



Trust, time and tenacity: A roadmap to a thriving, community-led not-for-profit sector

What we've learnt so far from our
Investing in Rural Community Futures program

October 2023



FRRR

Foundation for Rural
Regional Renewal

Acknowledgement of Country

The Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR) acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung clans as the Traditional Custodians of Jaara country (Bendigo) where we are based and extends this acknowledgement to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations where we fund organisations and activities.

We especially acknowledge the Gumbaynggirr, Wiradjuri and Yuin people in the communities where the IRCF program has been embedded for the past five years. The warm welcome and spirit of collaboration offered by Elders and Aboriginal organisations has been extraordinary. We are grateful for the opportunity to walk alongside First Nations people in this work and for the cultural knowledge they have shared so generously.

We pay our respect to Elders past and present and extend our thanks for their continuation and sharing of the cultural and educational practices of Australia's First People.



Executive Summary

Small, grassroots not-for-profit organisations play a fundamental role in building and sustaining the social and economic fabric of their communities. They deliver frontline services that become even more essential when natural disasters and economic challenges strike.

Yet these essential organisations that knit together the social fabric and vitality of their communities are almost always under-resourced. Funding available is often targeted at infrastructure and short-term projects, when what is most needed is long-term capacity building and investment in local people, strategy, systems, and efficiencies. The people leading the work – often volunteers wearing many hats – know what is most needed for their communities but are often not consulted when decisions are made about where to allocate funding. They need the **trust in their knowledge, the time investment to really listen, and the tenacity of sustained resources** over time to move their organisations and ultimately their communities from simply surviving to thriving.

The 2017 FRRR Impact Report identified that providing capacity building resources like professional fundraising, marketing or business development for small not-for-profits in rural, regional and remote communities was a key gap in building long term sustainability.

The Investing in Rural Community Futures (IRCF) program was designed to address this capacity building gap by investing in the long-term sustainability of the local not-for-profit sector in remote, rural and regional communities. Thanks to the investment and long-term vision of donor partners, the program is now operating in eight rural communities across NSW.

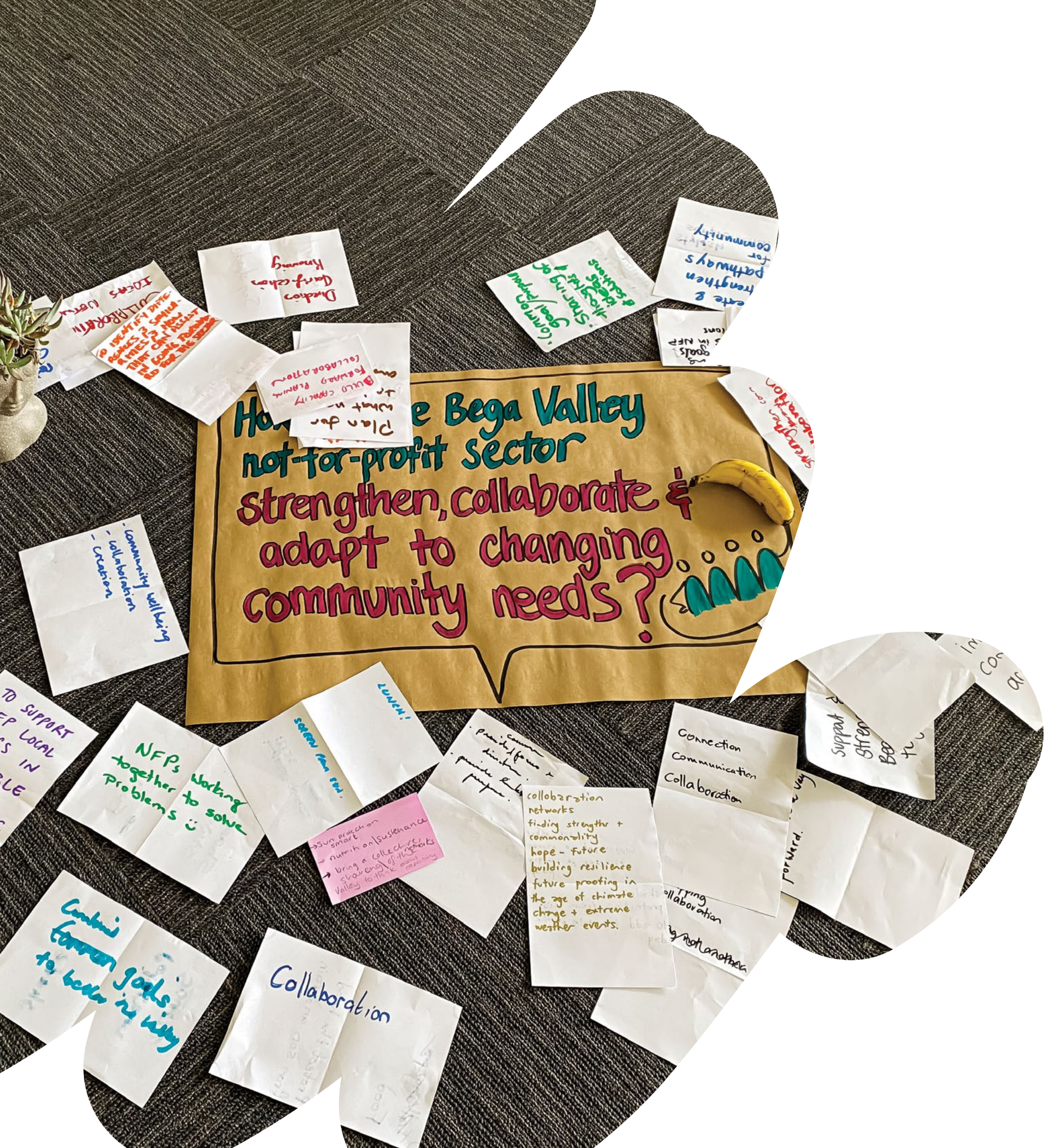
The IRCF program focuses on harnessing the strengths and knowledge of local leaders to develop a collective 'community roadmap' that prioritises capacity building support across four areas: People, Systems, Strategy and Efficiencies.

To date, the IRCF program has supported the delivery of 145 community identified capacity building activities across 85 organisations, each guided by a local IRCF facilitator who acts as a neutral connector and conduit to build collaboration and enduring networks.

A mid-term review, led by Seftons in 2021, found that the program was responding to the genuine needs of each community and building their capacity to recover from disruptions and begin to thrive. Pleasingly, at the five-year mark, there have been some significant outcomes in First Nations collaboration, financial sustainability, youth engagement, cultural, health and employment impacts and the establishment of local backbone organisations to drive collaboration into the future. This has been confirmed through an ongoing evaluation process that engages multiple stakeholders.

This report outlines how the key elements of the IRCF program have been activated to strengthen not-for-profit ecosystems and people in eight rural communities, supporting the development of confidence and strategies to collaboratively navigate challenges like employment, housing, disaster recovery, industry transitions and climate change.

Our hope is that the learnings and insights we have gathered so far through the IRCF program can be shared, adopted or adapted by others who seek to strengthen the social fabric of remote, rural and regional communities.



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Introduction

About FRRR

The Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR) is the only national foundation focused on ensuring the social and economic strength of remote, rural and regional communities.

FRRR’s vision is for a vibrant, resilient and revitalised remote, rural and regional Australia, with the belief that targeted, well-informed investment in people and organisations that are in and of their place will stimulate ideas that lead to actions, both big and small. Investing in local people and organisations that are connected, who know and understand the local context, and who can mobilise and activate resources can transform a community’s view of itself and drive its future vitality. FRRR programs focus on building resilience and strengthening communities.

FRRR’s unique model connects common purposes and investment with locally prioritised needs, to create communities that are vital and resilient. Since FRRR’s start in 2000, it has delivered over \$177 million to more than 14,000 projects.

The launch of Investing in Rural Community Futures

The IRCF program launched in 2018 as a place-based response to an identified need to invest in building collective not-for-profit sector capability for small rural communities.

The Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation (VFFF) was the founding philanthropic partner, providing an investment of \$5 million over five years with \$1 million in granting available for each of the three pilot communities – Junee, Leeton, and the Nambucca Valley.

The Snow Foundation, Bendigo Bank’s Community Enterprise Foundation and funding through the Australian Government’s Black Summer initiative have since supported the program to grow into five additional communities across New South Wales - Nowra, Ulladulla, Batemans Bay, Bay & Basin, and Bega - with a total of \$4.1 million in funding committed between 2018 and 2023.

The IRCF approach

The IRCF approach is grounded in the tenet that local people are best placed to know what will make the greatest difference in their community. Using a multi-faceted approach, the model has now been developed and tested over the past five years in eight communities. The IRCF program is underpinned by a hypothesis that communities will be more likely to experience long term sustainability if the local community sector is strong, resilient, and capable of leading change in an increasingly complex and turbulent socio-political environment.

The IRCF program is different to other models. **It offers the local not-for-profit organisations (NFPs) sector a framework through which to take action to plan for a sustainable future. Rather than respond to immediate need on an ad hoc basis, there has been a strategic shift, utilising IRCF principles and tools.** It takes a multi-year approach and remains community led, underpinned by a trust-based approach. It works holistically to embed sustainable growth and changes. Since the program began five years ago, models have appeared that echo elements of this approach, though the IRCF program continues to be unique in the way it builds capacity and meets the genuine needs of each community.

The IRCF program supports local leaders, volunteers and NFPs towards becoming high-functioning, collaborative, more viable and sustainable, so that they can fulfil their missions with greater impact.

Each community is supported through a consistent approach, which includes a local facilitator, a co-designed community roadmap, the involvement of locally-governed NFPs, funding, capacity development and collaboration. The work is documented on a digital hub and formally evaluated throughout the life of the project.

More detail on the approach is set out from page 14.

Defining terms and concepts

For the purposes of this paper, we will be referring to key terms as they relate to the collective of work undertaken by both the IRCF program and FRRR more broadly.

TERM	DEFINITION
Backbone organisation	An organisation that serves as the coordinator of a place-based initiative with a collective impact focus. They engage in activities, including but not limited to, guiding vision and strategy, supporting the alignment of local activity and investment, establishing shared measurement practices, building public will, advancing policy and mobilising funding.
Community	The identified boundary where the IRCF program is delivered. Across the eight IRCF communities this refers interchangeably to a broader region made up of several small towns, LGAs and specific communities.
Community capacity building	Increasing a given community's capacity to solve collective challenges by enabling and supporting local action and harnessing local knowledge.
Community readiness	A state of readiness in the broader community to embrace new ways of thinking and collaborative approaches to tackling common challenges.
Community Roadmaps	An evolving document capturing collective vision, principles and goals as well as the short and longer-term solutions identified by community throughout the IRCF capacity building program.
NFP Sector	The NFP sector in rural communities, consisting of small locally based organisations delivering frontline responses to local challenges.
Organisational capacity	The development of robust human, governance, resource, and delivery systems that allow organisations to sustainably deliver on their missions.
Place-based approach	A place-based approach contemplates the issues, interconnections and relationships in a place and coordinates action and investment to improve the quality of life for that community.
Rural, Regional & Remote (RRR)	Areas outside of Australia's capital cities. IRCF communities are in both rural and regional areas across NSW, and the remote, rural and regional acronym is used throughout the report to signify this.
Small organisations	Grassroots organisations that provide services to the community that are primarily volunteer-led with small budgets and limited resources.

Purpose of this report

This report outlines the development and evolution of the IRCF program in response to the systemic challenges experienced by NFP organisations in rural and regional communities. It highlights the importance of NFPs in the local context and the significant benefits experienced when they are the ones leading the change and are resourced and supported over time to tap into existing human and community capital to build resilient, sustainable capacity to collectively deliver their vital services.

Insights from ongoing independent evaluation of practices over five years highlight ways the IRCF model could be replicated to strengthen collaboration across local NFP networks, ultimately creating stronger, more sustainable organisations and a stronger not-for-profit sector.

Our hope is that this report will inspire more partners to join us and help inform future programs focused on building capacity for the vital NFP sectors across RRR communities.

Key learnings and insights

Our key learnings from rolling out this model over the past five years fall under three headings – Trust, Time and Tenacity. The report that follows demonstrates how we've reached this summary. We welcome the opportunity to elaborate on any of these points.

