Educating for equality

## Assessment tool

February 2026

Our Watch

Preventing violence against women

Acknowledgement of Country

Our Watch acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land across Australia on which we work and live. We pay respects to Elders past and present and recognise the continuing connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to land, culture, knowledge, and language for over 65,000 years.

As a non-Aboriginal organisation, Our Watch understands that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is an issue for the whole community. As highlighted in Our Watch's national resource *Changing the picture*, the evidence clearly shows the intersection between racism, sexism, and violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Our Watch has an ongoing commitment to the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, who continue to suffer from violence at a significantly higher rate than non-Aboriginal women. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations who continue to lead the work of sharing knowledge with non-Indigenous people and relentlessly advocate for an equitable, violence-free future in Australia.
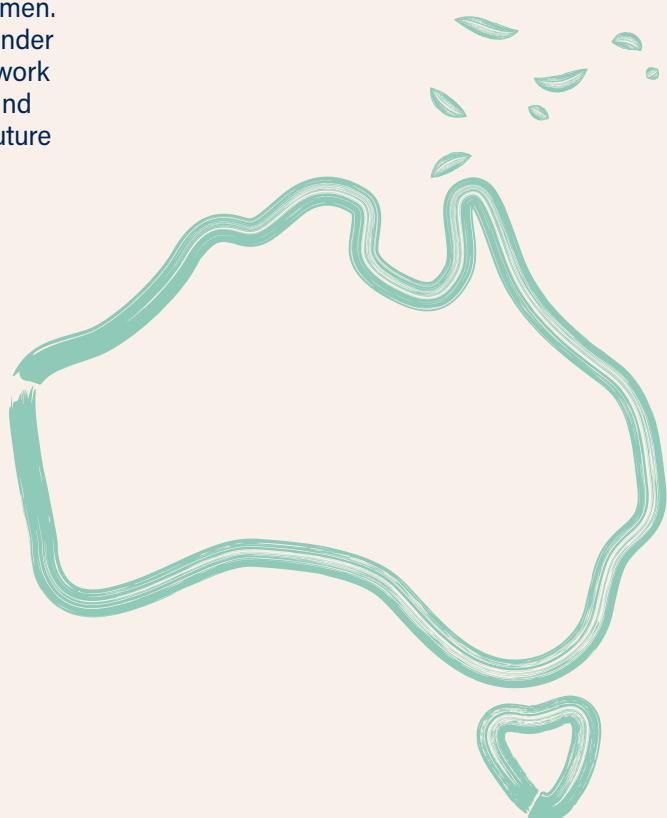
Introduction

About the process

This tool is designed for universities undertaking a whole-of organisation assessment of progress towards preventing gender-based violence. We refer to the responsible teams as 'implementation teams' in this document. This tool walks you through 5 stages of an assessment process for each of the *Educating for equality* domains.

This assessment tool contains a process and appendices that will help you to:

- understand your university's current landscape

- assess what else needs to happen – including enablers, risks and barriers

- integrate the perspectives of your diverse university community

- identify your priorities and next steps to start taking action.

The assessment findings will inform and support you to develop your university's whole-of-organisation approach to preventing gender-based violence and promoting gender equality – a requirement of the *National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence* – including undertaking a whole-of-organisation assessment (**Standard 1.4e**) and preparing your prevention and response plan (**Standard 1.4**). The findings may also support other intersecting plans, strategies and obligations, including Commonwealth and state/territory gender equality reporting requirements.

The five *Educating for equality* domains that you will assess are:

Governance, business and operations

Student life

Workplace

Teaching and learning

Research

The 5 stages of the assessment process

		What's involved	Who leads	Supporting tool
STAGE 1 **Gather**		Collect data to help understand the current situation in each domain	Implementation team	Information Gathering Tool (Appendix 1)
STAGE 2 **Assess**		Use your data to create a summary for each domain, including enablers, risks and barriers	Implementation team	Domain Summaries Tool (Appendix 2)
STAGE 3 **Consult**		Conduct stakeholder focus groups to review and build on your findings for each domain	Implementation team and focus group facilitators	Focus Group Feedback Tool (Appendix 3)
STAGE 4 **Reassess**		Review and finalise your domain summaries	Implementation team	Domain Summaries Tool (Appendix 2) and Focus Group Feedback Tool (Appendix 3)
STAGE 5 **Plan for action**		Use your findings to start planning for action in each domain	Implementation team	Action Planning Tool (Appendix 4)

Alignment with the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence and other obligations

The *National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence* (National Code) requires all universities to develop a whole-of-organisation approach to preventing and responding to gender-based violence. This aligns with the *Educating for equality* model and tools.

