



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL
Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

Learning on Country

Strategic Plan 2025-2026



Learning on Country is a highly successful, 'two-way' education Program, co-designed, governed and delivered by Indigenous stakeholders to support remote Indigenous school students on pathways to positive educational and employment outcomes.



NORTHERN
TERRITORY
GOVERNMENT

Department of
Education and Training



NIAA

NLC Chair's Message

As a former ranger in my hometown of Maningrida, I've seen the widespread positive impacts of the Learning on Country program first-hand. It is important for our young people to have opportunities in front of them, and two-way learning supports our kids to stay connected to their culture while they navigate the world. The program allows them to learn skills, feel proud and build confidence – this strong foundation leads to healthier and happier communities in the long-term.



M. Ryan

Mr Matthew Ryan

LoCP Co-Chair's Message

I am the Galiwin'ku Learning on Country Steering Committee Co-Chairperson of the Learning on Country Program. I am Yolŋu, from Galiwin'ku, my Homeland. I live here and I work here. My clan is Liyagawumirr. I joined the Learning on Country program in 2015 after it started in 2012. Two ways learning, Learning on Country, it's like his...You've got a student sitting inside the room, learning inside the class room, then you've got this program, Learning on Country, that takes the djamarrkuli' out on to Country. Learning in the clear environment so the djamarrkuli' feel comfortable, so they feel marrparaj (brave/courageous/fearless). It is very important for djamarrkuli' to learn outside, in the environment, so the student can feel free and can see and feel everything. We are offering our knowledge, and also the land is offering knowledge back to us. This is both ways learning.



D. Dangadanga

Danny Dangadanga

NLC CEO's Message

At the Northern Land Council, we are proud to support the Learning on Country program because it is driven by community leadership and Indigenous governance. This program is led from the ground up, with local LoC committees at the center. Its award-winning model shows what happens when decision-making is placed in the hands of Traditional Owners. Learning on Country gives students a powerful opportunity to engage in both ways learning—connecting classroom education with cultural knowledge, language, and work on Country. It builds pride, skills, and confidence in our young people. By strengthening cultural identity and creating clear pathways to employment, Learning on Country is not only creating pathways for our students—it's strengthening our communities for the future.



Y. Deen

Mr Yuseph Deen

LoCP Co-Chair's Message

I am a teacher at Maningrida College, Chairperson for the Maningrida LoC program and Co-Chairperson for the LoC Steering Committee. I was born and grew up in Maningrida Community, raised on my mother's homeland at Blythe River. My father's homeland is Ji-Bena. I have been part of the LoC Program in Maningrida since its beginning. The Maningrida LoC Program gives the students' knowledge and safety on country. Working with old people and Rangers ensures that the important stories and connections are passed down to the next generation, passing on strong cultural knowledge that gives students credit points towards graduation and Ranger training to become qualified Rangers so that they can look after their mother's country when they are older.



C. Jinmarabynana

Mrs Cindy Jinmarabynana

LoCP Overview

The Learning on Country Program (LoCP) operates in 14 remote community sites across the Top End of the Northern Territory, including Wadeye, Barunga, Wugularr, Borroloola, Galiwin'ku, Gapuwiyak, Gunbalanya, Laynhapuy Homelands, Maningrida, Milingimbi, Ngukurr, Numbulwar, Ramingining, and Yirrkala. It is delivered through a partnership between local Indigenous Ranger Groups and Community Schools, integrating a 'two-way' learning approach into the school curriculum.

By bringing on-country experiential learning into the classroom, LoCP supports literacy and numeracy outcomes while strengthening students' knowledge, skills, and confidence to walk strong in two worlds. This 'two tool-box' approach incorporates both Western and Indigenous knowledge systems, providing culturally appropriate education and training for remote Indigenous students.

The strong community ownership and institutional support for the LoCP are reflected in its strong and embedded governance structures, ensuring that communities guide program delivery and outcomes. These structures have been recognised nationally, earning awards for excellence in Indigenous Governance.

The Local LoC Committee (LLOCC)

The LLOCC is made up primarily of the School and Indigenous Ranger partnership stakeholders at each site and is responsible for guiding and directing the local program and delivery model.

The Indigenous Chair/s of the LLOCC also sit on the all-Indigenous over-arching Steering Committee that oversees the general business and strategic direction of the LoC Program as a whole.



