



# Lessons and impacts from the Investing in Rural Community Futures pilot

Leeton

Junee

Nambucca Valley



**FRRR**  
Foundation for Rural  
Regional Renewal



Vincent Fairfax Family  
Foundation

# Acknowledgement of Country

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

We especially acknowledge the Gumbaynggirr and Wiradjuri 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 respects 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.

## About FRRR

FRRR is the only national foundation focussed on ensuring the social and economic strength of remote, rural and regional Australia. Our vision is more vibrant, resilient, sustainable and empowered communities.

FRRR provides funding and capacity building support at the hyper-local level. We back the people and organisations that are in and of their place because we believe targeted, well-informed investment in people and organisations stimulates ideas that lead to actions, both big and small.

Working with our partners, we deliberately focus on strengthening NFP organisations, community groups and volunteer-led efforts that foster self-generation, enhancing leadership, networks and skill development. We couple that with support for improving access to services, sustainable social and physical infrastructure and sustaining vibrant local cultures.

That's why we connect good will with good purpose and align investment from government, business and philanthropy with the genuine local needs of rural people and places.



# Introduction

Over the last five years, thanks to a groundbreaking partnership with the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation (VFFF), FRRR has delivered the Investing in Rural Community Futures (IRCF) program in rural and regional NSW. We worked alongside amazing not-for-profit organisations (NFPs) using a highly relational and deeply considered place-based approach to strengthening their capability. Our goal was to help these organisations “fit their oxygen masks first”, so they can maintain their critical community work well into the future.

We feel privileged to have witnessed the vital and impactful role that these organisations play in fostering and sustaining their vibrant, resilient communities.

As we walked alongside these organisations, we saw them grow in confidence, as well as develop strategic partnerships and networks that have led to advocacy efforts to advance local and systemic issues. While the IRCF program is only part of their story, the evaluation we’ve undertaken confirms it has been a significant contributing factor to the growing impact of these organisations.

The evaluation confirmed that providing flexible support and funding targeted at the capacity and capability of for-purpose / NFP organisations leads to more capable, collaborative and resilient organisations that can more effectively advocate for themselves. It also reinforced that time, collaboration and the right local leaders are essential ingredients for success.

None of this would have been possible without the willingness of VFFF to work with us – to take a leap of faith on this pilot and to engage with us, and with community groups directly, over the last five years. It hasn’t always been linear, and their patience and trust has been greatly appreciated.

The commitment from the communities and organisations that took up the IRCF program has been remarkable. Investing in their own organisations, while responding to increased need and disruption including COVID and disasters, took courage and trust in the IRCF process. We hope that you agree that the resulting shifts in sustainability have been a game-changer that will garner benefits for all parties and other communities well into the future.

In this report, we have unpacked the design of the program and the capacity building projects it funded, highlighting what has been of benefit for the NFPs we have partnered with, the conditions affecting success and the areas that were challenging in delivering this capacity building initiative. We also offer some recommendations on what makes a successful place-based capacity building program. In sharing these insights, our hope is that this document continues to mobilise the learning and capability of rural and regional NFPs and all those who wish to continue this impactful work into the future.

**Natalie Egleton**

CEO

*on Dja Dja Wurrung Country*

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# Executive summary

To create vibrant, resilient, sustainable and empowered communities requires a capable and well-functioning local not-for-profit sector. However, there has typically been little external investment in organisational capability. The Investing in Rural Community Futures pilot set out to develop and [trial a model](#) that would work with local NFPs in three NSW local government areas (LGAs), bringing them together to learn, identify strengths and common challenges and then work collaboratively to lift up each organisation for the benefit of each community.

It involved a mix of on-the-ground support, coupled with a rigorous, regular 'roadmapping' process through which local NFPs agreed on gaps and opportunities, and prioritised activities to address them as a group. While some grants were provided to individual organisations, there was also 'Toolbox' funding available for projects that benefitted multiple organisations on common areas of capacity needs such as governance. Running alongside this was a robust evaluation program, to track learnings.

