

# Investing in Not-for-Profit Capacity in Regional NSW



## Bega Valley

Investing in Not-for-Profit Capacity in Regional NSW was a place-based program that ran in three communities affected by the Black Summer bushfires. Local NFPs came together to identify solutions to address diverse needs based around four strategic pillars: people, systems, strategies and sector efficiencies. This extract from the Community Insights Report focuses on Bega Valley.

### Community consultation workshop

There was strong interest in the program across the Bega Valley, with 49 registrations to attend the program launch and online workshop in May 2021, representing a diversity of locally based groups. A robust conversation followed with key themes focusing on:

- Interest in collective approaches and collaboration to address the priorities for NFPs, and not competition;
- Exploring resource sharing across organisations to improve effectiveness;
- Considerations for organisational strategy and sustainability;
- Developing and sharing grant writing skills;
- Ways to diversify income for community groups;
- Leadership, governance and management;
- Burnout and feeling of overwhelm from both volunteer-led groups and stretched NFP staff;
- Ongoing need for volunteer recruitment and retention;
- Need to actively support and maintain positive mental health and wellbeing across community members, organisations and volunteers; and
- 'Funding fatigue' and resistance to funders and their expectations of community funding applications and the requirements to apply for, manage and acquit often small amounts of funding.

What was clear from the conversation was an overwhelming appetite for whole-of-community, cross-sector collaboration and planning. This was related to a sense of wanting to demonstrate a deep understanding of the Bega Valley community, its people, organisations and assets.

# Activities

With COVID restrictions easing, two in-person workshops for representatives from NFP organisations in the Bega Valley were held in May and June 2022. The workshop topics were informed by the community conversations in the early stages of the program and were delivered by local facilitators, Campfire Co-op. The workshop themes were:

## 1. Engaging with and managing volunteers:

This half-day workshop tackled the question ‘How can we sustain and grow a flourishing volunteer community in the Bega Valley?’ The group of 27 shared their experiences with others facing similar challenges, discussed new ideas for engaging with current and new volunteers, and the conditions for creating an engaged volunteer network, with possibilities for shared resources.

## 2. Organisational strategy, planning and sustainability:

This was a full-day workshop exploring the question ‘How can our organisations best respond to community needs across the Bega Valley?’ A group of 25 explored emerging needs in the community and resources available, where and how

organisations align where there are gaps and how best to focus energy in the coming few years. Potential collaborative practices were considered and ideas to continue strategic conversations with stakeholders.

Both workshops were well attended by highly engaged participants and all received a follow up newsletter to consolidate the discussion points, themes, insights and ideas that emerged. The sessions demonstrated the local passion for being involved and working together to create meaningful impact to the organisations that bring so much value to their community. New ideas were hatched and people were motivated to take action, such as a promotional video focusing on the benefits of local volunteering and ways to include young people in NFP’s.

### Some comments following the workshops included:

*“I enjoyed learning other’s experiences and the responses to tasks in the working groups. It was good to meet people from throughout the shire in similar circumstances.”*

*“I enjoyed both workshops and felt they were run in a way that enabled new ideas to be openly discussed and connection between agencies established.”*

*“A fresh approach to strategy planning – in recognition of uncertainty – build in agility. The importance of maintaining strong community connection to share knowledge, skills and resources.”*

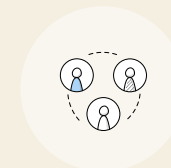
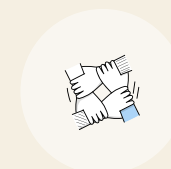
*“The one on volunteering was beautiful - it brought together a really diverse range of people. It was a cross pollination moment”.*



## Grants awarded

Following consideration by a Program Advisory Committee comprising local representatives, \$140,000 in grants was awarded to six organisations across the Bega Valley. Funding supported a range of initiatives from economic and strategic planning, support for groups to build systems and processes, undertake staff training and business skills development. Demonstrating the general community interest in collaboration, the Bega Valley Shire Business Forum delivered a project involving the seven local Chambers of Commerce in the region to build capacity, source future funding and raise awareness for all members.

Organisation	Project and Description	Grant
<b>Bega Valley Shire Business Forum</b>	<p><b>Bega Valley Business Forum Coordination</b></p> <p>Strengthen the capacity and networks of the seven member Chambers of Commerce of the Bega Valley Shire Business Forum through engagement of a contractor to address strategy, resourcing and collaboration across the network.</p>	<b>\$60,000</b>
<b>Cobargo Wellness Group</b>	<p><b>Raise the heART - Expanding the Capacity of the Cobargo Wellness Group</b></p> <p>Grow the capacity and direction of Cobargo Wellness Group through support for strategic planning, staff development, branding &amp; marketing and feasibility for future projects.</p>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Fling Physical Theatre Inc</b>	<p><b>Building the Capacity of FLING Physical Theatre through Strategic Development</b></p> <p>Grow the profile and determine the future directions of FLING Physical Theatre in the Bega Valley through development of a marketing and strategic plan.</p>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Far South Coast Family Support Service Inc</b>	<p><b>Transforming Trauma</b></p> <p>Expand the skills and capabilities of staff at Far South Coast Family Support Service to deliver a wider range of programs to their community through accredited trauma intervention training.</p>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Mumbulla Community Foundation</b>	<p><b>Mumbulla Community Foundation Systems, Strategy and Community Engagement Project</b></p> <p>Boost the capacity, profile and effectiveness of Mumbulla Community Foundation through strategic planning, investment in systems and community consultation.</p>	<b>\$40,000</b>
<b>South East Arts (NSW) Inc</b>	<p><b>First Nations Cultural Tourism Development</b></p> <p>Build the capacity of individuals and organisations working in the First Nations arts and cultural space in the Bega Valley through business skills training and ongoing practical support.</p>	<b>\$10,000</b>



# Grants in action

Grant Amount:  
\$60,000

## Organisation Details:

Bega Valley Shire Business Forum

## Project Title:

Bega Valley Business Forum coordination

## Project Locations:

Bega NSW

Merimbula NSW

Eden NSW

Bermagui NSW

In recent years, the unprecedented hardship for the Bega Valley Shire due to the Black Summer bushfires and the global pandemic has resulted in major economic loss alongside social and community devastation. With business support and networking more relevant than ever, the Bega Valley Shire Business Forum (BVSBF) has a key goal of advocacy and building collaborative relationships with local, state and federal organisations, business and the community.