LoCP Governance

A key and foundational principle of LoC is the primacy of Indigenous Ownership of the Program.

This is reflected at two levels;

1. The Local Learning on Country Committee (LLOCC)

The Local Learning on Country Committee is responsible for the governance, direction and oversight of the local Program.

The LLoCC meets (at minimum) once per school Term and is made up of key community members, local agencies, and, the School and Ranger partnership stakeholders.

2. The Learning on Country overarching Steering Committee (LoCSC)

The Learning on Country Steering Committee is responsible for the governance, direction and oversight of the Program.

Working closely with the LoC Program Management Team, all strategic projects and initiatives at the Program level are subject to discussion and endorsement by the LoCSC.

The nominated Indigenous chairperson of the LLoCC assumes the role on the Steering Committee ensuring that every local program / community has representation at the over-arching level (refer to LoCP Organisational Chart).

In November 2024 the LoC Program governance model was Nationally recognised with the Reconciliation Australia Indigenous Governance Award.

The LoC Program Management Team (LoCPMT)

The LoCPMT supports the objectives and outcomes of the LoC Program through high-level administrative management and operational guidance to ensure that the local programs are well supported and delivered effectively at each of the 14 remote LoC sites.

Their Mission

To be accountable and focused in service to our LoC Program sites, stakeholders and students.

To work with, and for, our local and overarching LoC governance committees and partner agencies to ensure continual program growth and improvement that directly benefits the educational and employment pathways of remote Indigenous students.





NORTHERN LAND COUNCIL



NATIONAL INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS AGENCY (NIAA)




THE NORTHERN TERRITORY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (NTDoE)



THE NORTHERN LAND COUNCIL

THE ALL-INDIGENOUS LoCP STEERING COMMITTEE

Key Over-Arching Program Governance Body

LEARNING ON COUNTRY PROGRAM MANAGEMENT TEAM (LoCPMT)

LOCP COORDINATOR CO-COORDINATORS AND LoC SUPPORT OFFICERS

LOCAL LEARNING ON COUNTRY COMMITTEE (LLoCC)

Key Local Governance Body
Guide, Direct and Deliver the Community LoC Program

- ### SCHOOL
- School Principal
 - LLoCC Chairperson
 - LoCP Coordinator/s
 - Senior LoC Teacher
 - Senior School Cultural Advisors
 - School Council Members
 - School Finance Officers

- ### RANGERS
- Ranger Manager
 - Ranger Coordinators (Men and Women Ranger units)
 - IPA Officers
 - Senior Rangers & Cultural Advisors

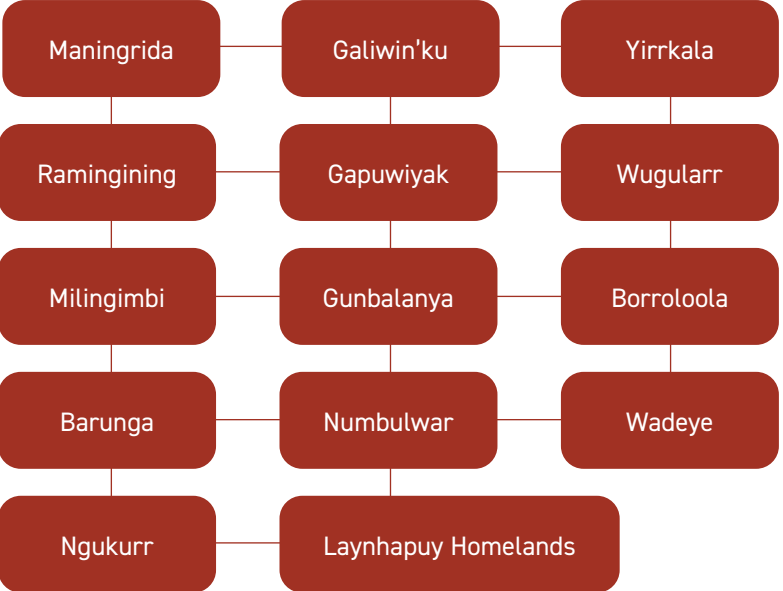
LoCP PARTICIPANTS

REMOTE INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

Average of **3000** students undertake LoC activities every School Semester

This includes an average core Senior Secondary student cohort of 800 students engaged in regular fortnightly activities and VET Training

LEARNING ON COUNTRY PROGRAM SITES



Learning on Country

Strategic Focus Areas

The success of the LoCP stems from its foundational principles of Indigenous ownership and governance.

