Queensland Government principles for intergovernmental activities
Background and context

The Queensland Government will be advancing its agenda first and foremost. The principles are underpinned by a desire to improve the well-being of Queenslanders, preserve Queensland’s constitutional roles and responsibilities, and through its intergovernmental activities support the government’s desire to work with the private and not-for-profit sectors to deliver better service delivery outcomes. Participation in all intergovernmental activities will be assessed within this context. The principles can be used to guide assessment of continued participation in current intergovernmental activities as well as future activities.

Definition

Intergovernmental activities mean all activities involving international governments, the Federal Government, other Australian state/territory governments, including but not limited to:

- Council of Australian Governments (COAG), Council for the Australian Federation and their officials
- COAG councils and other Ministerial councils
- all intergovernmental agreements (IGAs), including funding agreements made under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations (for example, national partnership agreements, project agreements) and non-funding agreements (for example, IGAs providing policy direction agreed by ministerial councils; international memoranda of understanding)
- other official engagements with Commonwealth Government agencies, state/territory government agencies, including participation in committees and working groups.

Principle one: net benefit

Participation in intergovernmental activities must result in a net benefit to Queensland that aligns to the Queensland Government’s policy priorities and agenda.

- In this context, ‘net benefit’ should be determined by undertaking both a cost/benefit analysis and a risk analysis. These analyses should be proportionate to the possible impact of the proposal on Queensland. The risk analysis should inform a risk management strategy as part of the initial policy advice to government, to ensure that risk mitigation is integral to the implementation of intergovernmental commitments.

- When assessing ‘net benefit’, agencies should consider whether an activity imposes unnecessary costs and restrictions on the delivery of services and infrastructure. In this regard:
  - only efficient and effective instruments/funding arrangements should be used
  - a best practice approach to all regulation and reporting will be necessary, with onerous and unnecessary reporting resisted
  - maximum flexibility for the Queensland Government will be preferable in all arrangements.

- When assessing ‘net benefit’, agencies should also consider the durability of funding agreements entered into by the state, particularly where funding for recurrent state service delivery obligations is provided through time-limited funding agreements.

Principle two: case-by-case approach

The Queensland Government will consider each matter on its merits on a case-by-case approach—particularly where it focuses on new policy areas or financial relations for the government—but decisions are made within the context of the Queensland Government’s whole-of-government priorities and policy agenda.

- Where agreements require matching funding contributions from the Queensland Government (including beyond the forward estimates), or impose recurrent capital, maintenance or service delivery costs beyond the life of the agreement, consideration during the Budget process may be required—particularly in relation to infrastructure projects.

- To facilitate this, departments will consult with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and Queensland Treasury early in the negotiation process, preferably on notification of a new agreement.
Principle three: Queensland’s role

The Queensland Government will focus on intergovernmental activity in areas where there is a clear role for the government’s leadership, action or service delivery.

- In giving effect to this principle, departments must be vigilant about examining proposed changes to the roles and responsibilities of the respective levels of government to ensure no further overlap or duplication between levels of government and to maintain appropriate levels of accountability.

Principle four: collaboration and cooperation

The Queensland Government will prioritise intergovernmental activity where collaboration/cooperation with other governments is critical to enable the Queensland Government to plan and deliver services, improve outcomes for Queenslanders, and achieve the Queensland Government’s priorities and policy agenda.

- In this context, the matter may provide a clear opportunity to influence the Federal Government, other state/territory governments, or the private and not-for-profit sectors, in a way that achieves the Queensland Government’s policy objectives—for example, a change of Federal Government policy, legislation, or funding allocation.

- It should be noted that while the Queensland Government will consider each matter cognisant of other states’ and territories’ positions these will not dictate the Queensland Government’s position.

Principle five: GST implications

The impact on the Queensland Government’s share of the GST—through assessments undertaken annually by the Commonwealth Grants Commission (CGC)—will be taken into consideration by the Queensland Government prior to participating in any financial agreement.

- In the context of agreement-making, the Queensland Government will not be rushed into agreeing to matters simply because it meets the needs of the Federal Government, including its budgetary timetables, and will ensure good governance by taking relevant matters to Cabinet and/or the Cabinet Budget Review Committee (CBRC) as and when required.

- In its deliberations, CBRC will consider where the proposed Commonwealth funding allocation clearly supports the Queensland Government’s policy agenda and provides more certainty to the Queensland Government over the forward estimates than the CGC process can.

- Queensland Treasury (Intergovernmental Relations) will provide advice on the GST implications of new intergovernmental agreements.

Principle six: exit strategy

In deciding to participate in any intergovernmental activity, Queensland Government departments will develop an exit strategy as part of the initial policy advice to government. This will ensure that the implications of withdrawing from participation in the future are clear from the outset.

- The exit strategy should include options for reduced participation and maximum flexibility to deliver services in a manner determined by the State. This should extend to consideration of withdrawal or scaling down of service delivery, corresponding to cessation or reduction of Federal Government funding at the end of an agreement.