Through this process, FRRR has identified several factors as critical to successful place-based NFP capacity building:

**[Patient and committed program partners](#), willing to trust the process, FRRR and the communities;**

Taking care [when selecting communities](#) – NFP organisations need to **be ready, willing and able to participate to fully extract value** and optimise the investment required to make place-based change;

**[Building trust and changing habits takes time](#)** – the five-year commitment was needed, especially given interruptions from COVID, floods and fires, to build trust and to see impact. It also encourages communities to think long-term, elevating thinking from immediate needs to strategic capability;

**[Face-to-face support is essential](#)** – the role of locally-based facilitators cannot be understated, nor can the value of regular face-to-face engagement in community from the evaluators and other program team members;

**[Consistent engagement from NFPs in all aspects of the model](#)** yields greatest benefits, thanks to the cumulative effect of the program elements;

**[Flexibility in funding](#)** – communities move at different paces but things also

happen in community that affect delivery, so understanding and flexing is critical to achieving outcomes and communicates a message of 'you believe in us'.

**[Collaboration](#)** as a critical principle including community [co-designing a 'roadmap'](#) and coming back to it – to keep the community focussed; encourage collaboration; allow evolution in response to changing priorities and provide guidance for funding;

**[Investing in people](#)** is a game-changer – funding roles and investing in leadership capability enables step-change in the organisation, as well as fundamental improvements in governance, processes, equipment and systems;

**[Strengthening foundational business infrastructure](#)** is essential to enable larger outcomes as well as identifying [shared business solutions](#), such as Local Shire Councils and the important supportive role they can play;

**[Communication needs to be accessible and consistent](#)** throughout the program; and

**Transitioning** out of the program **needs careful planning.**

We elaborate on these points in this report and welcome the opportunity to share it with you. If you would like to explore any aspects further, please email [info@frrr.org.au](mailto:info@frrr.org.au).



## IRCF's origins and program design

FRRR's 2017 Impact Report, which looked back over 15 years of funding activity, highlighted a gap in support for organisational capacity building, evidenced by a high percentage of unsuccessful applications to FRRR for resourcing and capacity building. Following the report's release, the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation (VFFF) approached FRRR to explore what could be done to address that gap, in light of their own strategy having similar ambitions.

The result was the Investing in Rural Community Futures (IRCF) program, which launched in 2018 as a place-based response to invest in building collective NFP sector capability for small rural and regional communities. VFFF committed \$5 million over five years, with \$1 million in grants available to support each of the three pilot communities.

This long-term partnership was informed by VFFF's ongoing work in the Lachlan Shire, Bourke and Dubbo, among other areas. Their understanding that it required hands-on, resource intensive work, coupled with their belief in FRRR's capability, knowledge and sensitivity to work in the remote, rural and regional context supported a high trust partnership, consistent with their 2017-2021 strategic goal of thriving people and places. This project became the cornerstone initiative for VFFF's investment in rural and regional New South Wales.

**"Investing in Rural Community Futures responds to the challenges local organisations experience in managing their sustainability and viability, which in turn affects the contribution they make to addressing local challenges and opportunities."**

Natalie Egleton, CEO, FRRR

## Theory of change

With the concept agreed, attention turned to the design of the master theory of change (ToC). Underpinned by the desire to enhance the capacity of local NFPs, the ToC was developed by GoodWolf Partners and designed to be tested and learnt from to understand the program's effectiveness and impact.

The design drew on input from FRRR, VFFF, our Advisory Committee members and the program's evaluation partner, Matrix on Board (MoB). It was also informed by, and responded to, the "IRCF Roadshow" - the initial community engagement. In 2021, Seftons conducted a mid-term program review, which led to further refinements. The ToC pictured was adopted during the rest of the program.

To build strong, collaborative, resilient & sustainable RRR\* communities by providing local NFPs flexible support & funding that allows them to advocate effectively.

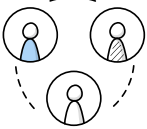
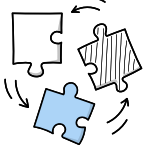




\*Remote, Rural & Regional

The ToC also set out the activities / interventions – or the principles of engagement – that would support change and continued learning.