The findings of this assessment tool will help you:

- design (or update) your whole-of-organisation approach

- contribute to your prevention and response plan

- strengthen your ability to comply with the National Code, particularly the primary prevention requirements.

To assist with your planning and reporting, the assessment tool notes key alignment with National Code standards. However, you should review the National Code carefully to ensure you are meeting all primary prevention and response requirements.

This assessment process is designed to build on and integrate into your existing processes and legislative obligations, which will help you to avoid duplication, prioritise resources and streamline engagement with your key stakeholders.

Your implementation team

Your implementation team is the group responsible for leading the assessment process and should be made up of staff (and ideally students) from all domains and various levels of the university. This is usually the team also responsible for the development and implementation of *Educating for equality* and would be established as part of the first step of the *Educating for equality* implementation process. All members of the implementation team should be familiar with:

- a whole-of-university approach to preventing gender-based violence, including the *Educating for equality domains*

- gender-based violence drivers and reinforcing factors, and the essential actions to address these

- the National Code standards and requirements.

The *Educating for equality* training packages and online resources can support your team to prepare for the assessment process and build a shared foundation of knowledge and language.

This tool forms part of the *Educating for equality: Implementation guide*, and will support your university through steps 2 (assess) and 3 (plan) of the implementation cycle.

To learn more about a whole-of organisation approach through the *Educating for equality* model, including the domains and 5-step process, see the *Educating for equality: Implementation guide*.

A five-step cycle

STEP 1

Prepare

- Secure support and commitment from leaders
- Establish governance structures
- Support and response services are in place
- Develop Communications Plan

STEP 2

Assess

- Map existing work and data
- Engage staff and students

STEP 3

Plan

- Develop Action Plan
- Secure endorsement
- Co-design and collaborate
- Communicate progress

STEP 4

Deliver

- Deliver planned actions within timeframes
- Communicate with stakeholders

STEP 5

Monitor and evaluate

- Monitor progress and seek feedback
- Process and impact evaluations
- Use findings to refine

STAGE 1

Gather

In this first stage you will be using the <u>information gathering tool (Appendix 1)</u> to gather the data and information needed to create a summary of your university's current primary prevention landscape for each domain. This data will then be used to complete the <u>domain summaries tool (Appendix 2)</u>.

What to do

1 **Get started:** using the <u>information gathering tool</u>, your implementation team can identify the data sources and information you will need to gather to complete the **domain summaries tool**, including who will collect the data and how long it may take to source that information.

2 **Make sure your data collection processes comply with confidentiality, use and storage requirements.** In addition to your institution's relevant data policies, the National Code sets out requirements for collecting and reporting on data, evidence and impact (see Standard 6).

3 **The information gathering tool includes examples of the kinds of data you may wish to gather** for your assessment stages, but key data sources may include the following:

- Student and staff surveys such as the *National Student Safety Survey* and *Respect@Work*, as well as university staff and student satisfaction surveys.

- Reporting from Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Athena SWAN and other equity and inclusion initiatives.

- University policies, procedures, codes of conduct and action plans related to gendered-violence prevention, gender equality, positive duty, workplace health and safety obligations, memberships and affiliations such as Athena SWAN, and other regulatory and legislative requirements.

- Disaggregated data to understand the demographics, needs and context of your student and staff population.

- Data from staff and student support and wellbeing services that reflect both access to, and experience using, services.

- Monitoring and evaluation data from existing programs, training and initiatives aligned to safety, equity and inclusion, including qualitative feedback and quantitative data.

- Examples of internal and external communications and initiatives that promote gender equality, respect and preventing gender-based violence.

- Evidence of gender-based violence focused research, partnerships and expertise within the university.

4 Once you have collected as much available and relevant data as possible, you are ready to begin using that **data to create your domain summaries**.