Trust

- Community readiness to embrace the IRCF model is an important success factor, and trust building happens from the start of the engagement process.
- It takes trust and practice to 'un-learn' competitive mindsets.
- Leaders of local NFPs are keen for collaboration and networking opportunities. However, they are time poor, and the support of a neutral facilitator is vital to establish trust in new connection pathways and practices.
- Building trust with First Nations organisations and leaders within each community needs to happen before cultural connections and collaboration can emerge.

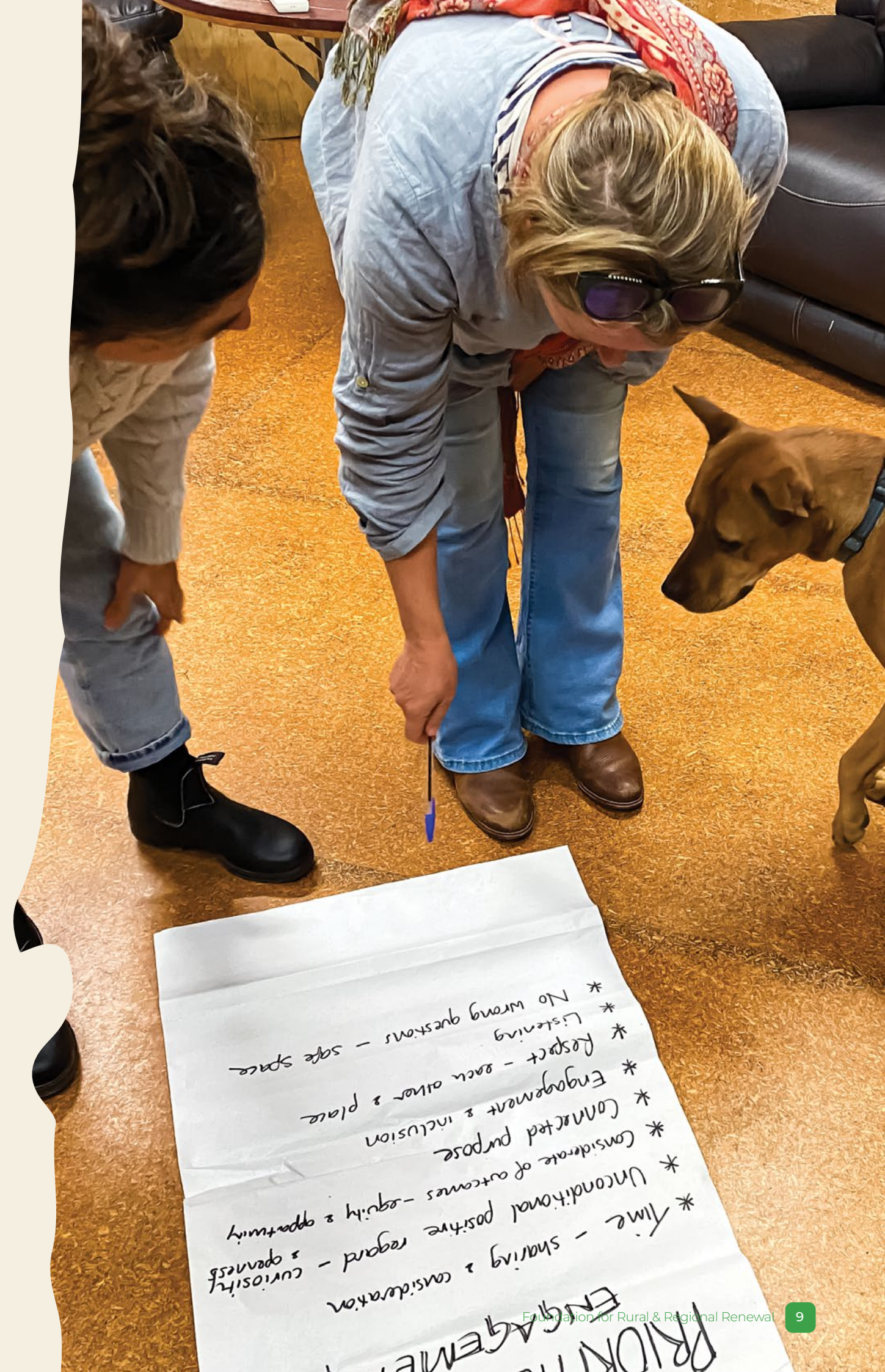
Time

- Progress toward sustainability moves at the pace of community and each is unique. Evaluation findings tell us that communities need flexibility and time to allow the conditions for long-term change to grow.
- A minimum five-year commitment and investment of resources is optimal to allow the community and IRCF team to build trust and activate program elements when there is readiness.
- It's important to stay flexible as the program progresses to respond alongside community to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Tenacity

- It's essential to understand the broader ecosystem, economic context and external stakeholders that can support longevity of outcomes from the IRCF program.
- Establishing clear pathways for future funding and resources is vital to sustainability.
- Early development of a lead organisation/backbone entity with community buy-in is emerging as a critical factor to ensuring impact can be sustained beyond the program.
- The relationship with local councils is an important way to connect and work with the NFP sector, and FRRR can play a key role in reinforcing the value of small NPF's to local vibrancy.
- To ensure quality support and facilitation on the ground, it's crucial to have ongoing access to a qualified pool of subject matter expertise, such as NFP strategy, business development, fundraising, governance and systems.
- Ongoing collaboration requires leadership, skilled neutral support and trust. Investing in resources that can sustain collaboration across the sector is an important consideration.

IRCF offers the local NFP sector a strategic framework. Rather than responding to immediate need on an ad hoc basis, there has been a strategic shift to utilising IRCF principles and tools to plan for a sustainable future.



IRCF Need & Scope

Why does capacity building matter for the NFP sector in remote, rural and regional communities?

To meet the growing and complex needs of their communities, rural NFPs and the people who lead them need to be supported and resourced to build capacity to drive long-term solutions and change.

Remote, rural and regional areas of Australia experience unique barriers to social and economic growth, such as limited access to services, infrastructure, and opportunities; geographic isolation and low population density; environmental degradation and climate impacts. These challenges can have a detrimental effect on the health, well-being, and livelihoods of people living in these areas, and this can be amplified even more for First Nations groups.

The quality of life in a rural, regional or remote town, its liveability, often depends on local NFPs and the people who lead them. They deliver essential services to address gaps and improve quality of life, enabling people from diverse backgrounds to participate and contribute while providing platforms for community advocacy and engagement. They are also often fuelled – in many cases exclusively - by the efforts of dedicated volunteers.

By recognising the value of NFPs and championing them to strengthen their focus and work towards greater sustainability, the opportunity can be activated to bring greater social benefit to communities now and into the future.

“Every organisation in the program brings the town together in what they do”

Junee stakeholder report,
March 2021

How the need for the IRCF model was identified

FRRR’s IRCF model was developed in partnership with the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation (VFFF), following the release of [FRRR’s 2017 Impact Report](#). This highlighted an investment gap in building not-for-profit and local community groups’ capacity to support their communities. The Report found a high percentage of unsuccessful applications to FRRR grant programs were for resourcing and capacity building. Further investigation in Australia and globally identified only one model in the USA addressing this need, highlighting the necessity for a solution.

VFFF’s earlier rural capacity building projects also helped inform the program concept, focusing on the importance of backing the local community and local grassroots organisations to build capacity in place.

FRRR’s 2022 [Heartbeat of Rural Australia study](#) further highlighted the critical role of community groups in remote, rural and regional communities, including the many vital roles held by NFP leaders and volunteers, the insecurity of funding sources, the need for more collaboration and technology, and the importance of people and their wellbeing.

Community selection and readiness

In 2019, the pilot IRCF model invited expressions of interest from communities identified through FRRR and VFFF granting trend data focused on a clear need for capacity building resources and without existing capacity building programs in place. From these expressions of interest, the NSW communities of Tumut, Junee, Nambucca Valley, Moree and Leeton were shortlisted. FRRR and VFFF visited these communities as part of an ‘IRCF Roadshow’, inviting local NFPs to a series of information sessions and workshops to better understand their local sectors, scope areas of common interest, and explore capacity building needs. Each community was supported with a \$60,000 start-up grant to support preparation for the next phase of the IRCF program, with collaboration between NFPs strongly encouraged. Videos highlighting important priorities were also captured for each community.

The communities of Junee, Leeton and Nambucca Heads were invited to join the five-year IRCF program pilot, based on factors including evidence of interest of local NFPs, support from the local council, and the energy of community leadership to embrace collaboration and change.

With the pilot a success, FRRR was keen to expand the program. The Snow Foundation wanted to do something significant on the South Coast and, after speaking with VFFF about IRCF, they agreed to come on board. In 2020, FRRR conducted information sessions across the region, with interest and evidence of community readiness in Batemans Bay, Nowra and Ulladulla. The nearby Bay & Basin communities were also eager and ready to participate, especially following the bushfires, and in 2021, Bendigo Bank Community Enterprise Foundation joined us to enable the program’s expansion into that region.

AS NEW COMMUNITIES HAVE JOINED THE IRCF PROGRAM, IT HAS BECOME EVIDENT THAT A ‘STATE OF READINESS’ FOR CAPACITY BUILDING IS VITAL FOR THIS COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO BE EFFECTIVE.

INDICATORS OF READINESS

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Diversity of NFP organisations and the people leading and supporting them. | One or two ‘backbone’ organisations, or the potential for their establishment. | A broad community commitment to solving common challenges, and an appetite for building capacity as a community beyond the IRCF program. |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

IRCF partner communities

The **South Coast communities of Batemans Bay, Nowra, Ulladulla and Bay and Basin** are on the lands of the Yuin Nation. This region was significantly impacted by the Black Summer bushfires and community recovery was hindered by the COVID pandemic.

The **Batemans Bay** cohort of the IRCF program stretches from Batemans Bay in the north to Moruya in the south. The 11,000 people in Batemans Bay are supported by more than 70 NFPs that provide for the community. The region has a strong agricultural industry, with health care and social assistance the top employing industries across the Shire.

Nestled along the picturesque Shoalhaven Coast, **Ulladulla** is a coastal haven with a blend of natural beauty and community warmth. The IRCF program in Ulladulla supports a combined population of more than 20,000. The heart of the region is known for its vibrant events and locals take pride in their town's rich maritime history and strong arts scene.

The **Bay & Basin** area reflects the blend of natural beauty and community life common to other locations nearby. Sussex Inlet, St Georges Basin, Sanctuary Point, Vincentia, Basin View, Tomerong, Wreck Bay, Huskisson and Jervis Bay have a combined population of around 12,000, supported by more than 30 NFPs. The region also has a significant Indigenous heritage, with ongoing efforts to recognise and celebrate this history.

Nowra is a major service town spanning both sides of the Shoalhaven River of the South Coast NSW. The IRCF program extends from Nowra up into the Kangaroo Valley. With a population of 37,000 people, the area is supported by more than 80 NFP organisations. Nowra's strong sense of community is evident through its cultural events, art galleries, and community groups. The local economy thrives on agriculture, tourism and manufacturing.

The **Bega Valley** region, on the southeast coast of NSW, is the traditional lands of the Yuin-Monaro Nations. It was significantly affected by the Black Summer bushfires. Small townships and villages nestle alongside beaches, rainforest and mountainous landscapes. The region is home to more than 35,000 people with the major townships including Bega, Merimbula, Pambula, Eden, Tathra and Bermagui. The Bega Valley is rich in culture, supported by a diverse range of local community organisations and has strong agricultural and tourism industries.

The **Nambucca Valley** is on the lands of the Gumbaynggirr people, on the mid-north coast of NSW. The area has been badly impacted by both fires and floods in recent years. It comprises the communities of Nambucca Heads, Bowraville, Macksville, Valla Beach and Scotts Head, as the larger villages in the LGA. With a combined population of more than 20,000 people, the community is supported by more than 80 NFPs. Tourism, agriculture, manufacturing and service sector are the main industries.

