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Townsville Impact Procurement Framework

A pathway for implementing local and social procurement in the region.

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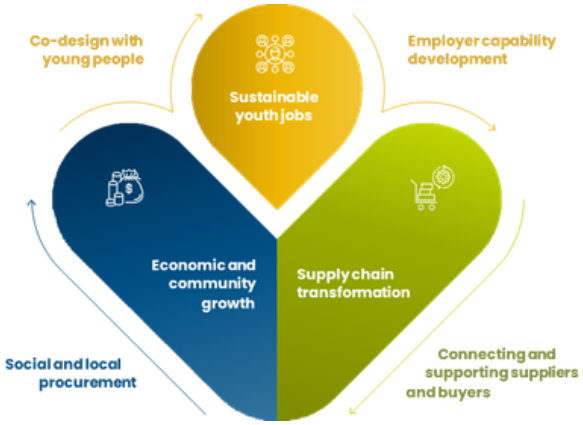
Introduction

What is Q-SEED?



Since 2024, Q-SEED (Queensland Social procurement, Employment and Economic Development) has worked to transform Townsville through social, Indigenous, and local procurement.

Funded by the Queensland Government, the project engaged more than 200 locals and organisations, and developed a pathway for implementing social procurement and inclusive employment in the region.

This framework is intended to support collaboration and capability-building in Townsville. It focuses on improving access and participation for local and First Nations businesses, strengthening pathways to meaningful employment, enhancing trust and transparency in procurement practices, and contributing to a more resilient, inclusive, and environmentally responsible local economy.

How this framework was designed

This framework was co-designed through a series of workshops with more than 50 local stakeholders participating, including representatives from industry, government, SMEs, social enterprises, and non-profits, beginning with a full-day in-person session at SPNQ, followed by three online workshops. Invitations were shared directly with stakeholders and promoted publicly via partner social media channels.

A dedicated workshop was held in consultation with the Department of Women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Multiculturalism, bringing together First Nations representatives to contribute to the content on First Nations engagement and voice.

This process informed a shared systems Theory of Change for collective action (not a program logic model for evaluation), designed to guide many organisations working together, rather than a single program or compliance model. It reflects the view that change happens through alignment of procurement practices, capability, and partnerships across the local ecosystem over time.

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City of Townsville

Acknowledgement to Australia's First Nations Peoples.

CQUniversity recognises and acknowledges the important role First Nations Peoples make to our communities, and values Australian Indigenous knowledge systems as an integral part of our teachings.

Participant perspectives

Samantha Scandlyn

Local Economic Participation Specialist, Powerlink QLD

"Q-SEED has left a legacy already… hands-down. (The project) was doing something Townsville-wide, and making us work together... the port and the hospital and council and all those big buyers work together to deliver this? That's something that I'd never seen done before, and (had) never been considered. That's probably the biggest value I see.

"I liked that Smart Precinct didn't just invite procurement people. It is usually like… meet the buyer, so you'll have all the buyers and the suppliers… (Q-SEED) was just a really big mix in the room.

"Local suppliers loved it, the small businesses… their feedback is, they have more confidence now of tendering and they understand the process."

Karl Gill

Chief Procurement Officer, Townsville City Council

"Townsville City Council joined Q-SEED to strengthen how procurement supports local employment and economic participation... Sustained engagement was (how Q-SEED built) local capability, improving market transparency, and structuring procurement to enable competition.

"The project demonstrated that supporting local, social and First Nations outcomes is most effective when it is embedded through early planning, clear pathways to market, and capability uplift.

"This alignment between value-for-money principles and local economic outcomes was a key reason Council has been involved.

"Council expects the outputs of Q-SEED to contribute to a pathway to a more capable and competitive local supplier base, reduced reliance on single suppliers, and stronger participation of local and First Nations businesses in major projects. These outcomes support better pricing, innovation and resilience for the community."