Tip:

During this process you may identify that there is missing data or information you don't have. Before you rush to collect it, consider that additional data can also be collected in later stages of the assessment and implementation process.

For example, plan to find this information in your consultation stage/focus groups, or develop a priority action in your action plan so you have time to do a thorough data collection process (like a student/staff survey, research project or gaps analysis in a key domain).

STAGE 2

Assess

In this stage, you will assess the information gathered in stage 1 to summarise where the university stands on taking action to prevent gender-based violence across each domain – including strengths, opportunities, enablers, risks and barriers.

The implementation team will complete a **domain summary** for each of the 5 domains using the <u>domain summaries tool (Appendix 2)</u> and the information gathered in stage 1.

What to do

1 Start with the goal:
Review the example goal provided for each domain and tailor it to reflect your university's vision and context.

2 Analyse the information collected:
Look at the information you've collected and consider how well your university is currently meeting each of the aims. Think about any additional aims you might want to add that are relevant to your context. Reflect on what's working well and what's missing. Think about this through the lens of the three levers of action from the *Educating for equality* model:

- values and culture
- structures, strategies and policies
- prevention practice.

3 Determine a group score for each aim:
Next, you will come up with a group score for each of the domain aims. This score should not be considered 'hard' evidence or assessment, but can be used as a jumping off point for reflection to help you identify strengths, gaps and priorities and complete your Domain Assessments.

Use the **scoring key and descriptors** at the start of **Appendix 2** to support this activity.

How to come up with a group score:
Each participant can come up with an individual score to reflect how the university is performing for each aim (using the rating in the score key) based on their own knowledge and information gathered in stage 1.

Once you have individual scores, average the individual scores to generate a group score.

You can use apps like Mentimeter or Slido, which allow participants to enter scores anonymously via their mobile or computer, and generate the group score for you. Once you have your group scores, see if any aims need further discussion to help you understand or agree on the final score. For instance, if an aim has a wide range of scores or if it is low scoring.

4 Complete the Current Situation column:
Summarise your reflections on the group score and discussion in the 'Current Situation' tab of the **Appendix Tool 2**.

5 Complete the domain assessment table:
Summarise your discussion about current strengths, gaps, opportunities, enablers, risks and barriers in the domain assessment table. Note any missing voices or perspectives that need to be included.

Once you've completed all five domain summaries, you'll be ready to move to stage 3 and consult with key stakeholders from each domain to review and build on your assessment.
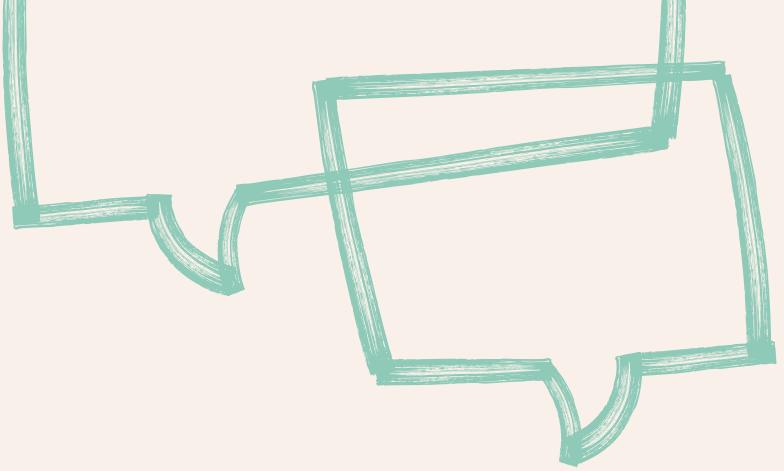
STAGE 3

Consult

In this stage, the implementation team will consult with stakeholders across each domain by using the <u>focus group feedback tool (Appendix 3)</u>.

This process will help you to review and build on your initial domain summaries and is essential to ensure your prevention and response plan is informed by staff and students, as required by the National Code (Standards 1.4, 1.5).

Purpose of consultation

The primary purpose of this stage is to test and validate your domain summaries through stakeholder input. Consultation through focus groups will help assess your findings, review aims and identify priorities, ensuring your planning reflects the diverse needs and experiences of your university community.