Leeton and Junee are both located in the Riverina region of NSW on the lands of the Wiradjuri people. The IRCF program in **Leeton** encompasses the Leeton local government area and includes the villages of Yanco, Wamoon, Whitton and Murrumbidgee. The area has a population of 11,600, with almost 120 NFP organisations supporting the community. Agriculture and manufacturing are the Shire's largest industries. Leeton was impacted by severe storms and flash flooding in January 2022.

Junee is a medium-sized town, relatively close to Wagga Wagga. There are more than 80 NFPs servicing the community. It has a population of more than 6,200 people and the construction industry is the largest employer, followed by the agricultural sector. It has a deep railway history and is in a period of economic transition.

A model that flexes to meet communities 'where they are'

The deep capacity building approach of the IRCF program requires a long-term investment of time and resourcing. Each community began the program from a unique place, and elements of the program started to take shape and 'land' with the community on different timelines.

It's critical for communities to have enough time to plan and implement strategies to solve problems and create opportunities for long term change. This is particularly true when there are unexpected events that interrupt momentum, such as floods or bushfires. For communities in recovery, flexibility with timeframes builds capacity by allowing and empowering organisations and community members to reset and continue moving forward to meet their broader vision and goals.

The IRCF program is more than community-based work or project management. The

IRCF model scaffolds community-led growth across the not-for-profit sector, building social capital and increasing community members' capacities. Providing the right conditions through flexible timeframes is conducive to driving sustainable long-term outcomes that creates change at a community level.

A minimum timeline of five years or more is optimal in communities new to capacity building. A three-year timeline has also been explored in communities with an advanced state of readiness following participation in other place-based capacity building initiatives. Each new IRCF community has benefitted from a tailored approach to meet their community's needs. A review undertaken by Seftons in 2021 found that the IRCF program was "responding to the genuine needs of each community and is building their capacity to recover from disruptions and begin to thrive."

Three flexible IRCF delivery model variations have emerged to date:

1. Individual communities

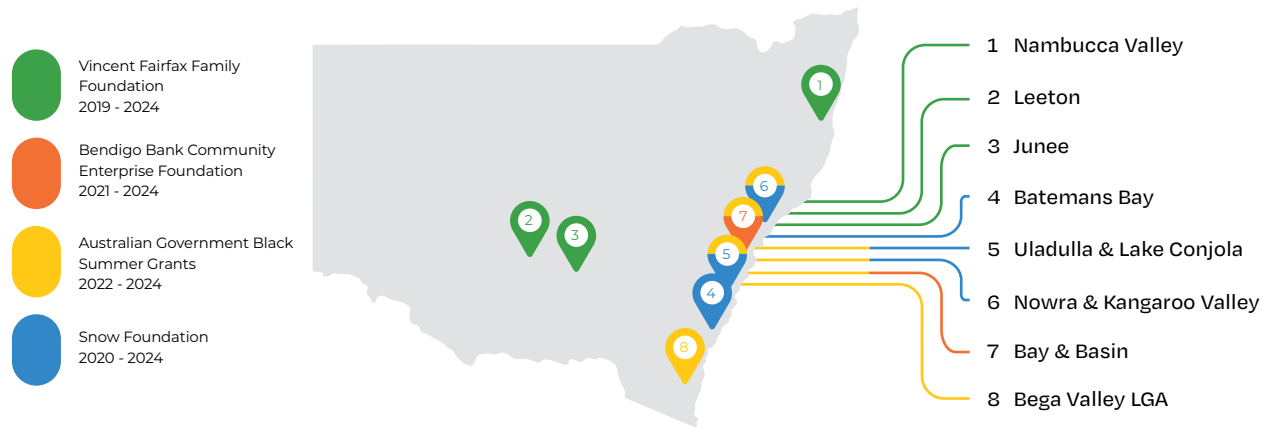
IRCF is supported by a single donor or small donor collaborative, with resourcing focused on that community e.g. Nambucca Valley.

2. Clustered communities

Geographically connected communities benefit from shared resources and/or multiple sources of funding e.g. Junee/Leeton, Bay & Basin, and the Shoalhaven region.

3. Partnership delivery communities

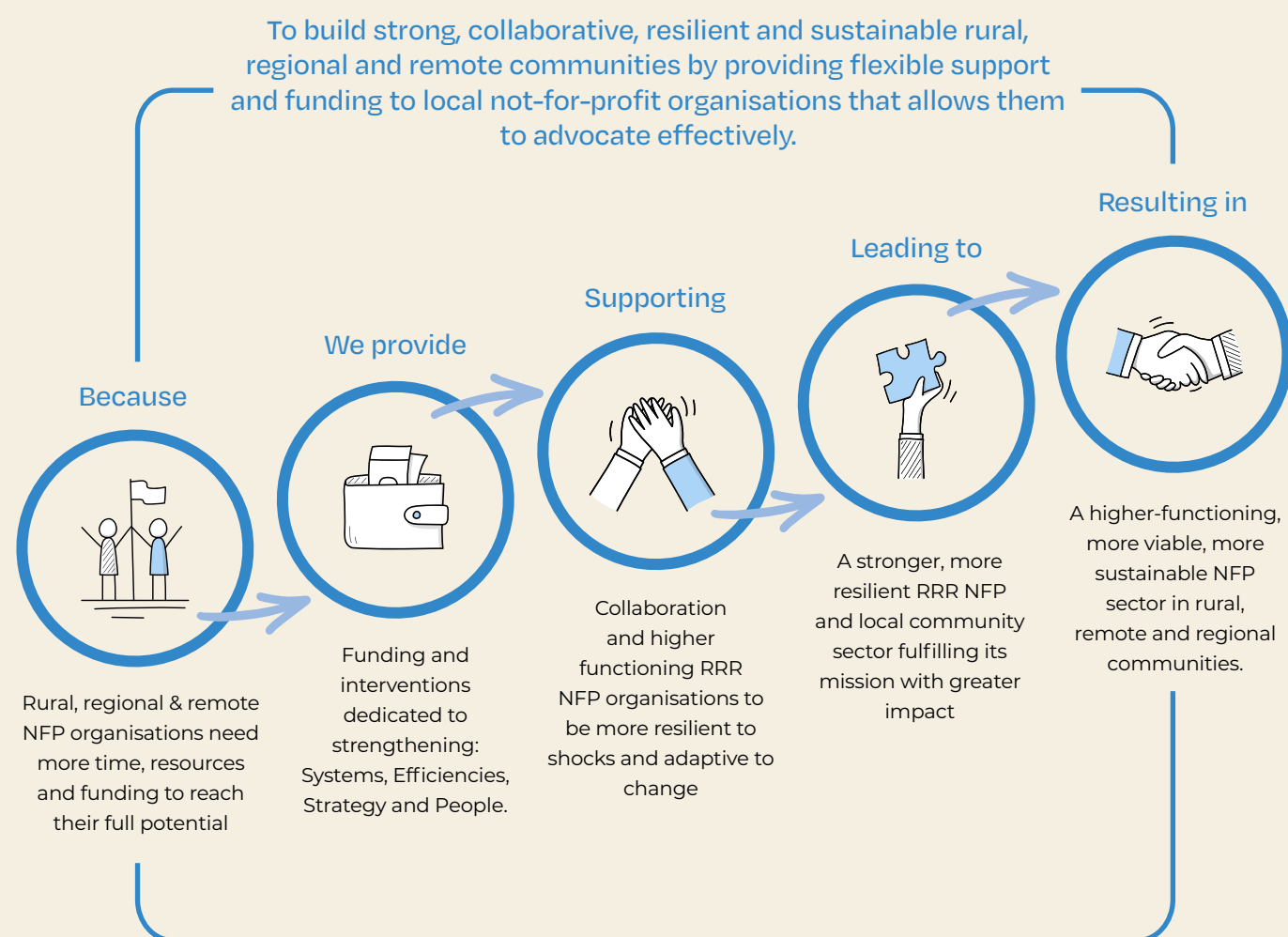
The IRCF program is delivered in partnership with others e.g. Bega region with the Bega Valley Shire Council and the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation.



The IRCF Model

Theory of change

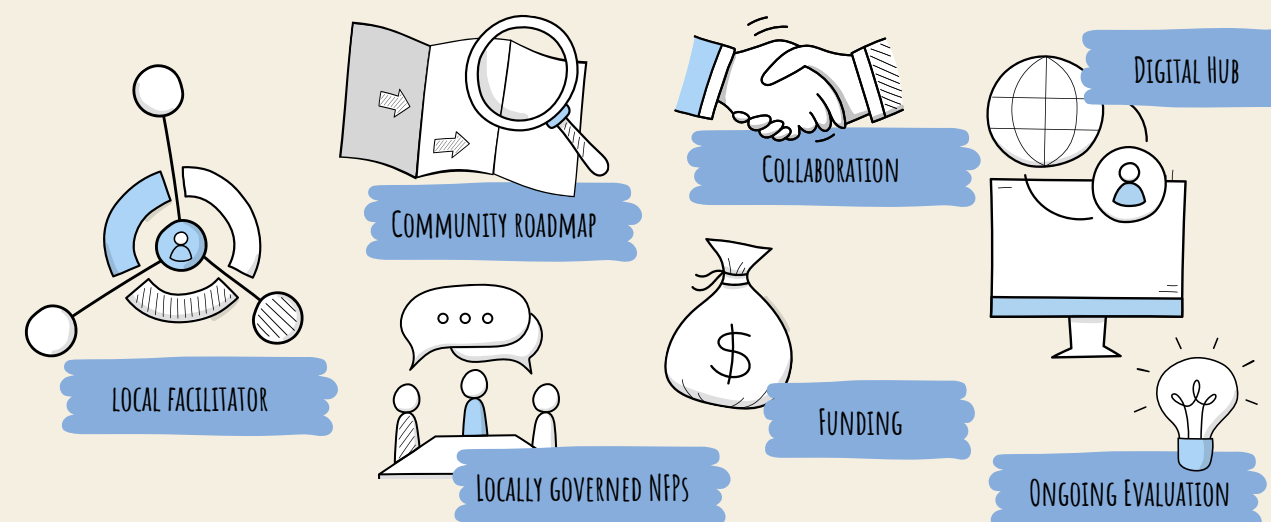
A Theory of Change was developed by Goodwolf Partners at the launch of the IRCF program, and was revisited in 2021 as part of a mid-program review conducted by Sefton's:



The Theory of Change is activated through four key IRCF program focus areas:

