support hub**

**Recommendation 1.12:** *Fund a First Nations support hub to support connectivity literacy*

LOH's mobile kiosk program and Indigenous Tech Skills Hubs are completely aligned with this recommendation. The purpose of our hubs is to build a pipeline of Indigenous tech talent in a progressive way, building skills through engaging community in a range of activities and digital projects that are suited to that community.

Generally, the process would include:

- digital literacy training – both face to face and online digital literacy content;
- digital literacy programs are within our kiosks and are culturally appropriate;
- provision of other health, social, educational, government information through our kiosks that are culturally inclusive and accessible to all (eg. English as 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> language – spoken and written);
- working closely with digital experts, as well as advocacy groups and government agencies (such as e-Safety Commission) to ensure that online safety information is provided in a culturally appropriate way – both content and delivery;
- local mentors engaged as LOH staff – to provide face to face support in community to enable access and increase ability to use tech;





- local LOH staff will also play an important role in maintaining and troubleshooting with technical hardware (such as the kiosks) – supported by LOH staff based in Geelong (headquarters) and other locations in Australia;
- working with local mentors and community to create innovative tech to incorporate local language into digital literacy programs, online safety messages and information available on the kiosks;
- LOH technical experts will visit the communities at least once a year to perform maintenance to hardware (and any software issues), as well as work with community to identify further projects;
- working with community to identify projects which aligns with their interests and priorities as well as building digital skills ie. Recording cultural stories, or capturing local language as a way of preserving culture and language;
- identifying various training and upskilling across the generations including young people – for example primary school-aged children; and
- continually building upon the digital skills through engagement into community-based digital initiatives.

The hubs will receive continual support from LOH’s broader staffing compliment of tech specialists, and will continue the digital skills journey to progress towards creating Indigenous “call centres” or “tech support centres”, as well as other tech capabilities – such as working on Indigenous innovative tech solutions.

LOH is currently working with industry leaders, global tech companies and tech support centres to provide:

- Mentoring and support to Indigenous talent
- Resources – hardware, software and technical expertise
- In-kind support to community initiatives and projects
- Pathway into employment within their company
- Co-design IT support centres based in community
- Employment through on-the-job training programs co-created with LOH.

### **Measure 3: A network of digital mentors**

***Recommendation 1.6:*** Partner with industry to support a network of digital mentors in communities of need.

LOH is collaborating and partnering with several Corporations and SMEs within the industry. Some of these include: ServiceNow, Interactive, AWS (for an Indigenous-specific upskilling program), Skills TX (mentoring platform), Microsoft (creating cultural tech solutions) and Indigenous companies such as Deadly Coders. We are also a solution partner to Microsoft and Crayon, as well as a supplier to Lenovo.

As a foundational partner, global tech company ServiceNow is undertaking a variety of activities in partnership with LOH to enhance their internal cultural capability and collaborate on innovative tech solutions to assist with Indigenous community-based projects.



LOH employs a place-based, co-design approach to developing and implementing programs within community. As part of our model, we engage a variety of mentors to undertake different types of support within our programs. The activities would include providing mentoring to local people across a range of activities from hardware troubleshooting through to assisting with online forms, internet banking etc.

We identify existing and potential mentors through:

- Initial community members identified during consultation to provide mentoring and support to community when using the kiosk;
- scoping existing and planned (human) resources which could be engaged as mentors to participate in our mentoring program (this could be local or regional resources engaged to perform roles and can provide in-kind support and mentoring to local communities eg. Centrelink officers);
- identifying local talent to continue with a cluster-based approach for remote locations – becoming a Land on Heart employee;
- partnerships with Corporates and tech companies (both local, SMEs, and global) – to access their talent to provide in-kind support through their RAP initiatives or Social Responsibility targets;
- local talent identified to be upskilled through our existing staffing (both remotely through phone support, virtual meetings and face to face training);
- working in collaboration with Skills TX to continue upskilling of individuals that want to continue their tech skill development journey – through their tech skills mentoring platform;
- partnering with other digital education and mentoring organisations to apply a cultural lens to their content and delivery to ensure the provision of a culturally appropriate mentoring program;
- tapping into existing local and regional Indigenous mentor programs and resources that are culturally appropriate to provide support (and upskill if necessary) to individuals seeking assistance.

Although the mentoring can be sourced through a variety of ways, the mentor network is managed through our mentoring program. The program ensures coordination of upskilling and building capability within a sustainable and culturally appropriate way is achieved to maximise the effectiveness of the mentoring – and can be scaled up.

#### **Measure 4: Improving the national collection of data on First Nations digital inclusion.**

##### ***Recommendation 2.1 – Expansion of the Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII)***

Through our mobile kiosks, LOH has the ability to access and analyse the following data:

Reporting features

- Ability to track all usage and behaviour across each kiosk
- Rolled up content usage statistics to track most viewed content, break points, etc
- AI engine to establish usage profiles and recommended content changes for community priorities



- Full reporting capabilities for Service based reporting, including health statistic and forecasting faults and failures pre-emptively.

Our reporting is in real time and allows content to be modified to suit community needs and preferences. We can also share these learnings with content providers – both existing and potential – to ensure they modify their content to suit community needs.

LOH has commenced discussions with RMIT, as part of the Centre of Excellence for automated decision-making and society, to ensure that the recently funded DSS Digital Connectivity project (to be implemented across 21 communities – and potentially 31 - in the Northern Territory). As this project will be underway this month, with planning to be finalised in September, progression of these discussions is critical. We aim to achieve a guideline and process to embed appropriate evaluation and reporting mechanisms which are incorporated into our software (to minimise impact on community).

LOH's aim is to commence the project with a baseline and evaluation process embedded, which will assist with the continuous improvement of our services and activities and provide useful data to inform effectiveness of the overall digital connectivity program.

Land on Heart values and prioritises Indigenous Data Sovereignty and therefore, any data that is collected will be done in line with adhering to this.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, LOH believes our vision, purpose and model are aligned with the findings of the First Nations Digital Inclusion Plan. As the digital divide grows and the reliance on tech as the main delivery point of key services and information continues to build, addressing digital literacy issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly in remote locations is critical. Furthermore, the tech sector is the third largest and fastest growing in Australia. Indigenous representation in this sector is miniscule, and our passion to engage and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander into the tech sector – in employment and entrepreneurialism. Through our strategic partnerships with tech companies, Corporates and training partners, we can help achieve our goals.