What to do

1 **Organise a series of focus groups to be conducted by a skilled facilitator – at least one per domain**. Each focus group should include 10 to 20 participants and run for one to 2 hours to allow meaningful contributions.

2 **Conduct your focus groups using the focus group feedback tool (Appendix 3)** to assist you. This provides a structure in which participants will:

1. discuss the domain assessment findings

2. review and score the aims

3. identify next steps or priorities.

> ### Note:
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> **You may already have relevant stakeholder input from previous consultations.** If so, you can choose to skip this step, but it is important to ensure you can demonstrate sufficient stakeholder engagement to meet the National Code requirements.

Planning focus groups

Safety, confidentiality and accessibility

Ensure participation is safe, confidential and accessible. Recognise that sensitive topics, power dynamics, or fear of repercussions may affect willingness to share identifiable data, and consider ways to create safe and respectful environments.

Facilitators

Engage experienced external facilitators or staff with expertise in gender equality and violence prevention to conduct these sessions. They should use a trauma-informed approach and provide de-identified feedback. Ideally, the same facilitators should run all groups for consistency.

Participant supports

Support best practice consultation by:

- sharing background materials and information in advance (including the relevant **domain summaries** completed by the implementation team)

- offering multiple and accessible ways to contribute (e.g., accessible formats, translations, interpreters)

- providing options for anonymous input before and after the session

- sharing information about support services (e.g., 1800 RESPECT, internal support services, referral pathways and reporting processes).

Data collection and storage

Ensure compliance with your institution's data policies and the National Code (**Standard 6**) regarding safe, confidential data handling, and consider who might access the documentation and outcomes of the consultations.

Stakeholder engagement

Identify and invite stakeholders with relevant expertise and lived experience across each domain. This ensures a whole-of-university approach and increases the likelihood of meaningful outcomes that reflect the university community.

This table includes examples of potential stakeholders from each domain who could participate in focus groups, noting that each university is structured differently, with variations in role titles and portfolios.

DOMAIN

Governance, business and operations

- Vice-Chancellor (Given the seniority and power of this role it may be appropriate to provide a separate, individualised opportunity for consultation)
- Chief Operating Officer
- Provost
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor Student Experience and Engagement and/or associated staff
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor Global/International and/or associated staff
- General Counsel
- Registrar
- Executive Director of Strategy and/or associated staff
- Executive Director TAFE (for dual-sector universities)
- Elected Staff Member of University Council

- Elected Student Member of University Council
- Elected President of Student Representative Council
- CEO or executive leader of Students' Association staff
- Executive leaders representing faculties or schools
- Director People and Culture and/or associated staff
- Director of Integrity/Misconduct Team and/or associated staff
- Director of Wellbeing and Support Services and/or associated staff
- Director of Communications and Marketing and/or associated staff
- Executive leaders from relevant controlled, associated, affiliated and related entities, and/or associated staff
- Other student representatives (e.g. relevant committee members)
- People with diverse lived experience and/or expertise in intersectional approaches

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DOMAIN

Student life

- Student leaders from Students' Associations, Student Representative Councils or other student-led entities (including Clubs and Societies)
- Student leaders and staff representatives from colleges and residences
- Students, including domestic, international, undergraduate and post-graduate – both coursework and Higher Degree by Research (HDR)

- Staff from student-facing services and entities (e.g., Students Associations, sports organisations, student experience, equity and diversity, engagement, wellbeing, support and events teams)
- People with diverse lived experience and/or expertise in intersectional approaches

DOMAIN

Workplace

- Human resources staff, including those with a focus on equity and diversity
- Academic staff from various faculties, schools and levels
- Professional staff from various teams, divisions and seniority levels
- Researchers and research fellows
- Union delegates or representatives
- Students who also hold staff roles
- People with diverse lived experience and/or expertise in intersectional approaches

DOMAIN

Teaching and learning

- Staff from learning and development or specialist teaching and learning units
- Teaching staff from various faculties, schools and levels, including sessional and casual staff
- Tutors and academic peer mentors
- Student leaders from Academic Senate, Students' Associations or Student Representative Councils
- Staff representing library services and other learning/academic support services
- Work integrated learning and placement staff
- Pathway and ELICOS staff
- People with diverse lived experience and/or expertise in intersectional approaches