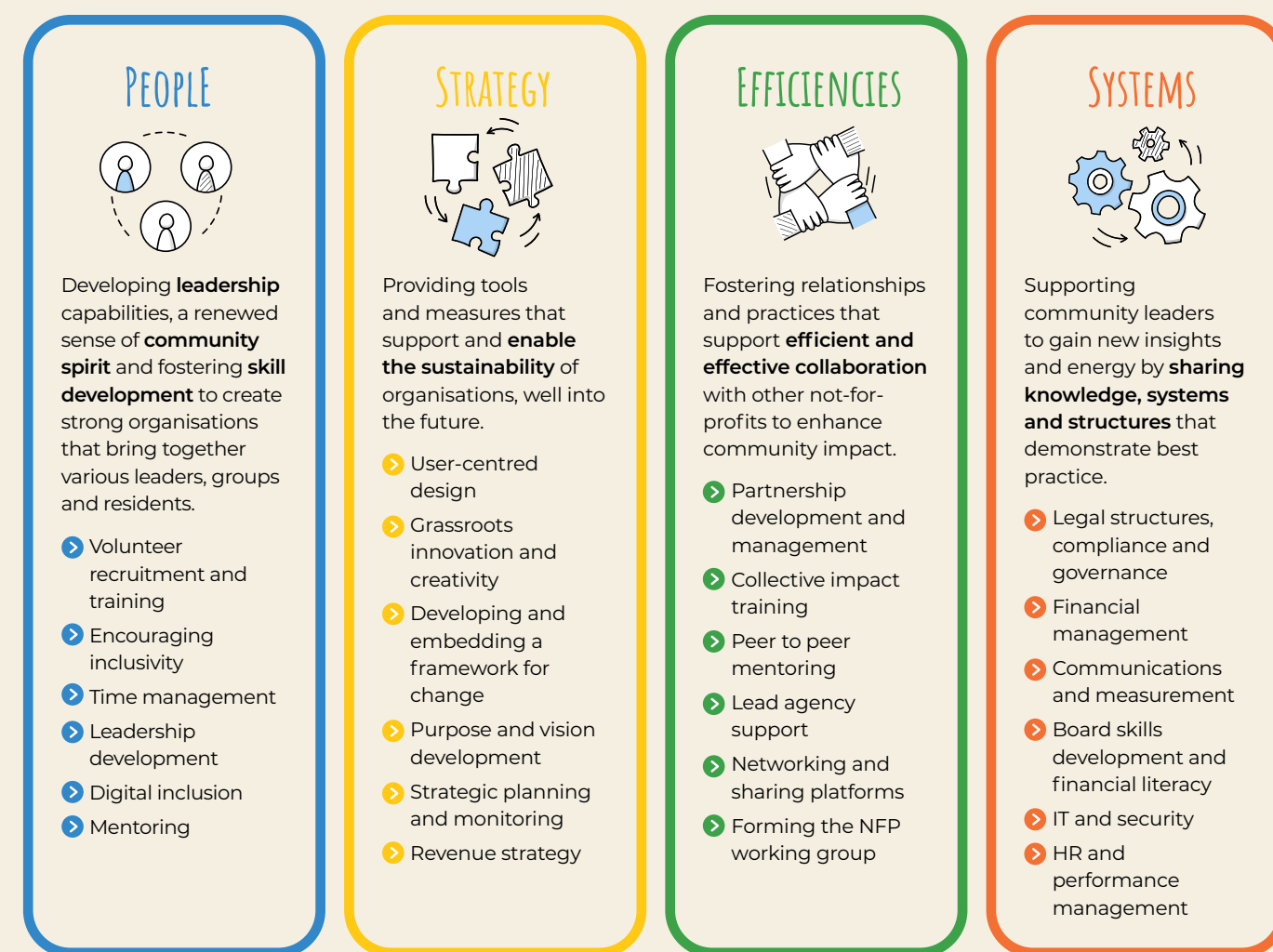
- 1. Collaboration:** Foster collaboration between not-for-profit organisations to create sector efficiencies and increase capacity for community-wide advocacy;
- 2. Flexibility:** Respond flexibly to the needs of the community through the co-design of a unique community roadmap;
- 3. Activation of local connections and support:** Local community facilitators build relationships, drive a community-led approach and activate vital support to not-for-profit organisations;
- 4. Evaluate and learn:** Measure community and not-for-profit change over time, share learnings with other communities and adapt.

Key components



Four pillars of capacity building

Each community is supported to develop goals that align with their unique local needs and ecosystem, through a co-designed 'roadmapping' process. Once these collective priorities have been identified, the IRCF program offers granting support to activate capacity building initiatives across four strategic priority areas: People, Strategy, Efficiencies and Systems. A list of all grants funded starts on page 38.



Program activation partnerships

Funding partnerships

Programs like IRCF only work when there is a deep, trust-based partnership with funding partners who understand that learning and testing solutions is crucial to driving large scale impact. It's the essential ingredient for the program to stay flexible and agile in the face of challenges and truly meet communities 'where they are'.

The IRCF model encourages donor visits to community. These opportunities offer two-way learning and sharing, with donors learning about the impact in a local context, and their visits providing an opportunity for organisations to build stakeholder engagement capacity.

Facilitation partnerships

Identifying facilitation partners who are subject matter experts and familiar with the regional context has ensured IRCF communities receive the best possible guidance in areas like strategic planning, governance, fundraising, volunteer engagement and financial management. Wherever possible, the IRCF team seeks to engage local practitioners who can provide support beyond the program.



Evaluation partnership

A community-focused approach to evaluation builds capacity for participants throughout the program, providing them with skills and self-assessment tools in addition to gathering data.

In choosing an evaluation partnership, an important consideration has been to ensure the evaluation process responds to community needs first and gathers information that will support them into the future. Evaluation facilitators have become a part of the IRCF team, warmly welcomed into communities and delivering value well beyond the sharing of data.

This partnership approach to evaluation has allowed for the building of trust over time, resulting in richer insights. It has also left NFPs with a deeper knowledge of why evaluation matters, building their capacity for embedding evaluation into their own programs.



Local program delivery partnership

In the Bega community, FRRR has partnered with Council to manage the delivery of the IRCF program across the Bega Valley. Community facilitators are employed by Council, and this unique IRCF model has generated enhanced relationships between Council and the local not-for-profit sector.

In several other IRCF communities, councils emerged as a supportive partner in the delivery of the IRCF program, providing access to venues and resources. However, this is not universal, and engagement with councils to bring more visibility to the NFP sector and the need for tailored resourcing is a consistent goal for the IRCF team.

Leadership development partnership

In the Bega Valley and across the Shoalhaven region, FRRR has partnered with the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation (ARLF) to deliver their Regenerate program. This will support local leaders to build skills in collaboration and how they can help their communities become resilient to and recover from natural disasters.

"Being involved with IRCF has reinforced that we need to fund in a flexible and nimble way, fund what the local organisation needs to take their work forward, build local connections and capacity, understand that collaboration is complex and time consuming and that not all collaborations will thrive, and to fund and employ local people working in their communities."

David Hardie, Foundation Manager VFFF

"The local council in each area continues to be a key partner. When they provide co-location, access to land etc they provide a home, facility to run activities, increased visibility, access to shared staff resources and contribute to greater long term financial sustainability for NFPs."

IRCF Evaluation Report
Matrix on Board, 2021

The Model in Action

Embedding local NFP collaboration

Collaboration

- Foster collaboration between not-for-profit organisations to create sector efficiencies.
- Increase capacity for community-wide advocacy.



Increased community collaboration

A key consideration in collaborative work is allowing the process to take the time it needs.

The competitive nature of many funding and granting programs can lead to NFPs working in a way that can hinder collaboration. The underpinnings for this competitive mindset are complex, and the unique approach of IRCF supports community leaders to find their own pathways to enhanced partnerships and relationships. The pace of embedding collaborative practices can vary greatly, especially in grassroots organisations with limited time, capacity and systems.

One of the most significant IRCF outcomes to date is community organisations coming together around a shared vision and common goals. Locally embedded IRCF Community Facilitators actively engage a diverse cross section of community members to identify capacity, strengths and needs. This empowers the local NFP sector by giving them a voice and decision-making in shaping priorities, projects, and goals.

The emphasis on inclusivity and shared decision-making fosters a sense of ownership and social cohesion that builds a strong foundation for ongoing collaboration beyond IRCF.

“There are better partnerships and collaborations between organisations in the community. We share a lot of our resources now. We used to be in competition with each other, but now we all talk more to each other. When there’s funding and it’s not our core business, we send the information to other organisations. We didn’t do that before.”

Nambucca Valley participant

Nambucca Valley Fundraising Collective – building a sustainable future, together

Background:

Since 2022, a core group of Nambucca Valley organisations and their leaders have shown a deep commitment to moving from a place of competition to a place of trust and collaboration. In the final year of their IRCF journey, they are in the process of investigating a collective to develop strategy for collaborative grant writing and fundraising.

The Fundraising Collective has received \$75,653 in funding to scope this project, utilising consultation, research, and best practices to help inform the best strategy for the Nambucca Valley.

Possible outcomes they will be exploring include contracting a community grant writer, establishing a community fundraising account or even a community foundation, and collaborative fundraising initiatives that could become part of the fabric of the Nambucca Valley annual events calendar.

Key learning:

Competition for funding and resources often lies at the heart of why collaborative approaches are challenging for NFPs in small communities. The willingness of a wide range of NFPs in the Nambucca Valley to embrace the possibility of collective fundraising has emerged from many conversations over time that have established trust.



Embedding collaborative cultural approaches



Gaining cultural trust is a continuous process that requires building authentic relationships and fostering mutual understanding. Engaging a First Nations facilitator to engage across communities enables the creation of culturally safe spaces for local Aboriginal leaders to share wisdom through meaningful conversations. It also allows the IRCF program to stay informed on cultural experiences and perspectives and continually incorporate this learning into the model.

The focus on partnering, sharing and networking is evidenced in the IRCF funded Jinda biin duguula (Sisters Together) collaboration between Miimi Aboriginal Corporation, Unkya Local Aboriginal Land Council, Jaanyмили Bawrrungga, Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative, focused on deepening First Nations NFP sector collaboration across the Nambucca Valley and supporting key leaders to develop a cultural competency induction package and Women’s Wellness Conference.

“Changing people’s mindset, having an open mind on how we can all be connected and have a shared vision. We had tunnel vision before and were focusing on how we could survive. Now we are connecting automatically to each other and helping. We are checking in on each other to see how we are travelling as individual women.”

Jaanyмили Bawrrungga,
Nambucca Valley Participant

What have we learned so far about collaboration?

It takes time for communities to move to a place of collaboration when the NFP funding environment is often based on competition. Skilled, neutral facilitation that ‘connects the dots’ and creates safe spaces for all voices to be heard as meaningful conversations happen over time and is central to success.

The pace at which each community embraces collaborative approaches is as unique as the communities themselves. The IRCF team act as the ‘guardrails’ to ensure the community and the local voice and perspective stay at the centre of decision making around activities and timing, especially when delivered by external partners not as familiar with the local context.

Ensuring a First Nations facilitator is available to support for each community can lead to greater impacts such as development of collaborative projects, sharing of community-wide cultural immersion resources, and greater confidence community-wide in embracing cultural collaboration.

Flexible funding – a ‘toolbox’ of support

Flexibility

- Respond flexibly to the needs of the community through the co-design of a unique community roadmap.



Community roadmaps

A community co-design process is facilitated through annual roadmap workshops, with all local NFPs invited to participate. Through this collaborative process, shared goals are explored, and the resulting roadmaps are developed, reviewed and updated to document progress over time and frame community priorities. The roadmaps then inform the projects developed for partnership grants and ‘toolbox’ funding.

Community roadmaps have already proven to be beneficial when communities are faced with challenges. In the Nambucca Valley when they experienced natural disasters, the community was able to mobilise quickly to support one another. Having documented community priorities also supported advocacy efforts for transport and improved telecom’s, as well as informed Council planning.

“Roadmapping was brilliant. We had a big demographic of people, and it made everything very concise and clear, support for projects but also boundaries.”

South Coast roadmap workshop participant

The program’s strength is its flexibility to adapt to the needs of communities, not-for-profit organisations and donors. There is a suite of tools within the program model that can be used depending on the circumstances and requirements of each opportunity.

Mid-term report – Sefton’s

Alongside annual partnership grant rounds, participating NFPs also have access to ‘toolbox’ funds, an agile funding mechanism available for projects with broad community benefit. This smaller pool of \$50,000 over the life of the program is pre-approved, which allows for a quick response to funding requests when there is energy and enthusiasm among participants to activate collaborative projects like workshops, community expo’s and networking opportunities.

The Art of Hosting – conversations that matter

In South Coast IRCF communities, a participatory leadership practice called The Art of Hosting has been utilised in the facilitation of workshops, in partnership with Campfire Coop. This is a highly effective way of harnessing the collective wisdom and self-organising capacity of a group. Based on the assumption that people give their energy and resources to what matters most to them, the Art of Hosting approach invites people to take charge of the challenges facing them. The philosophy of a ‘leader in every chair’ strengthens trust and has greatly enhanced the outcomes of the South Coast roadmap workshops.



The capacity to continue utilising these techniques has also been established through local leaders participating in an Art of Hosting training workshop supported through toolbox funding.

Factoring in environmental and economic impacts

Since the program’s inception, all IRCF communities have navigated a pandemic and are experiencing the effects of the economic aftermath. Most have also experienced devastating bushfires, floods, and/or drought. The impact of these environmental and economic challenges has been an essential consideration when designing and implementing the IRCF program flexibly in each community.

The IRCF program is designed to help communities navigate working together and integrating the supports that may be available. By building the capacity of the NFP sector, community leaders and volunteers, the social ecosystem of the community will be better prepared to navigate future impacts.

The flexible IRCF approach of building capacity and collaboration at the pace determined by each community can support deeper connection, making them stronger together and more prepared to withstand inevitable future environmental and economic impacts.