BVSBF has a broad reach across 560 member businesses, so when they were successful in receiving a grant through the INFPC program, the potential impact of their planned project activities would be widespread. BVSBF received funds for a contracted coordinator for 10 months to deliver capacity building activities, such as workshops and other resources, and develop a website to promote and assist with communications across the network and with community members.

Along with developing and creating content for a new website for BVSBF, other activities included grant writing and funding applications for 32 individual projects totalling \$641,054, researching and producing the Good Governance Guide that was distributed to all business chambers, developing a report with recommendations on the BVSBF's governance and constitution, and other capacity building meetings with business chambers. With more than 15,700 people benefitting from these initiatives, the community is significantly better equipped to meet the recovery needs of connected organisations going forward.



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**The Bega Valley**  
A great place to do business in Eden



*"Activities have provided significant gains in the capacity of volunteer led not-for-profit business chambers in the Bega Valley. The assistance provided was well appreciated by the Bega Valley Business Forum and the committee members of the local chambers. There has been a legacy provided that will have a lasting influence of the capacity of local volunteer led business chambers to serve the members."*

Grant  
Amount:  
\$40,000

**Organisation Details:**

Mumbulla Community Foundation

**Project Title:**

Mumbulla Community Foundation Systems, Strategy and Community Engagement Project

**Project Location:**

Bega Valley NSW

Established in 2000, Mumbulla Community Foundation is the Community Foundation of the Bega Valley. This volunteer-run organisation supports community and education endeavours, partnering with key groups both within and outside the Valley.

While the organisation has been successful and distributed around \$1.6M in grants to more than 300 local organisations, the time was right to enhance its capacity and capability to guide their future impact. The \$40,000 grant was used to strengthen the organisation's foundations. They started with their strategy, engaging an external consultant to support them through a process that involved consulting key stakeholders, including Board members, local residents and Councillors, setting up a number of working groups and then coming back together to finalise the strategy and launch it to the community. Part of that work saw the organisation rebrand to Mumbulla Community Foundation, emphasising its role in the Bega Valley community.

The second part of the funding went toward strengthening policies, systems and procedures, including implementing software to enable the organisation to better track its interactions across the community, from donors to volunteers, grantseekers to local networks. Key to achieving this was engaging a part time 'Capability Officer'. They were able to document and streamline administration tasks, undertake supporter engagement, including setting up campaigns, build robust processes around Board minutes and Board management and assist with plans to relaunch and reposition the Foundation, through enhanced communication activities.

Thanks to additional funding secured, this role will be retained until the end of May 2023.



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*“This has been an outstanding opportunity for Mumbulla Community Foundation. As a DGR-2, it is difficult to find funding to build our organisational capabilities. The support of Paul Ramsay Foundation and FRRR has, literally, been a game changer for us. We cannot thank both organisations enough for their help and support.”*

# Learnings and next steps

In the Bega Valley, community spirit shines and the willingness to connect and search for ways to collaborate for stronger community groups and local outcomes is very evident. Following the bushfires came a time of reflection for many local leaders and groups about how to be better prepared for future shocks. The overlay of COVID bringing constant cancellations, stalling activities and events, causing financial implications, and isolating people from their social connections was hard on many. Conversely, COVID also forced flexibility and new ways of doing things, particularly engaging with more online formats, which in some instances has resulted in better engagement from members and stakeholders.

These shifts helped organisations to think differently. For example, an arts organisation harnessed arts as a recovery tool for community members. For another, taking on a new perspective on their role in a disaster and the recovery that comes afterwards was a priority.

The health and wellbeing of volunteers, staff and Boards are fragile in periods of disruption, and while there is no magic fix, there are many ways to acknowledge this and find ways to take care of each other and, as a result, become more united in some ways.

The INFPC program was able to facilitate authentic community conversations with purpose to help bring to the surface local

priorities, as the following stakeholder feedback highlights.

*"The change has been a little spark of inspiration, taking an interest in our community, I can do something now and here's the support to think about the future again and reassess where we are, and move forwards. An invitation to build capacity invites the conversation about 'what do we need to do?'"*

INFPC funding "took pressure off in areas that would have caused pressure for our organisation, freed us to be able to do the things we do, events which really connect people, from a mental health area, gave energy being with people and connecting with the community, knowing that we are all in this together."

FRRR was successful in securing funding of \$1,310,246 through the National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA, now NEMA) Black Summer program to leverage the initial investment by PRF and further extend the activities of the INFPC program in the Bega Valley. This three-year program – Investing in Rural Community Futures Bega Valley: Resilience, Connection and Place Project - is now underway in partnership with the Bega Valley Shire Council and is building on the connections and momentum of the INFPC program, an exciting outcome and opportunity for NFP's and community groups across the Bega Valley.

**For more insights,  
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