DOMAIN

Research

- Student leaders from Academic Senate, Students' Associations or Student Representative Councils
- HDR students
- Early, mid-career and established researchers
- Research supervisors
- Staff representing HDR academic or student engagement or support services
- Representatives from research networks and centres
- Visiting scholars
- People with diverse lived experience and/or expertise in intersectional approaches

Communicating the process

Before running your focus groups, take time to brief stakeholders so they understand the purpose and feel confident participating. Let them know:

- that your university is taking a whole-of-university approach to preventing gender-based violence
- what the focus groups will involve and why they're important
- how their input will be used, and how you'll ensure their data is handled safely and confidentially.

Share the relevant domain summaries ahead of time and invite feedback before the session – some participants may prefer to contribute anonymously or in writing rather than speaking in the group.

Running the focus groups

Use the **focus group feedback tool (Appendix 2)** to guide discussions. In these focus group sessions, a facilitator will support the participants to:

- discuss the findings of the domain assessments that were completed by the implementation team
- identify gaps and opportunities
- review and score the aims
- identify next steps and priority actions.

Embedding diverse perspectives

To comply with Standards 1.4 and 1.5 of the National Code and ensure you are capturing the voices that reflect the diversity of your university community, you should include:

- people with lived experience of gender-based violence, especially from disproportionately affected communities
- experts in gender-based violence prevention and gender equality
- equity, diversity and inclusion representatives
- leaders who can support implementation and resourcing.

STAGE 4

Reassess

In this stage, you will use the consultation findings from the <u>focus group feedback tool (Appendix 3)</u> to update and finalise your **domain summaries (Appendix 2).**

What to do

The implementation team will regroup and consider the findings of the consultations (focus groups) carried out in stage 3. You will reassess and update your domain summaries based on feedback from the consultation participants.

1 Spend time going through the **focus group feedback tool (Appendix 3)** and reflect on the following questions:

- Does this change your previous assessment (from stage 1)?

- Are there any major differences of opinion/perspective, and how do you balance these?

- Are there any areas with more resistance or complexities that you will need to plan for?

- Does this change your priorities?

2 Use the scoring system in the focus group feedback tool to help you further focus in on gaps, challenges and priorities.
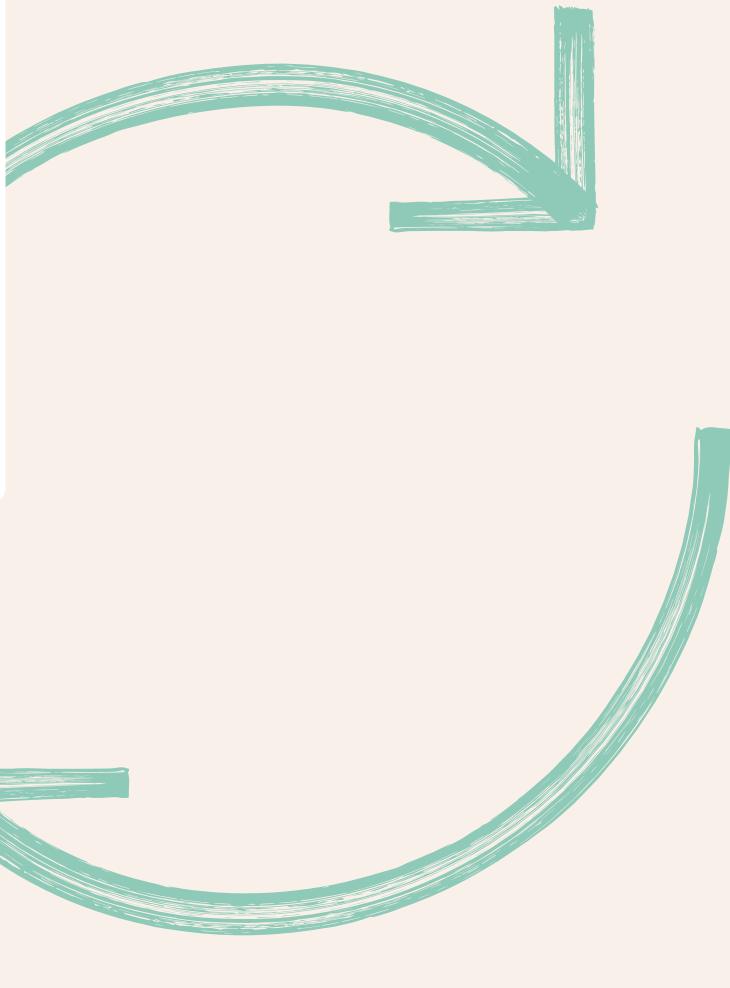
STAGE 5