Spotlight on: South Coast NSW communities

The Shoalhaven and Bega Valley regions on the South Coast of NSW were devastated by the Black Summer bushfires in early 2020. In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, communities and volunteers rallied together and significant recovery funding was available. Community volunteers ensured people were cared for, even as funding waned and they themselves had been affected and needed support.

The IRCF program was already established in the Shoalhaven region prior to the bushfires, and the flexible nature of the program quickly adapted to focusing on supporting the people who were supporting others.

The flexibility and community-led, relationship-centred approach of the IRCF program has provided a locally facilitated forum for five communities across the South Coast to come together on their own terms, and lead with their own solutions.

Two great examples:

Project: Treading Lightly Community Hub (\$25,000 partnership grant). While an environmental action group at its core, post-fires Treading Lightly was called on to coordinate community recovery. IRCF's support helped build their overall capacity to deliver on their core mission, at the same time as step up to support the community. This included creating a space for community meetings, to store relief supplies and to do the work without volunteers taking it home.

Project: Conjola Raft Race (\$3,481 partnership grant). Post-fires, there was a clear need to bring the community together to help re-stitch the social fabric. The once-popular Conjola Raft Race was resurrected, with IRCF funding supporting the volunteer committee to re-launch the event. Some 350 of the town's 400 people came along. The grant gave the committee confidence to re-engage and local businesses have now stepped up to ensure this vital community activity continues.

“The facilitator role can also get a read on the energy levels of non-profits on the ground.

For example, they are able to determine when there is volunteer fatigue and adjust the engagement between FRRR / evaluation team and the organisations appropriately.”

IRCF South Coast evaluation



What have we learned so far about flexibility?

Representation matters, and having buy-in and engagement from a broad cross-section of community organisations is an important element of successful roadmapping.

Ensuring the end goals are in mind as roadmaps are being developed and reviewed can support communities to feel 'ready' and well-resourced to thrive beyond IRCF.

Developing an early common understanding about the difference between capacity building funding and 'typical' grant funding focused on infrastructure and short-term projects is essential to achieving shared goals developed through the roadmap process.

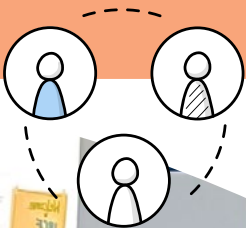
Flexible timeframes (within reason) allow for changes in momentum or delays in projects beyond the control of the community and enable communities to enable communities to engage with the process and move through the stages of the model in a way that builds their capacity to make sustainable and long-term change.

Providing communities with the tools to have meaningful conversations can greatly enhance their capacity to move through challenges and embrace collaboration.

Facilitators as connectors

Activation of local connections and support

- ▶ Local community facilitators build relationships, drive a community-led approach.
- ▶ Activate vital support to not-for-profit organisations.



Community facilitators

A local community facilitator is contracted for each IRCF community. They are skilled local practitioners who bring lived experience, expertise and connections to build relationships and trust that supports the facilitation of a community-led approach.

The community facilitator acts as a conduit to resources and as a trusted advisor to NFPs throughout their IRCF journey, along with being a source of support for people in organisations who might otherwise feel isolated. Facilitators coach, mentor and encourage diverse community engagement. They provide guidance for partnership grants and toolbox funding applications and help leverage additional opportunities to build local and broader sector networks. Facilitators have a deep understanding of the fabric of their community and the local NFP sector, and an appreciation of the important role organisations have within their local context.

In evaluation interviews, organisations have shared the value of the community facilitator with feedback like: “Rather than us just flying on a wing and prayer we can discuss projects with her.”; “They are easy to talk to” and “They are like a mentor.”

The evaluation process also highlights the role of community facilitators as a standout feature of the IRCF program model. Key data points include the value of living locally, understanding the local population, having a business and strategic thinking approach tailored to the community, and the ability to build engagement with diverse groups while remaining neutral.

“The role of the local community facilitators is crucial to the effectiveness of the program delivery and has been shown to be as important to these communities and their not-for-profit organisations as the funding itself.”

Mid-term report - Sefton’s

Shoalhaven Community Pre-school – unlocking leadership capacity

Background:

Shoalhaven Community Preschool became an IRCF Partner when the program first launched in the region. Their premises were located on land that was resumed by the NSW Government to build a new hospital, and the preschool was suddenly faced with finding a new location and project managing the construction process.

The IRCF Facilitator in Nowra was available to provide support and offer strategies, and with their encouragement the pre-school applied for \$22,000 in IRCF funding to allow the centre’s director to hire additional support to free up her time to focus on the preschool relocation. This resulted in a successful project and expansion of the centre’s services.

“FRRR’s process is really unique in working out what is a good fit for the organisation. It’s a really collaborative process.”

Kate Morris,
Managing Director



Key learning:

The impartial yet fully invested local expertise offered by the IRCF Facilitator was invaluable in supporting the organisation through a particularly challenging time, which led to creative solutions and positive outcomes for the community.

Spotlight on: Leeton Connect



“We are always asking the community what they need and what they want from us. From this comes networking opportunities and opportunities for training, which strengthens the not-for-profits.”

Mary Errey,
Leeton Connect Coordinator

Leeton Connect was established after a clear community need for a central support hub for NFPs was identified in early roadmapping and reinforced through evaluation insights.

With IRCF partnership funding and local facilitator support, a welcoming hub in downtown Leeton was established to support local NFPs with branding and marketing, using social media, training and networking events, and working collaboratively with NFPs and Leeton Shire Council and the Business Chamber. At the four-year mark, Leeton Connect is now focusing on building a sustainable financial model to continue this much needed support beyond the IRCF program.

Leeton Connect is an excellent example of the outcomes possible when flexible IRCF funding, responsiveness to community needs and the support of a local facilitator are activated.

It has evolved into a vital backbone organisation in the community and will continue to build NFP capacity and partnerships into the future.

Partnership grants

Following the community roadmap process, in addition to toolbox funding IRCF partner organisations are invited to apply for partnership grants that align with priority capacity building projects for their community.

A highly supported granting process has been developed, starting with the Community Facilitator relationship with local NFPs. Facilitators work with organisations to discuss how applying for capacity building funding might meet the priority needs identified in the community roadmap. Once projects are scoped and developed, a grant application is submitted, with support available during every step of the process. The high level of trust and collaboration developed throughout the grant round leads to a more streamlined process and a 90%+ grant success rate.

Initially, organisations approached grant funding with the desire to have their internal capacity needs met. This has evolved over time to focus more on collective community needs being met through efficiencies and collaborations. This in turn leads to sector strengthening in the longer term as these practices become embedded as ways of working in the community.

A list of the 145 projects funded to date through the IRCF Program is included on page 38.

Community hubs

The development of a centralised IRCF Digital Hub has provided a forum for learning, knowledge exchange, network / ecosystem mapping, a contact database of participating NFPs, access to recommended suppliers and resources and a home for each of the community roadmaps.

This concept has been implemented in various ways across IRCF communities to share resources in the local context. Some communities have utilised partnership grant funding to develop their own digital hubs, while others have developed a physical hub where community groups can receive support, training and exchange ideas and information.

Spotlight on:
The Valley Hub

A 2019 IRCF start up grant of \$60,000 saw the development of the Valley Hub.

The Hub is an online community resource, showcasing the Valley, inspiring visitors and locals alike, and acting as a conduit to quickly disseminate important information, especially during a crisis.

This community project in the Nambucca Valley is a valuable asset that will sustain connection across the community sector well beyond the culmination of the IRCF program.

With the support of the IRCF Facilitator, the project added a paid Project Manager and pivoted from the original physical hub project to a digital hub. Both were significant factors in getting the project up and running. A beautiful [video celebrating Gumbaynggirr culture](#) in the Valley was also produced.

The Valley Hub is now developing a revenue model for sustainability and is poised to be a valuable community connection resource beyond.



What have we learned so far about activating local connections and support?

Having Facilitators in place who are flexible, responsive and listening deeply to community as they move through the IRCF program is a critical success factor. On the South Coast, the injection of Black Summer funding allowed for the recruitment of additional facilitators at the mid-point of the program, resulting in significant acceleration of collaborative community efforts.

Not all organisations participating in the IRCF program apply for grant funding, and yet still remain highly engaged throughout the program. There is innate value in the collaboration, learning and networking opportunities offered.

It's important to invest in strategies and mechanisms like a digital or physical hub for keeping the community connected and talking to each other, along with connected and talking to other IRCF communities and accessing broader sector resources both during and after.

Evaluation and learning

- Measure community and not-for-profit change over time, share learnings with other communities and adapt.

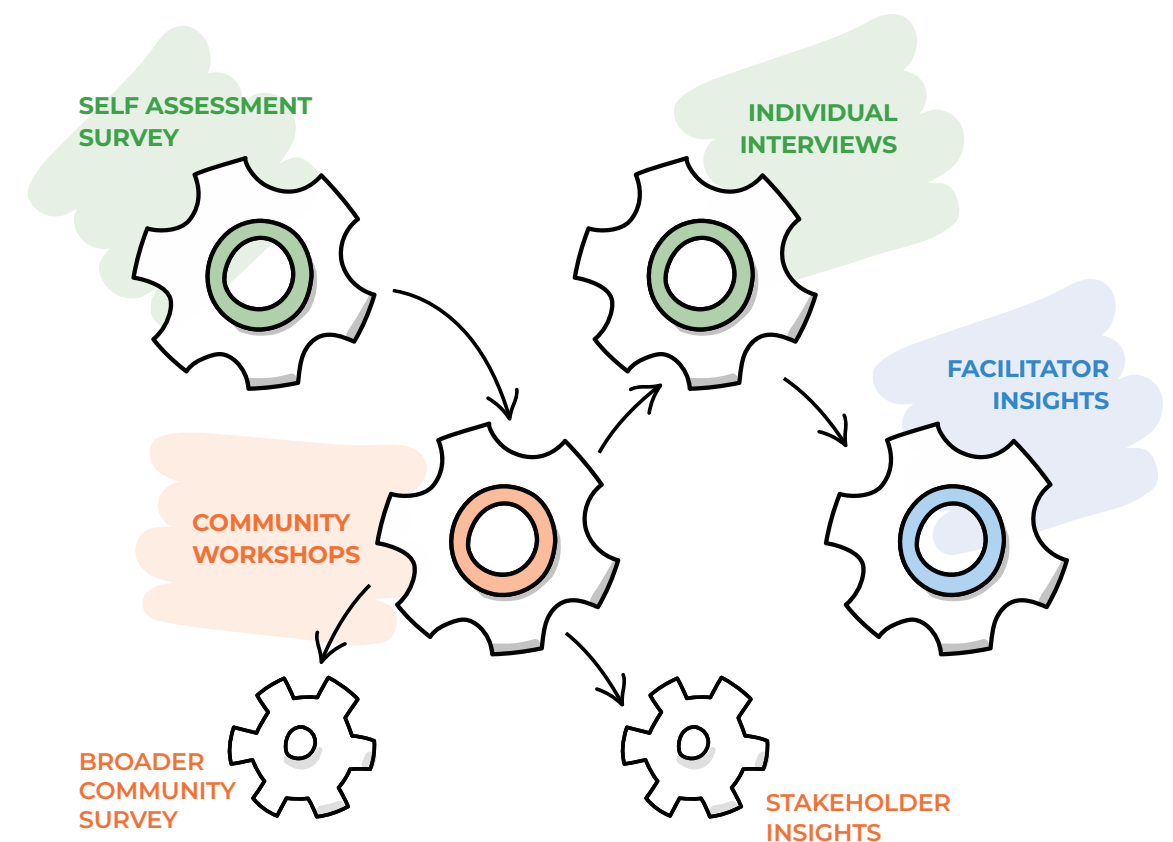


Embedded evaluation

A community-focused approach to evaluation builds capacity for participants throughout the program, providing them with skills and self-assessment tools in addition to gathering data.

Engaging external evaluation partners who complement the IRCF relationship-centred approach has been a key element of supporting community engagement in the process. The community can develop meaningful relationships with the evaluation team and build their own evaluation capacity as they work with methodologies and tools that become more familiar over time. This embedded learning approach is evidenced in deeper and more insightful responses to each data collection.

The evaluation approach uses a tailored combination of elements, in-person and virtual:



Mid-term program review findings

In August 2021, a mid-program review was conducted by Sefton's to consider the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities that were emerging. This provided an invaluable opportunity to reflect and inform the design and delivery of the IRCF program as it was launching into new communities on the South Coast.