Support and Facilitation

We support and enable the on-ground delivery of LoC activities in accordance with program principles and governance arrangements with a ground-up approach.

Partnerships and Co-Design

We actively collaborate with Schools, Rangers, Remote Communities and Agencies to deliver and improve LoC Program outcomes.

Adaptive Management

We will continue to develop, review, improve and maintain effective processes and systems to ensure sustainable outcomes for LoC delivery.

Strategic Outcomes

Program stakeholders and partners feel supported and empowered

Positive, strong and collaborative relationships with our stakeholders and partners

Systems and processes are efficient and adaptive to support LoC Program delivery, outcomes and growth

Strategic Priorities

- 1 The LoCPMT provides Secretariat services to the Steering Committee to support strategic guidance and decision making
- 2 LoC Coordinators are properly inducted, trained, capable and supported
- 3 Local LoC Committees are supported to design, plan, implement and report on student activities and program outcomes
- 4 Advocate for the primacy of Indigenous ownership in the local and over-arching governance of the Program
- 5 Establish and regularly review MoU's with Partner agencies
- 6 Explore opportunities for new partnerships that value add to the LoC Program, its stakeholders and students
- 7 Commit to ethical, open and transparent communications with cultural understanding and sensitivity
- 8 Ensure that clear, fit for purpose policies, procedures, systems and guidelines are in place to support the Program
- 9 Continue to provide Adaptive Management systems that ensure LoC growth and improvement with focus on maintaining the integrity and integration of the LoC Program Indigenous Values through on-going Monitoring and Evaluation processes across all sites.



Strong Language, culture, identity and well-being for children

Däl dhäruk, rom, yol nhe ga djägamirr rom djamarrkuḷiw'.

Children have a strong cultural identity and wellbeing through looking after country, focusing on local knowledge, cultural education and connecting to land and language

Intergenerational knowledge transmission (IKT) and relationships

Djalkirinur märram marṅgithinyawuy, gurrupan djamarrkuḷi'wal.

Local knowledge and stories about country are passed from old people to young people. Young people are learning from elders for the future

Two-Way Education

Märrmaw dhukarrwu marṅgithirr.

Both ways teaching and learning - Indigenous Australian and Western knowledge systems informing good two-way practice (two tool boxes)

Being on Country

ḷuku nhirpanmirr wäṅaw.

Time to be on country - on the right country with the right people in the right way

Community Control, commitment and local development

Gämurru warryun, gumurr nhirpanmirr ga wäṅa warkthun.

The program is locally driven and owned. It values and recognises cultural authority and local aspirations

Looking after Country

Djäga limurruṅ wäṅaw.

Students work with community and Rangers on practical activities to look after country

Collaboration and Partnerships

Bukumanapanmirr ga waṅgany manapanmirr.

Schools, rangers and community are working together using 'both ways' to partner in respectful learning

Kids engaged with School

Djamarrkuḷi' wukirrikurr marrtji.

Increase school attendance, course completion and retention to Year 12 or equivalent of Indigenous students enrolled in LoCP-based curricula

New pathways and employment

Yuṭa dhukarr ga djäma.

Increase transition rates to further education, training and employment for Indigenous students completing LoCP-based curricula

Strengths-based teaching and celebration

Däl marṅgithinyamirr rom, ga märrṅama-ṅamayunamirr.

Students and community are recognised as having existing strengths and we celebrate and recognise Individual and whole group achievements

LoC Program Aims and Objectives

The aim of the LoCP is to provide a “Culturally relevant, school based, Indigenous ranger facilitated program” aimed at linking Australian curriculum subjects and sources with field based experiential learning and data collection through engaging on-country and in classroom activities.

These activities aim to:

1. Increase inter-generational transmission of Indigenous knowledge and customary practice
2. Develop strong partnerships between ranger groups, schools and local community to deliver a culturally responsive secondary school curriculum
3. Increase school attendance
4. Improve student learning

The key Principles of the LoCP include:

- * The primacy of Indigenous ownership and authority
- * The importance of inter-generational transmission of Indigenous knowledge and customary practice
- * Indigenous Australian and Western knowledge systems combining to deliver good two-way practice (two-tool box teaching approach)
- * The critical role of monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement. Integrated with participatory planning and management to provide an evidence based approach capable of measuring educational, social, environmental, economic and cultural outcomes.