Elisabeth Lette

Founder and Director, EML Advisory Pty Ltd

"Over the past 2.5 years, more than 200 representatives of the Townsville community have contributed to this place-based procurement program. Q-SEED applied procurement principles and practice as a lever to keep money in the local Townsville economy.

"There are many legacy Q-SEED relationships, learnings, documented tools and approaches that will position Townsville to achieve better procurement outcomes as a region, better than any other location in Queensland.

"Why? Because of passionate individuals who came together with a collective problem in mind and defined what a collective solution could look like. Organisations can now embed local and social outcomes into their business-as-usual procurement decisions."

Theory of Change

How to use

This Theory of Change is intended to be used as a shared guide and reference point for shaping procurement practice, programs and partnerships across Townsville. It can be used by Council teams, suppliers, industry partners, SMEs and supporting organisations to understand the intent behind procurement decisions, test whether proposed actions align with agreed priorities, and identify where there are opportunities to contribute.

The Theory of Change is not a fixed plan or compliance checklist, but a living, aspirational framework that reflects the collective direction set through co-design with SMEs, industry and support organisations. As conditions, policy settings and market capability evolve, it is expected to be revisited, adapted and strengthened over time. It supports continuous learning, accountability and collaboration across the procurement ecosystem.

Evaluation and global context

International research on anchor institutions[1] demonstrates that social value from procurement is created through the alignment of strategy, activities, capabilities and partnerships over time, rather than through isolated or short-term interventions. This supports an evaluation approach that looks for early shifts in behaviour, capability and collaboration as leading indicators of longer-term system and community outcomes.

[1] Selviaridis, K., Luzzini, D., & Mena, C. (2023). *Achieving social value through public procurement: Evidence from UK anchor institutions.* Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management.

Caring for people, place and our natural systems

If we... **Believe in caring for people, place and our natural systems.**

By...	This will result in...	And eventually...
Mapping and understanding the local ecosystem.	# Tools or datasets produced linking environmental outcomes to economic benefits. # Environmental/circular economy procurement guidelines or templates developed.	Environmental and circular economy principles embedded in procurement.
Showcasing local and regional examples of circular economy and environmental leadership.	# Whole-of-life education sessions delivered to buyers and suppliers. # Cross-sector circular economy collaboration sessions held.	Buyers increasingly incorporate environmental and whole-of-life criteria into tenders. Buyers make procurement decisions with clearer environmental and economic insight.
Promoting education on whole-of-life sustainability, waste and resource recovery.	# Waste or by-product reuse pilots trialled.	New business models emerge creating value from waste and by-products. SMEs improve capacity to meet environmental standards and offer low-waste solutions.
Supporting applied uses for waste and by-products.	# Procurement briefs updated with environmental and circular criteria.	Increased suppliers providing circular, regenerative or low-waste solutions. More materials recovered, reused or repurposed locally.
Building shared equipment and collaboration models.	Appropriately scaled and simplified contracts for SMEs.	Major and minor projects adopt circular procurement models. Cross-sector collaboration on sustainability becomes normalised practice.
Connecting environmental and economic value in procurement planning.	Better alignment between environmental and economic goals across the region.	Procurement decisions consistently informed by environmental and economic evidence.

A confident, capable, collaborative Townsville where local and First Nations businesses prosper, people access meaningful long-term work, procurement systems are trusted and transparent, and the local economy is resilient, inclusive, and environmentally responsible.

This Theory of Change acknowledges the contribution, creativity and co-design of participants at Q-SEED workshops across 2024-2025.