The importance of face-to-face community engagement and taking time to build strong relationships with community groups was a common theme.

Most importantly this review found that the IRCF program is responding to the genuine needs of each community and is building their capacity to recover from disruptions and begin to thrive.

Sefton's Evaluation

What have we learned so far about evaluation?

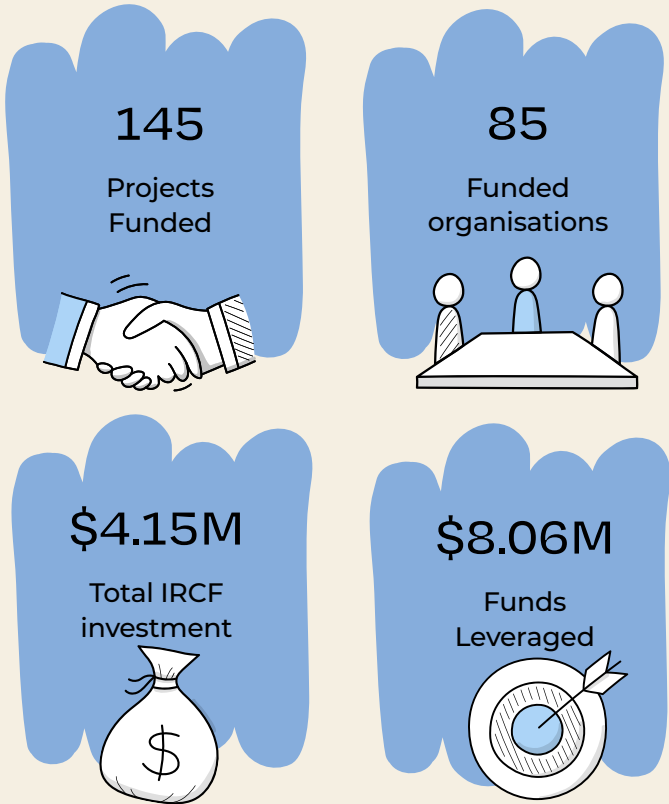
The evaluation process itself can be capacity building for small local NFPs when delivered by aligned evaluation partners in a flexible way with community needs at the centre.

Collecting data is only helpful when it informs program evolution. Ongoing evaluation throughout the IRCF program has allowed for continual growth of the model.

Focusing on resourcing the core strengths of the IRCF program – flexibility, responsiveness to community needs, and the local facilitator role – will streamline the replication of IRCF into new communities.

IRCF Impact

Where are IRCF partner communities after five years?



Confident and ready to embrace future opportunities

To date, more than \$4 million in funding has been invested across eight communities in NSW, thanks to the support of IRCF funders – the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation, the Snow Foundation, Bendigo Bank's Community Enterprise Foundation and the Australian Government Black Summer fund.

There are 85 locally governed organisations ranging from very small volunteer run NFPs to mid-size NFPs engaged in the IRCF program, and 145 capacity building grants have been provided to build capacity in people, organisations and collaborative community efforts.

For every dollar invested through IRCF, communities have leveraged that investment two-fold, resulting in a total investment of \$12+ million.

Perhaps most pleasingly NFPs tell us they feel more confident, as they have more things in their toolkit and therefore more capability to build sustainable future.

With a stronger, better resourced NFP sector and leadership

As community sector priority skill building areas have been identified through the roadmapping process and activated with partnership and toolbox funding, local NFP leaders and volunteers have been able to attend workshops focusing on governance, volunteer management, fundraising, NFP careers, facilitation skills and more.

To date, local NFPs have been able to employ 127 people to advance their work and collaborative efforts.



With embedded new ways of working collaboratively

Each IRCF community is embracing opportunities to collaborate and advocate in their own ways, with a common commitment to developing collective initiatives that will grow the local NFP sector. Collaboration has started to feel more like the norm, and there is a new confidence among local not-for-profits that they have the right tools to advocate for their needs. Indicators of progress include:

- > A shared vision and common goals;
- > Local NFP leaders and volunteers committed to a shared future;
- > First Nations collaboration, consultation and cultural immersion practices being sought out;
- > Embedded systems and efficiencies in many organisations e.g., governance;
- > Fundraising strategies and collaboration e.g., collective resourcing and shared grant writing;
- > Connections to broader sector networks and resources.

Emergent areas of impact

As current IRCF programs are at the four-to-five-year mark, we are seeing strong examples of how increased capacity is enabling NFPs to advocate and fulfill their missions with greater impact.

Health

The health and vibrancy of rural communities is complex and intersects across a range of services. In Junee, greater collaboration has energised the Junee Health Advisory Committee through increasing capacity in two participating local health services; Junee Community Centre and aged care facility Coinda Court. This increased awareness and communication between service providers in town has resulted in services being more frequent, more thorough and leaving fewer gaps. And in the Southern Shoalhaven, a collaborative of NFPs is working together to address the challenge of attracting and retaining allied health professionals, developing strategies for their region, and creating marketing and promotional videos.

Mental health of volunteers

Community roadmaps across all IRCF communities consistently identify the need for developing strategies to recruit, support and retain volunteers. In Ulladulla, a wellbeing expo celebrating volunteers and providing practical support has led to improvements in volunteer connectedness and wellbeing. IRCF funding has also allowed several volunteer-led organisations to add their first paid co-ordination role, providing much needed support for their volunteer workforce and reducing volunteer burnout.

Food security

Community Facilitators across the South Coast identified a trend of increased requests from providers of food pantries, emergency relief and food hampers from IRCF partner organisations. They brought these organisations together as a collective to explore bulk buying options and share learnings and different models of addressing increasing food insecurity across the Shoalhaven region.

Cultural capacity

The roadmapping process in South Coast communities identified a need to build cultural capacity in areas like connecting with Elders, engaging with First Nations individuals and businesses for Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country, cultural immersion, decolonisation, culturally appropriate practices and sourcing appropriate venues. Utilising IRCF toolbox funding, a cultural consultant has been engaged to work with the IRCF First Nations facilitator to bring together local Indigenous businesses and individuals to share their skills, offerings and connections with the NFP sector.

Youth engagement

IRCF organisations have engaged young people through free and low-cost sport, recreation, health, enrichment and employment pathway activities within the NFP sector. Several IRCF communities have also engaged young people through activities that focus on communications and digital media e.g., a Nambucca Valley IRCF funded project where young people were trained to develop a series of podcasts to increase awareness of all the youth opportunities in their region. Similarly, in Ulladulla a series of podcasts were developed by young people to highlight opportunities in the NFP sector.

Renewable energy

Junee Community Power introduced a circular funding model to allow local non-profits to install solar power on their premises, reducing their operating costs. South Coast Health and Sustainability Alliance (SHASA) provided grant writing and auspice support to install solar power on NFP owned premises in the Eurobodalla region to reduce ongoing costs to the groups through bulk buying efficiencies.

Social enterprise

Existing social enterprise models have strengthened financial sustainability, forged connections in the community, and new initiatives like Independence Ulladulla's Cup n Cake n Co cafe have been launched.

Spotlight on: Independence Ulladulla

Independence Ulladulla's engagement with IRCF program since the start of the program has supported the launch of two social enterprises – a café and a school uniform supply shop – to establish and employ local young people living with a disability.

The sequence of projects activated throughout the program is an excellent example of how IRCF supports an organisation to grow their capacity and confidence over time, which in turn grows the overall capacity of the community to support people.

Project 1: EveryBody Deserves to Thrive

(\$20,000 partnership grant)

This funding enabled Independence Ulladulla to secure their tenancy and operations, modernise operating systems, and update training to provide a much-needed School Leavers' Employment Support.

Project 2: EveryBody Deserves to Flourish

(\$20,000 partnership grant)

The second IRCF grant supported the implementation of systems and technology, a new brand strategy for the promotion and delivery of a wide range of services to people with a disability, along with website development and staff training.

Project 3: Helping Hands

(\$19,000 partnership grant)

Support to improve systems and invest in leadership capacity to continue to innovate and grow their social enterprises.



Where to from here?

Beyond IRCF – creating a positive and intentional ‘off-ramp’

A key consideration identified through evaluation interviews is the importance of providing communities with a positive ‘off-ramp’ that embeds capacity, activities and collaboration beyond the IRCF program.

Aligned with all elements of the IRCF program, transparency, community co-design and flexibility have informed the culmination strategy in each community, along with facilitator input. Priority areas during the final 12 months include: Community Roadmap handover; Financial Sustainability; Fundraising; Facilitator Support; Governance/Succession Planning; Volunteer Engagement; and Communications.

Culmination projects

Work is underway to gently phase out IRCF program supports like the local community facilitator role, and ensure organisations are in a good place to resource these initiatives themselves. Examples of culmination activities:

- Consolidate learnings to support advocacy for IRCF and new RRR communities;
- Identify a pool of subject matter experts as ongoing resources for IRCF communities;
- Share IRCF project case studies, stories and tips to enhance learnings and amplify the efforts of community organisations through FRRR and community communications channels;
- Enable post program support through an enhanced Digital Hub and connecting local NFP Hubs to form ‘alumni’ networking groups for ongoing learning and sharing;
- Support events that celebrate community efforts and enhance current momentum.

Continual learning and growth

Continual learning and growth are a hallmark of any successful place-based program looking to build capacity and support enduring change for communities. The IRCF program has embraced this through key elements of the model focused on flexibility, evaluation and learning. This report only reflects highlights of the depth of learning and insights to date, and the IRCF program will continue to iterate and flex to new challenges and opportunities as they arise in current and new communities.

Building momentum in new communities

Across RRR Australia there are countless communities that could benefit greatly from an injection of support for capacity building through a long-term, trust-based, community-led program like IRCF. Using all that we have learned working alongside eight unique communities over the past five years, the team at FRRR now has the capacity and capability to share the successes, challenges, systems and strategies for maximising impact in the next local context. As the IRCF program meets communities where they are, the FRRR team can envisage benefits in a range of contexts, such as navigating industry transitions, and recovery and resilience of the local NFP sector post disaster. If you’d like to join us, contact partnerships@frrr.org.au.

Projects activated

To date, FRRR and our partners supported 145 projects delivered via 85 organisations operating in the partner communities.

The chart below shows the breakdown of those projects across the four strategic pillars.



The table overleaf lists grants awarded to August 2023. Note, the program is ongoing at the time of writing, so it will not include all grants funded through this program. The table is colour coded by pillar, with projects listed alphabetically by the grant recipient and then by date of grant awarded. As you’ll note, in many cases, groups received more than one grant, building their capacity as the program rolled out.