2025-2026 Strategic Projects and Priority LoC Program Business

The LoC Program Management Team has successfully secured a 6 year funding contract with the NIAA (2023-2028).

The Strategic LoC Program Projects meet the following criteria:

- * Have appropriate consultation, input and endorsement from the LoC Steering Committee, Local LoC Committees and program partners
- * Align with the LoC Programs “Indigenous Values”
- * Are clearly tied to program outcomes and objectives
- * Support the continual improvement of the LoC Program.



Strategic Projects 2025-2026

Investment	Purpose	Benefit
Special Projects (NLC LoCP Grant Process) <i>To be delivered by Dec 2025</i>	Provides monies to sites to collaborate on inter-cultural 'special' projects that exceed their allocated site funding.	Enhances site relationships and develops a connected Program Network. Allows resource and information sharing across sites. Brings together students from different communities to share, engage and learn.
Steering Committee Governance Training <i>(In progress and ongoing 2025-2028)</i>	Further develop Program and Local governance capacities. Provide professional development opportunities for LoC Steering Committee Members and Stakeholders.	Improved leadership and decision-making capabilities. Succession investment for future LoCP stakeholder employment.
NLC LoCP National Summit LoCP Expansion Support <i>(To be delivered September 2025)</i>	NLC, ANU & NIAA spearhead initiative to showcase LoC to a National agency and stakeholder audience in support of expanding the Program to regions outside the NLC.	Learn from and utilise the methods, tools and framework developed by LoC to new areas to support Indigenous school students with the opportunity to improve educational outcomes and employment pathways through participation in LoCP.
On-Country LoC Forum and Steering Committee Meeting <i>(To be delivered by Dec 2025)</i>	Bring all LoCP Sites together to celebrate and conduct business in an on-country setting (as opposed to Darwin-based meetings). Endorsed by the LoCP Steering Committee.	Increase intra-LoC site engagement and support via on-country connections and provide opportunity for sites to proudly showcase country and culture.
NTG NLC LoCP Interagency Meeting <i>(To be delivered by Dec 2025)</i>	Bring together high-level interagency representatives to be informed and contribute to LoCP outcomes and establish collaborative networks and initiatives to further support the Program.	Enhanced interagency communication, collaboration and cooperation. Leads to better-aligned objectives and improved program outcomes.
LoC Internship Initiative & Leadership Program <i>(To be delivered by Dec 2025)</i>	Support sites to develop Ranger Internship initiatives.	Inter-program succession planning (LoC students to Rangers to LoC Coordinators). Growing the programs future from a ground-up mentoring and development approach.
Curriculum and VET Development Project <i>(In progress and ongoing)</i>	Develop additional and relevant educational and vocational training resources that increase student achievement and graduation outcomes.	Empower LoC student participants with skills and knowledge toward academic success and employment opportunities.
LoCP Evaluation V3 Australian National University <i>(2025-2027)</i>	Independent Evaluation of the LoCP across all sites and focus areas to capture stakeholder and agency partners satisfaction and feed-back on current Program status.	Ensures direct stakeholder feed-back to the NLC LoCPMT and provides recommendations to inform LoCP growth and direction. Will be a valuable document in lobbying for the next LoCP contract (post 2028)
Monitoring and Evaluation Project <i>(In progress)</i>	Support sites in local strategic planning for continual improvement. Identify Program based indicators that align with the establish LoCP Indigenous Values and operationalise this process to inform the LoCP and LLoCC's.	Add culturally relevant KPI's and reporting measures to existing M&E processes Further improve local and overarching governance and adaptive management planning skills. Continual Local site and overarching Program improvement.

