

## ACODE Benchmarking Code of Conduct and Protocols for Participation

### *Participant Information & Acknowledgement Sheet*

As confidentiality is important to inter-institutional benchmarking, please read through and carefully note the contents of the ACODE Benchmarking Code of Conduct and Protocols for Participation documents that follow.

The ACODE Benchmarking Code of Conduct is based on five core tenants. All participants will:

1. keep it lawful
2. be willing to share equally
3. respect other institutions confidentiality
4. not discuss areas outside your realm of influence without permission
5. establish principles around partnership and preparation.

By your participation in the activity, you acknowledge that:

1. you will abide by the ACODE Benchmarking Code of Conduct
2. if you intend to produce an academic publication from this activity, you will seek approval and comply with your institution's ethical reviewing process. As confidentiality is important, as indicated in the Code of Conduct, benchmarking findings, data, contacts and exchanges are to be treated as confidential to the individual and organisations involved. Therefore, for academic research outputs such as the publication of journal articles, books, and/or conference presentations, you acknowledge that in any publication, information will be provided in such a way that the participating institutions cannot be identified, i.e. aggregated data will be reported
3. when you participate in this benchmarking activity, you will respect the confidentiality of the information being shared by the other participants.

#### **Declaration**

I acknowledge that I will adhere to the following guiding principles in the ACODE Benchmarking Code of Conduct, so as to contribute efficiency and ethically to this benchmarking activity.

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Sign here: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: / /

The following is based on 'The Benchmarking Code of Conduct' (2010) from the American Productivity & Quality Center (APQC).



## ***ACODE Benchmarking Code of Conduct***

### **1. Keep it Lawful**

- If there is any potential conflict of interest in any of the proposed activities you should first consult your institutions legal advisor.
- Avoid discussions that could lead to you divulging any information that may be considered 'commercial-in-confidence'.
- Do not disclose, or use, any secrets that may have been obtained through improper means, or have been disclosed by another in violation of their duty to maintain its secrecy.
- Do not extend data from a benchmarking activity to another institution without first ensuring that the data is completely anonymous so that the participants' and institutional identities, or affiliations, are protected.

### **2. Be willing to share equally**

- Be willing to share equally the same types and level of data that you expect others to provide you and be authentic and comprehensive.
- Communicate and clarify expectations about the benchmarking activity early and fully with all the parties involved. This is primarily to avoid any misunderstanding and it will help to establish a common level of shared interest.

### **3. Respect other institutions confidentiality**

- Treat all benchmarking conversations as confidential to the institutions and individuals participating.
- Information must not be communicated outside the partnering institution without prior consent.
- An institutions participation in an activity is confidential and should not be communicated externally without prior consent.
- Do not discuss any costs that your institution may pay to third party providers or partners.

### **4. Do not discuss areas outside your realm of influence without permission**

- Only provide data that is relevant to your institution and within your realm of influence.
- The sharing of data, other than your own, should only be shared with permission.
- Respect the culture of partner institutions and work within mutually agreed procedures.
- You should first obtain an individual's permission before providing his or her name in response to a contact request, or in an open forum presentation.

### **5. Establish principles around partnership and preparation**

- Be fully prepared for each benchmarking exchange so as to make the most of your benchmarking partner's time.
- Assist your benchmarking partner/s by ensuring they are fully informed of the agenda and any expectations associated with a proposed activity, prior to a benchmarking activity.
- Follow through with each commitment you make to the other participants in your benchmarking activity in a timely manner.
- Complete each benchmarking activity to a level of mutual agreement.
- Recognise and agree on how each partnering institution would like to have their information handled and used, and be faithful to that.

## ***Protocols for participation***

Prior to the formal inter-institutional benchmarking activity, each participating institution should ensure the following.

- Be conversant with the ACODE Benchmarking Code of Conduct prior to entering into an arrangement with another institution.
- Follow a benchmarking process and the guidelines provided by ACODE.
- When making initial contact with a potential benchmarking partner, first agree on which benchmarks you will use. Once agreed, complete a rigorous self-assessment based on the proscribed performance measures and indicators.
- Those representing their institution in a benchmarking activity should possess the authority to share the information required with each benchmarking partner.
- Work together through the mutually agreed schedule for self-assessment, prior to the formal benchmarking activity occurring.

When the benchmarking process proceeds to the holding of an inter-institutional activity, the following behaviors are encouraged.

- Provide a meeting agenda in advance and work to adhere to it.
- Be prompt, fully participate in all activities and conclude these activities on-time.
- Ensure all attendees get the opportunity to introduce themselves and share what they hope to get-out of the activity.
- Avoid the use of jargon and acronyms; rather use language that is seen as universal.
- Be sure that neither party is sharing confidential information without prior consent.
- Thank each benchmarking participant for sharing their information and encourage follow-up communication, where required.

The following guidelines may apply to participants in a benchmarking activity where the institutions are seen as competitors, or potential competitors within a given region.

- Establish specific ground rules up-front, e.g. "We don't want to talk about things that will give either of us a competitive advantage; rather we want to see where we can both mutually improve or gain benefit."
- Participants should check with their institution's legal department if there is any doubt or concerns held around any information gathering procedure undertaken. If uncomfortable, do not proceed, or ensure there is a non-disclosure agreement in place for each of the institutions involved.
- Do not ask competitor institutions for sensitive data, or cause the institution to feel they have to provide data to keep the process alive.
- Any information obtained from a benchmarking partner should be treated as internal, privileged communications only.