	Strategic Pillar	People	Systems	Strategy	Efficiencies
Organisation	Project				Grant & Date Awarded
Batemans Bay					
Clyde River and Batemans Bay Historical Society Inc.	Provide training in governance to build capacity in partner historical societies.				\$22,923 Aug 2020
Clyde River and Batemans Bay Historical Society Inc.	Training BBHS's partner NFPs to assist in attracting and retaining volunteers.				\$6,426 Sept 2021
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Auspiced by Clyde River and Batemans Bay Historical Society	Train NFP volunteers in online marketing.				\$4,916 May 2023
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Auspiced by Clyde River and Batemans Bay Historical Society	Support NFPs to attract and retain volunteers.				\$7,659 Aug 2023
Community Life Batemans Bay Inc.	Develop capacity by delivering a workshop for directors, staff and volunteers.				\$5,045 Aug 2020
Eurobodalla Education and Therapy Services Ltd	Establish an Allied Health student placement program and strengthen planning at Muddy Puddles.				\$37,500 Aug 2020
Eurobodalla Education and Therapy Services Ltd	Develop a communications strategy and marketing materials to promote Muddy Puddles.				\$20,000 Sept 2021
Eurobodalla Education and Therapy Services Ltd	Develop a learning and development strategy for Allied Health employees.				\$20,000 Oct 2022
Eurobodalla Woodcraft Guild Inc.	Support planning and design of a new woodworking workshop following Black Summer fires.				\$10,000 Sept 2021
Rotary Club of Batemans Bay Inc.	Enhance IT skills and systems to better link local community services, charities and clubs.				\$24,680 Sept 2021
Rotary Club of Batemans Bay Inc.	Establish and resource a community hub to provide support local NFPs.				\$19,370 Oct 2022
SEARMS Community Housing Aboriginal Corporation	Development of a community engagement plan and new strategic plan.				\$40,000 Aug 2020
SEARMS Community Housing Aboriginal Corporation	Build community engagement and celebrate Aboriginal culture through language and storytelling.				\$14,000 Oct 2022
Southcoast Health and Sustainability Alliance	Engage a project co-ordinator to drive capacity building across grassroots NFPs.				\$37,500 Aug 2020
Southcoast Health and Sustainability Alliance	Engage a Coordinator to expand training and support for Batemans Bay's NFPs.				\$30,000 Sept 2021
Southcoast Health and Sustainability Alliance	Build organisational capacity and support community organisations to reduce energy costs.				\$20,000 Oct 2022
The Circle Foundation Cooperative Ltd	Build capacity in operations, fundraising and community co-design.				\$20,000 Sept 2021
The Circle Foundation Cooperative Ltd	Build capacity by improving IT and employing a project officer.				\$22,675 Oct 2022
The Family Place Inc.	Strengthen service delivery and governance by engaging a consultant for advice.				\$40,785 Aug 2020
The Family Place Inc.	Appoint a part-time employee to support fundraising, compliance and governance upgrades.				\$20,000 Sept 2021

	Strategic Pillar	People	Systems	Strategy	Efficiencies
The Family Place Inc.	Engage a project officer to develop housing solutions models and support collaboration.				\$26,208 Oct 2022
Bay & Basin					
Bay & Basin Community Resources Ltd	Employ a marketing coordinator for six months to strengthen communications.				\$30,000 Nov 2021
Bay & Basin Community Resources Ltd	Employ a project coordinator to develop a youth-focused training centre.				\$30,000 Oct 2022
Huskisson Public School Parents and Citizens Association	Build organisational capacity through planning and developing strategic documents and resources.				\$13,070 Nov 2021
Lady Denman Heritage Complex Huskisson Inc.	Purchase cataloguing software to strengthen collection management.				\$6,424 Nov 2021
Sanctuary Point Community Pride Inc.	Develop a website, communications strategy and use accounting software to strengthen organisational capacity and community engagement.				\$10,309 Nov 2021
Sussex Inlet District Chamber of Commerce Inc.	Provide resilience training and develop a marketing campaign.				\$3,900 Nov 2021
Sussex Inlet Foundation for Community Development	Strengthen the volunteer committee to support the Sussex Inlet Community.				\$19,500 Oct 2022
The Bay & Basin Uniting Church Opshop	Employ a coordinator for the Husky Op-Shop and engage a business consultant.				\$29,084 Nov 2021
Tomerong School of Arts	Enhance operations through the development of policies and procedures.				\$12,000 Oct 2022
Uniting - Firefly Bay and Basin	Develop a youth forum and youth led projects by engaging a youth practitioner.				\$26,000 Nov 2021
Vincentia High School - Yiliga-Miraral Wellbeing Team	Support the planning and delivery of Walawaani-ngarn, an integrated community health hub, by employing a project manager.				\$24,000 Nov 2021
Vincentia High School P&C - Yiliga-Miraral Wellbeing Team	Create awareness of the community health hub through a launch event and marketing material.				\$9,000 Oct 2022
Vincentia Ratepayers and Residents Association Inc.	Develop a strategic vision document to support future direction.				\$7,000 Nov 2021
Junee					
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Auspiced by Riverina School Boys Football Carnival	Provide access and training for NFPs to access EFTPOS terminals for local events.				\$9,019 Sept 2022
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Auspiced by Junee Roundhouse Rail Museum	Support the culmination of the digital capacity project.				\$23,600 Nov 2022
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Auspiced by Junee Community Centre	Undertake Part A of the Community Hub Think Tank and feasibility study.				\$22,000 April 2023

Strategic Pillar			People	Systems	Strategy	Efficiencies
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Auspiced by Junee Community Center			Part B of the Community Hub feasibility study.			\$27,490 April 2023
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Auspiced by Junee Community Power			Support NFP access to PV systems by funding a feasibility study			\$24,950 June 2023
Cooinda Court Aged Care Ltd			Build organisational capacity through a feasibility study.			\$19,286 Nov 2022
Junee & District Historical Society Inc.			Invest in technology to preserve local history and increase organisational capacity.			\$1,500 Aug 2019
Junee Business & Trades Inc.			Build community resilience through workshops and employing a part-time Community Liaison Officer.			\$37,500 Aug 2019
Junee Business & Trades Inc.			Support leaders and volunteers through presentations and workshops.			\$20,000 Aug 2020
Junee Business & Trades Inc.			Purchase and fit out a trailer to support community events.			\$30,611 Aug 2020
Junee Business & Trades Inc.			Appoint a Grants Officer and conduct a trial of a Community Newsletter.			\$118,959 Sept 2021
Junee Business & Trades Inc.			Develop strategic and marketing plans to build capacity.			\$27,894 Nov 2022
Junee Community Centre Inc.			Engaging a consultant to develop a fundraising strategy for the Junee Community Centre.			\$21,000 Aug 2019
Junee Community Centre (JCC) Inc.			Subsidise JCC Manager position to strengthen organisational capacity.			\$140,000 Sept 2021
Junee Community Centre Inc.			Improve sustainability and support the development of a Community Hub through scoping and planning activities.			\$33,648 Nov 2022
Junee Community Power Inc.			Invest in solar systems to develop a community-owned renewable energy circular fund.			\$15,000 Aug 2020
Junee Community Power Inc.			Generate working examples to support Junee NFPs to solve energy wastage.			\$47,508 Sept 2021
Junee Hostel for the Aged Inc.			Improve management systems by installing new technology.			\$49,706 Sept 2021
Junee Senior Citizens Club Inc.			Build organisational and community capacity through hall upgrade.			\$13,000 Aug 2020
Junee Show Society Incorporated			Develop a strategic plan to enhance coordination and use of Junee Showgrounds.			\$23,491 Nov 2022
Regional Heritage Transport Assoc Junee Incorporated			Update technology to strengthen organisational capacity.			\$25,724 Sept 2021
Rhythm n Rail Incorporated			Increase community engagement through the upgrade of AV equipment.			\$19,944 Aug 2020
Riverina School boys Football Carnival			Install a Public Address system across Junee to support engagement.			\$20,000 Aug 2020
Riverina Working Equitation Inc.			Develop a strategy for the future sustainability of the grounds.			\$3,580 Sept 2021

Strategic Pillar			People	Systems	Strategy	Efficiencies
Leeton						
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Auspiced by Leeton Connect			Undertake Leeton Connect governance and grant writing workshops.			\$9,950 April 2021
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Auspiced by Leeton Connect			Deliver volunteer and grant writing workshops for Leeton NFP sector.			\$24,954 Oct 2022
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Auspiced by Leeton Show Society Inc.			Support Show Society and the local NFP sector through digital upgrades.			\$1,858 April 2023
Leeton Art Society Inc.			Invest in a new website and digital literacy program to build capacity and engagement.			\$15,500 Aug 2020
Leeton Business Chamber Inc.			Develop a digital hub to Support NFPs and engage the community.			\$40,000 Dec 2021
Leeton Business Chamber Inc.			Build volunteer and organisational capacity to ensure sustainability and business continuity.			\$60,000 Nov 2022
Leeton Community Care Development Inc.			Upgrade vital equipment to build organisational capacity.			\$31,963 Dec 2020
Leeton Connect Inc.			Develop a Community Hub to share resources, skills, knowledge and equipment.			\$60,000 Aug 2019
Leeton Connect Inc.			Build organisational capacity across the NFP sector through training, resources and information.			\$90,000 Aug 2020
Leeton Connect Inc.			Employ a coordinator to build capacity of the organisation and NFP sector.			\$147,600 Dec 2021
Leeton Connect Inc.			Consolidate strategic objectives through grants support coordination.			\$56,570 Nov 2022
Leeton Jumpstart Fund Inc.			Employ a coordinator to build capacity and support volunteers and NFPs.			\$44,718 Dec 2021
Leeton Jumpstart Fund Inc.			Build organisational capacity and upskill volunteers.			\$38,980 Nov 2022
Leeton Shire Council			Employ a Community Grants Support Coordinator to support NFPs.			\$54,000 Dec 2021
Leeton Shire Council Leeton Multicultural Support Group			Recruit an Operations Manager to build organisational strength.			\$150,000 Dec 2020
Leeton Shire Council Western Riverina Arts Inc.			Employ a Museum Development Officer to support local museums.			\$60,000 Dec 2020
Leeton Show Society Inc.			Upgrade facilities at the Leeton Show Society's combined office space to support volunteers and NFPs.			\$23,436 Aug 2020
Roxy Community Theatre Rotary Club of Leeton Inc.			Build a community volunteer bank by providing learning partnership pathways.			\$35,000 Dec 2020
Whitton Public School P & C Association			Provide an office space to community organisations to build sustainability and connectedness.			\$10,207 Aug 2020

Strategic Pillar		People	Systems	Strategy	Efficiencies
Nambucca Valley					
Alithia	Strengthen organisational capacity and community inclusion through administration and funding support.				\$30,000 Aug 2020
Bowraville Communication Technology Centre Inc.	Support volunteers and service delivery through equipment upgrades and training.				\$12,430 Nov 2022
Bowraville Community Development Association Inc.	Undertake community consultation to strengthen collaboration and increase use of Pioneer Community Centre.				\$13,750 Sept 2021
Bowraville Innovative Social Enterprises Precinct Inc.	Build organisational capacity and provide community support by developing a governance framework.				\$44,912 Aug 2020
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Auspiced by MiiMi Aboriginal Corporation	Support sector-wide capacity building through delivery of training and workshops.				\$9,222 Mar 2022
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Auspiced by Bowraville Innovative Social Enterprises Precinct	Establish a working group to inform the delivery of expert governance training for NFPs.				\$25,000 June 2023
Collaborative Toolbox Project Auspiced by Bowraville Innovative Social Enterprise Precinct	Scope and assess feasibility of an operating model for financial sustainability and ongoing capacity building of a collective of local NFPs.				\$75,653 Aug 2023
Jaanyмили Bawrrungga Inc.	Strengthen organisational capacity by developing systems, leadership and governance structures.				\$30,290 Aug 2020
Lifetime Connect Inc.	Build community networks and organisational capacity across the Nambucca Valley.				\$60,000 Aug 2019
MiiMi Aboriginal Corporation	Build organisational sustainability and capacity by employing an administrative officer.				\$55,735 Aug 2020
MiiMi Aboriginal Corporation	Strengthen operational capacity by extending the Receptionist's employment.				\$54,470 Sept 2021
MiiMi Aboriginal Corporation	Provide human resources to support wellbeing, cultural leadership and organisational capacity.				\$50,000 Nov 2022
Mujaay Ganma Foundation Aboriginal Corporation	Engage trainee coordinators and mentors to kickstart the Mujaay Ganma's Yuraal Garden Project.				\$38,443 Aug 2020
Mujaay Ganma Foundation Aboriginal Corporation	Support community wellbeing and build capacity in young Gumbaynggirr trainees to deliver projects and develop management skills.				\$31,173 Sept 2021
Mujaay Ganma Foundation Aboriginal Corporation	Strengthen cultural knowledge and skills in youth trainee to support organisational capacity.				\$45,764 Nov 2022
Muurrbay Aboriginal Language & Culture Co-operative	Update policies, procedure and plans to support organisational sustainability and survival of local Aboriginal languages.				\$14,600 Aug 2020
Nambucca Heads Mens Shed Inc.	Explore the viability of using renewable energy to help sustain local NFPs.				\$11,000 Sept 2021
Nambucca Senior Citizens Club Incorporated	Promote community connectivity by supporting a local Nambucca print newsletter.				\$4,030.13 Aug 2020