LoCP Timeline



2012

Initial funding for 4 sites



2015

First LoCP Evaluation by ANU - Dr Bill Fogarty

LoCP expands to 9 sites with the inclusion of Gapuwiyak, Milingimbi, Ramingining, Angurugu and Umbakumba

2019

First meeting of the All-Indigenous LoCP Steering Committee

2010

LoCP established in Maningrida, Galiwin'ku, Yirrkala, and Laynhapuy Homelands

2013



LoC contract transferred from NTDoE to NLC

LoC expands to 15 sites with the inclusion of Gunbalanya, Ngukurr, Numbulwar, Borroloola, Wugularr, and Barunga

2018

2020





2023

Groote sites returned to AIC

LoCP Curriculum Development Project Commences



2025

LoCP Northern Australian Summit - To Be Delivered (TBD)



2028

End of current contract

LoCP 2029 AND BEYOND ▶

10 year LoC celebration at Nitmiluk
NIAA announce a 6 year contract for the LoCP (through until 2028)
LoCP Indigenous Values Endorsed by Steering Committee
LoCP Monitoring and Evaluation Project Commences

2022

The LoCP Steering Committee wins the National Reconciliation Indigenous Award
Wadeye LoCP implemented
LoCP now delivered at 14 remote community sites
National Banksia Award Finalist LoCP

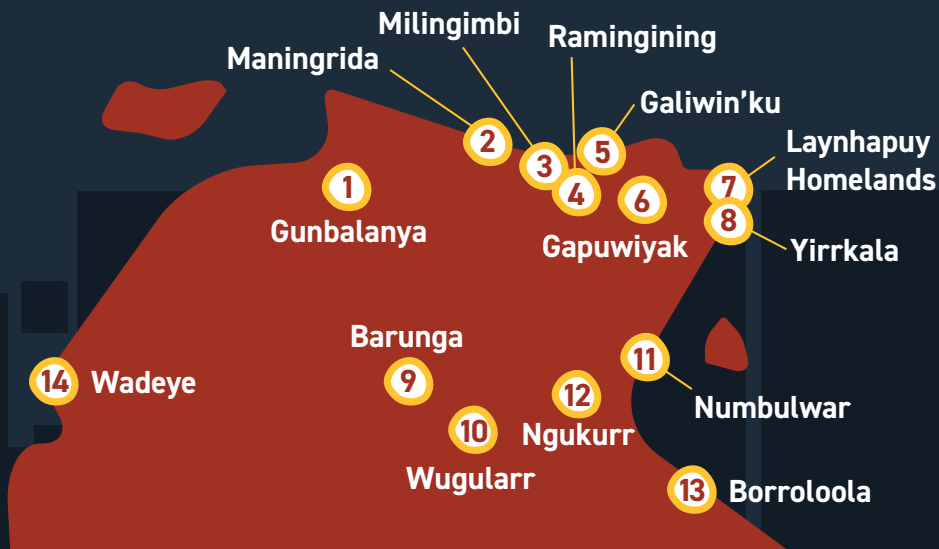
2024

Produce a high-level evidence based Program Prospectus to support new contract negotiations with the Federal Government

2027



Learning on Country Program Sites 2025



<p>1</p> <p>Gunbalanya School and Njanjma Rangers</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Maningrida College and Bawinanga Djelk Rangers</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Milingimbi School and Crocodile Island Rangers (MOPRA)</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Ramingining School and Arafura Swamp Rangers (ASRAC)</p>
<p>5</p> <p>Shepherdson College and Marthakal Rangers</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Gapuwiyak School and Yirrkala Rangers</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Laynhapuy Homelands School and Yirrkala Rangers</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Yirrkala School and Dhimurru Rangers</p>
<p>9</p> <p>Barunga School and Jawoyng Aboriginal Corporation</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Wugularr School and Jawoyng Aboriginal Corporation</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Numbulwar School and Numbulwar Numburindi Rangers</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Ngukurr School and Yugul Mangi Rangers</p>
<p>13</p> <p>Borroloola School and Waanyi Garawa, Garawa, Li-Anthawirriyarra Rangers</p>		<p>14</p> <p>Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr Catholic College and Thamarrurr Rangers</p>	

Learning on Country



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Related Policies and Documentation

The foundational aims and funding of the LoCP relate specifically to the following policies, strategies and documents;

- * COAG National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions
- * The Commonwealth Governments 'Closing the Gap' Implementation Plan 2023 (Education Outcomes 3-7)
- * NIAA Reconciliation Action Plan
- * The Learning on Country Program Guidelines 2024-2028
- * The Learning on Country Evaluations (ANU / CAEPR / POLIS)
- * NLC Strategic Plan

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