Engaging respectfully with the local First Nations community

If we... **Engage respectfully with the local First Nations community, including Traditional Owners, First Nations business owners and individuals early and at every stage of a project.**

By...	This will result in...	And eventually...
Cultural site visits and learning about traditional connections to place.	# Indigenous Working Group established for all major projects. Engagement with Traditional Owners and community leaders via Land Councils, DWATSIPM and Supply Nation. Traditional Owner alliance formed. Tier one and two businesses attend community-led events.	First Nations voices and knowledge meaningfully embedded in procurement design, leading to more respectful, place-based partnerships and stronger trust between Townsville City Council and Traditional Owners.
Building a database of First Nations businesses and community contacts.	# Transparency of outcomes reported to Townsville First Nations Council. DWATSIPM database used as reporting mechanism for First Nations businesses.	First Nations businesses consistently identified, contacted and included in procurement opportunities, reducing systemic invisibility and increasing share of contracts over time.
Developing cultural impact statements to guide procurement and project design.	# Local procurement plan developed outlining potential opportunities, submitted at time of application.	Procurement decisions consistently informed by cultural values and community priorities, reducing cultural harm and rework.
Setting aside contracts and procurement portions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	# Monitoring and reporting frameworks developed. # Work packages developed within the capacity of SMEs in the region. Consultation with First Nations business community about capacity in planning stages.	First Nations businesses grow in revenue, workforce and capacity; set-aside mechanisms become normalised and expanded across more contract types.
Embedding RAP-aligned policies and continuous engagement processes.	Procurement plans embedded into RAPs.	Engagement with First Nations community embedded in organisational culture, with measurable progress reported annually through RAP frameworks.
Scaling up the capacity of existing businesses so they have more control over procurement in larger contracts.	Indigenous businesses mentored to elevate capability and capacity for subcontracting. # Queensland Government Procurement Policy (QPP) 2026 guidelines met for state government operators.	First Nations-owned businesses winning larger contracts, including as prime contractors; subcontracting pipelines grow; and the region meets and exceeds QPP 2026 Guidelines.

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Supporting Townsville's local economy

If we... **Support the local economy by providing local employment and procurement opportunities.**

By...	This will result in...	And eventually...
Training and upskilling local workforce, prioritising young people and First Nations people.	# Employment and procurement access pathways established. # Training workshops delivered to SMEs and local workforce. # Apprenticeships, graduate or training opportunities created via procurement.	Local workforce has improved job readiness and access to career pathways. Local SMEs are more capable, confident and competitive in tendering.
Sharing knowledge, mentoring and coaching for local businesses.	# Tender-readiness and procurement information sessions delivered. # Mentoring sessions delivered and SMEs supported. # Major project engagement sessions and capability briefings delivered.	More local and First Nations businesses win contracts. The business ecosystem is more connected, collaborative and resilient.
Creating clear access pathways to employment and procurement opportunities.	# Buyer-supplier matching events delivered. # Local capability and supplier asset maps produced (incl. First Nations suppliers).	Procurement systems are more transparent, predictable and accessible. Increased cultural safety and genuine First Nations economic participation.
Breaking large contracts into smaller local packages.	# Contract packages redesigned for local supplier suitability. # Supplier registrations, capability profiles or directories created.	Increased employment opportunities and strengthened local economy leading to regional growth across multiple social determinants.
Attracting and aligning major projects with local capability.	# Local businesses that have simplified onboarding processes and payment terms to align with small business participation.	
Forward procurement planning and transparency for SMEs.	# Forward procurement pipeline published and regularly updated. # Local procurement guidelines and toolkits produced for suppliers and buyers.	

Contributing to...

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Engage with us

Continue what Q-SEED began. Explore procurement opportunities, impact processes, and best-practice toolkits for inclusive engagement.

Townsville City Council is supporting the continued impact of Q-SEED initiatives, by maintaining resources and momentum generated by the project.

LEARN MORE:

Want to embed social impact in your procurement, operations or region?

CQUniversity's Social Impact Lab works with government, industry, business and the for-purpose sector, leading human-centred design and co-design for sustainable solutions.

CQUniversity is Australia's first and only social enterprise university, certified by Social Traders Australia and recognised for our social and environmental benefit.

Partner with the Social Impact Lab to grow social impact, and meet impact procurement targets for your organisation.

cqu.edu.au/socialimpact
socialimpact@cqu.edu.au

City of Townsville

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