



# Building speak-up culture

The APS Employee Census has an underlying framework that identifies and considers conditions within workplaces that influence employee and workgroup performance.

This guide explores one element of this framework, speak up culture, and outlines:

- What speak up culture is
- Its benefits
- The specific questions that measure the speak up culture index
- Tips for improving results

Have  
*your*  
say



2026 APS  
**Employee Census**

4 May–5 June

## Building speak up culture

Speak up culture refers to someone's perception that they can openly share ideas, ask questions, or admit mistakes without fear of embarrassment or punishment. It focuses on fostering trust, respect, and open communication within teams.

In workplaces, speak up culture might mean staff feel confident proposing new ideas in a meeting or speaking up if something isn't working. This is essential for encouraging innovation, and collaboration, ultimately improving integrity culture.

Building speak up culture takes time and requires consistent, intentional effort. It is built, and can be lost, in the everyday interactions between team members.

In 2025, questions were added to the APS Employee Census to support the measurement of speak up culture in the APS. This year, an index will be calculated from these questions. The 'Speak Up Culture Index' includes the following questions that relate to employee perceptions of speak up culture in their workplace.

- **20a.** The people in my workgroup value others' individual skills and talents.
- **20b.** People in my workgroup are comfortable checking with each other if they have questions about the right way to do something.
- **20c.** If you make a mistake in my workgroup, it tends to be held against you (reverse scored).
- **20d.** The people in my workgroup are able to bring up problems and tough issues.

## Actions to improve scores on these questions

- Explore the suite of resources to build speak up culture in the APS. Build your own knowledge, facilitate activities with your teams and integrate into existing agency frameworks.

Link to APSLearn for APS staff: [Building speak up culture in the APS](#) (APSC employees will need to [use this link](#).)

The speak up culture resources include:

- **Introductory guidance:** covers what speak up culture is, and what it isn't, the benefits of speak up culture and how it contributes to integrity. It introduces the 4C practices for building speak up culture: Listen with compassion, Show curiosity, Act with courage, Speak with candour. Suitable for all APS employees, from entry level to agency executive leadership teams.
- **Observe, reflect and act (ORA) tool:** a tool to help people reflect on the application of the 4C practices and resources to build the 4Cs in yourself and your team.
- **Resources toolkit:** a curated list of resources that are already available to APS employees but separated by some common barriers to speaking up in the workplace.
- **Manager playbook:** contains some additional principles and actionable steps to help leaders and managers build speak up culture in their teams. This includes activities, practical ideas and aims to help managers talk to their teams about speak up culture, set behavioural expectations and develop a team commitment to trying those new practices. Suitable for all APS employees with people management responsibilities.