	Strategic Pillar	People	Systems	Strategy	Efficiencies
Nambucca Valley Phoenix Ltd	Undertake strategic planning and mentoring program to help develop a social enterprise.				\$40,000 Aug 2020
Nambucca Valley Phoenix Ltd	Support the Coordinator position and invest in delivery of social enterprise strategic objectives.				\$47,000 Sept 2021
Nambucca Valley Youth Services Inc.	Upskill staff and volunteers through marketing and administration training.				\$41,990 Aug 2020
ShoreTrack Ltd	Develop a Management Operational System to build capacity and develop a strategic plan.				\$36,300 Sept 2021
ShoreTrack Ltd	Build connections between young people and NFPs through collaborative workshops and work experience opportunities.				\$45,000 Nov 2022
Unkya Local Aboriginal Land Council	Support key leaders to develop a cultural competency induction package.				\$72,704 Sept 2021
Valla Beach Community Association Nambucca Valley Council	Bring local community newsletters together to share content and amplify the voice of young people.				\$43,292 Sept 2021
Nowra					
Bomaderry Community Inc.	Support the volunteers to rejuvenate and focus on their passion.				\$3,240 Oct 2022
Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre Aboriginal Corporation	Appoint team Leader to undertake strategic planning to support the centre's future vision and rapid growth.				\$30,000 Nov 2021
Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre Aboriginal Corporation	Boost capacity by engaging a Project Officer to operationalise the strategic plan.				\$20,000 Oct 2022
Illaroo Co-operative Aboriginal Corporation	Upgrade IT systems and provide operational training for staff.				\$24,000 Mar 2022
Kangaroo Valley Voice Incorporated	Support development of a community hub through research and scoping of project.				\$15,000 Oct 2022
Noahs Ark Centre of Shoalhaven Inc.	Build organisational capacity through a coaching program and student placement partnership with University of Sydney.				\$30,000 April 2021
Noahs Ark Centre of Shoalhaven Inc.	Provide intergenerational peer mentoring of disability service professionals.				\$7,900 Oct 2022
Nowra Community Food Store Inc.	Transform operating systems and support the leadership development of the Nowra Community Food Store.				\$14,300 Nov 2021
Nowra Community Food Store Inc.	Develop a five-year strategic plan, operational business plan and HR framework to support organisational direction.				\$13,000 Oct 2022
Nowra Local Aboriginal Land Council	Develop operational capacity, communications strategy and provide governance support.				\$18,315 Oct 2022
Nowra Sub Branch of the Returned and Services League of Australia New South Wales Branch	Upgrade IT equipment and furniture to improve client experience.				\$16,469 Nov 2021
Pathways Foundation Ltd	Provide seed funding for the appointment of a community development officer to implement localised strategic plan.				\$30,000 April 2021

	Strategic Pillar	People	Systems	Strategy	Efficiencies
Shoalhaven Business Chamber Inc.		Build community capacity and resilience by strengthening the links between the corporate and community sector.			\$20,000 Oct 2022
Shoalhaven Community PreSchool Inc.		Develop and provide a staff wellbeing and capacity building program and employ an Aboriginal Identified trainee.			\$15,000 Aug 2020
Shoalhaven Community PreSchool Inc.		Strengthen resourcing and operational capacity during relocation and expansion of the preschool.			\$22,000 Nov 2021
Shoalhaven Community PreSchool Inc.		Support the final transition of the organisational growth and relocation of preschool.			\$30,000 Oct 2022
Shoalhaven Health and Arts Inc.		Create community awareness of the community arts & health activities being developed to support those impacted by bushfire trauma.			\$10,000 Aug 2020
Shoalhaven Health and Arts Inc.		Strengthen organisational capacity to respond to community demand through paid employment of volunteer-based managers.			\$14,112 Nov 2021
Shoalhaven Neighbourhood Services Inc.		Enhance the Client Management System to enable organisational sustainability and flexibility.			\$28,304 Aug 2020
South Coast Beef Producers Association Incorporated		Improve industry opportunities through development of a Cattle Industry Training Centre at the Nowra Show Grounds.			\$47,508 Aug 2020
South Coast Beef Producers Association Inc.		Provide governance training for South Coast Beef Management Committee members.			\$10,590 Nov 2021
South Coast Women's Health & Welfare Aboriginal Corporation		Strengthen the financial sustainability of Waminda and improve employment outcomes for Aboriginal women through the implementation of a business plan for three social enterprises.			\$23,000 April 2021
South Coast Women's Health & Welfare Aboriginal Corporation		Build a culturally safe local NFP sector by supporting Waminda to deliver their Cultural Immersion Program.			\$28,000 Nov 2021
The Shoalhaven Women's Resource Group Ltd		Support sustainability and succession by developing strategy and understating feasibility studies.			\$18,810 Aug 2020
The Shoalhaven Women's Resource Group Ltd		Prepare the organisation to achieve accreditation and strengthen communications.			\$10,000 Oct 2022
Tomerong School of Arts		Develop a community newsletter and new resident welcome pack to enhance community connectedness.			\$5,900 Aug 2020
Ulladulla					
Bawley Point and Kioloa Community Association Inc.		Build connectedness and strengthen organisational capacity through access to equipment, software and support.			\$7,567 Sept 2021
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Auspiced by Milton Ulladulla Business Chamber		Collaborative networking exercise for the Ulladulla IRCF participants.			\$1,280 May 2022
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Auspiced by Milton Ulladulla Business Chamber		Maximise community groups' efficiencies and financial capabilities through development of training and support.			\$19,700 Oct 2022
Independence Ulladulla Inc.		Enable tenancy and update operating systems and training to provide a School Leavers Employments Support program.			\$50,000 Aug 2020
Independence Ulladulla Inc.		Build organisational capacity through new brand strategy, website and staff training.			\$20,000 Sept 2021
Independence Ulladulla Inc.		Improve systems to support leadership to innovate and grow.			\$19,000 Oct 2022

Strategic Pillar	People	Systems	Strategy	Efficiencies
Milton Ulladulla Business Chamber Inc.	Strengthen connectedness through community newsletter, website and database of organisations, events and volunteers.			\$17,870 Aug 2020
Milton Ulladulla Business Chamber Inc.	Strengthen capacity through a community database, training resources & shared community campaigns.			\$22,010 Sept 2021
Milton Ulladulla Business Chamber Inc.	Continuation of building connections within the community groups by capturing and sharing information.			\$20,830 Oct 2022
Noahs Ark Centre of Shoalhaven Inc.	Strengthen service through the design and implementation of a recruitment and retention program for Destination Ulladulla.			\$30,000 Sept 2021
Noahs Ark Centre of Shoalhaven Inc.	Implement communication plan to build capacity in recruitment and communications.			\$12,000 Oct 2022
Red Head Villages Association Inc.	Prepare community master plan to improve future disaster preparedness.			\$31,971 Aug 2020
Safe Waters Community Care Inc.	Recruit manager to establish operational procedures for the Ulladulla shelter for homeless people.			\$30,000 Sept 2021
Safe Waters Community Care Inc.	Train volunteers & management in de-escalation and occupational violence prevention.			\$3,900 Oct 2022
South Coast Bookclubs Inc.	Expand bookclub service to create a sense of community for residents.			\$6,456 Oct 2022
StoryFest Inc.	Support donor fundraising for StoryFest school students through a new website and marketing campaign.			\$10,000 Oct 2022
The Dunn & Lewis Youth Development Foundation Ltd	Foster youth interest in community volunteering with a Youth Podcast Series.			\$10,795 Oct 2022
Treading Lightly Inc.	Establish a Community Hub and an efficient delivery mechanism for the region's affiliated NFPs.			\$25,000 Aug 2020
Treading Lightly Inc.	Establish and provide leadership through a paid Regenerative Development Officer role.			\$30,000 Oct 2022
Ulladulla and Districts Community Resources Centre Inc.	Support a research and training program and development of strategic partnerships to culturally diverse communities.			\$45,902 Aug 2020
Ulladulla and Districts Community Resources Centre Inc.	Provide succession planning and marketing support to the Lake Conjola Raft Race Committee.			\$3,481 Oct 2022

“Having IRCF come in to our community gave us confidence.

You believed in us; you listened to us; you heard us; and you were willing to invest in us.”

Matrix summary of key messages from participants

The Team Behind the Work

We extend our gratitude to supporters, delivery partners and the FRRR team who have guided the program to date:

IRCF Donor Group & Reference Panel

- Annabel White** (FRRR – Panel Chair)
- Jenny Wheatley** (VFFF)
- David Hardie** (VFFF)
- Georgina Byron** (Snow Foundation)
- Patrick Moriarty** (Strategic Australia)
- Matt Linnegar** (Australian Rural Leadership Foundation)
- Fiona McKenzie** (Orange Compass)

Program delivery partners

- Australian Rural Leadership Foundation**
- Bega Valley Shire Council**
- Campfire Coop**
- Goodwolf**
- iClicktoLearn**
- Matrix on Board**
- SEFA Partnerships**
- Sefton's**

FRRR

- Natalie Egleton**, CEO
- Deb Samuels**, People Portfolio Lead (2022 -)
- Alli Mudford**, People Portfolio Lead (2018 – 2022)

We couldn't do this work without the trust, belief in the value of place-based capacity building and commitment to long-term investment of our IRCF donor partners:



Australian Government

IRCF Program Managers

- Nancy Sposato** (June, Leeton & Nambucca)
- Carolyn Ardler** (South Coast 2022 –)
- Lauren Ryan** (Bay & Basin + general IRCF support)
- Kate Dezarnaulds** (South Coast 2019 – 2021)

IRCF Community Facilitators

- Kate Brabin** (June & Leeton 2021 – Present)
- Claire Williams** (Leeton 2020 – 2022)
- Cahli Wall** (June 2020 – 2021)
- Ali Buckley** (Nambucca Valley 2021 – 2022)
- Patricia Walker** (Nambucca Valley First Nations 2020 – 2023)
- Meg Stratti** (Nowra & Kangaroo Valley)
- Natalie Lloyd** (Shoalhaven First Nations)
- Kate McBride** (Bay & Basin)
- Monique Carson** (Ulladulla)
- Julie Klugman** (Batemans Bay)
- Leah Szanto** (Bega Valley Shire Council)
- Bree Morgan** (Bega Valley Shire Council)

Photography

We thank Alice Payne Photography for providing some photos, as well as our team and our community partners.

Who to Contact to Know More

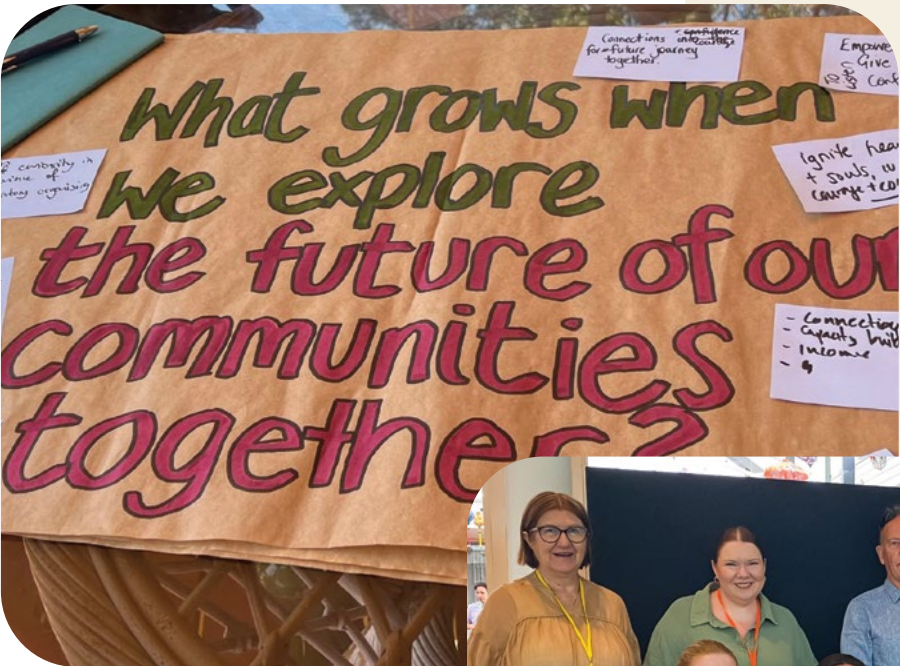
The FRRR team welcomes the opportunity to discuss how the IRCF model can be tailored and resourced to meet the unique needs of communities ready to build their collective capacity and thrive.

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