Plan for action

In this final stage, the implementation team will draw from the updated domain summaries to help prioritise next steps and actions using the <u>action planning tool (Appendix 4),</u> or to input directly into your own internal strategies and plans.

This stage supports step 3 (plan) of the *Educating for equality* 5-step cycle, and can also feed into existing plans or strategies. Use the **action planning tool (Appendix 4)**, or use your own action planning templates or planning documents.

This stage will set you up to move to step 4 (deliver) of the *Educating for equality* cycle. Refer to the *Educating for equality: Implementation guide* for more detail on how to move from planning to delivery.

Resources to support your assessment process

Appendix 1: Information Gathering Tool

Appendix 2: Domain Summaries Tool

Appendix 3: Focus Group Tool

Appendix 4: Action Planning Tool

Educating for Equality Implementation Guide
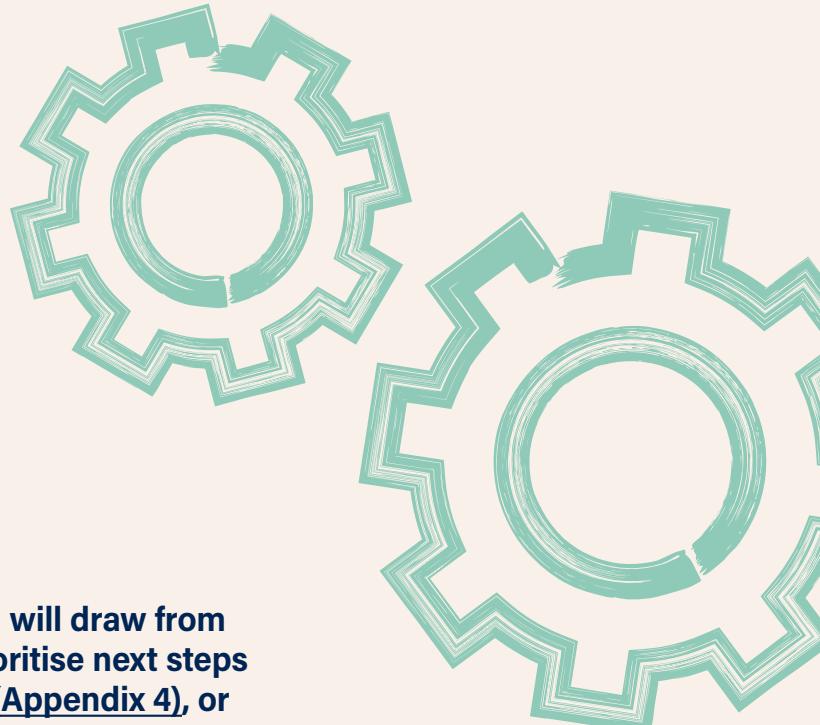
What to do

1 Identify your key priorities and actions:
Drawing from your completed domain summaries, use the action planning tool (Appendix 4) to identify and list key priorities and actions. Bring your full implementation team together to help with this stage – collaboration will strengthen your planning.

2 Consider timeframes and alignment to other institutional plans and strategies:
You can't commit to all the actions at once, so think about developing short-, medium- and longer-term goals and actions. Consider resourcing, strategic alignment and timeframes for actions to be carried out.

3 Decide who's responsible for each action and where it fits:
Actions might sit within your prevention and response plan, gender equality action plan, or other related strategies. Actions might also be delivered by other teams or individuals. Be clear about ownership, accountability and strategic alignment. These actions will need to be signed off or endorsed by key individuals or teams – it's good to consider who will need to be engaged or briefed, in order to move into the delivery phase.