It also identified four areas to focus on to bring about the change, which became known as the strategic priorities or pillars.

<h2 style="text-align: center;">PEOPLE</h2>  <p>Develop <b>leadership</b> capabilities, a renewed sense of <b>community spirit</b> &amp; foster <b>skill development</b> to create strong organisations that bring together various leaders, groups and residents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Recruit &amp; train staff &amp; volunteers</li> <li>➤ Encourage inclusivity</li> <li>➤ Time management</li> <li>➤ Develop leadership</li> <li>➤ Digital inclusion</li> <li>➤ Mentoring</li> </ul>	<h2 style="text-align: center;">STRATEGY</h2>  <p>Provide tools &amp; measures that support &amp; <b>enable the sustainability</b> of organisations, into the future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Purpose and vision development</li> <li>➤ Strategic planning and monitoring</li> <li>➤ Revenue strategy</li> <li>➤ Grassroots innovation and creativity</li> <li>➤ Developing and embedding a framework for change</li> </ul>	<h2 style="text-align: center;">EFFICIENCIES</h2>  <p>Foster relationships &amp; practices that support <b>efficient and effective collaboration</b> with other NFPs to enhance community impact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Partnership development &amp; management</li> <li>➤ Collective impact training</li> <li>➤ Peer to peer mentoring</li> <li>➤ Lead agency support</li> <li>➤ Networking &amp; sharing platforms</li> <li>➤ Forming an NFP working group</li> </ul>	<h2 style="text-align: center;">SYSTEMS</h2>  <p>Support community leaders to gain new insights &amp; energy by <b>sharing knowledge, systems and structures</b> that demonstrate best practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Legal structures, compliance &amp; governance</li> <li>➤ Financial management</li> <li>➤ Communications and measurement</li> <li>➤ Develop Board skills &amp; financial literacy</li> <li>➤ IT and security</li> <li>➤ HR &amp; performance management</li> </ul>
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The focus on these pillars saw funding directed to support a wide range of things, including:





## Evaluation and learning

As this was a pilot, robust insights and learning were essential to inform future practice. The following principles were inherent in its design:

- Data collection needed to be **regular** enough to pick up nuance and seasonal changes;
- **Flexible** enough to fit in with the limited time of NFP staff and volunteers;
- **Accessible** for participants, avoiding jargon and theoretical language in evaluation materials and maximising interpersonal and narrative-driven activities;
- Able to measure and **capture wider impact**, which wasn't defined at the start – such as health and wellbeing outcomes, community education or community action; and
- With the evaluation 'ask' greater than usual funding programs, **capacity building** opportunities for participants needed to be maximised.

The resulting framework included tools (see appendix) that could accommodate a range of conditions and be adapted if required :

1. a six-monthly [self-assessment survey](#) completed by the community organisations;
2. one-on-one meetings with the community organisations to identify stories and narrative on reflection of survey responses;
3. a two-hour [Harwood Index](#) workshop (exploring the five stages of community life) and a pre-survey open to the public;
4. an external stakeholder breakfast to garner perspectives from those not close to the program; and
5. regular community facilitator reporting.

“Another important part of this program is that it will be formally evaluated, and lessons shared with philanthropic, government and NFP audiences to support leading practice and thought leadership.”

Jenny Wheatley, CEO,  
Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation



Evaluation included interviews with community leaders.



Final Junee evaluation community workshop



Leeton community evaluation workshop, May 23

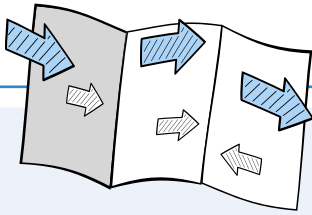
The evaluation process was deliberately aligned to the four strategic priorities: *people, strategy; efficiencies, and systems*. For example, the self-assessment survey enabled NFP representatives to select levels of competency of their operations, categorised by pillar. In this example below, they had to choose where they felt they were on the scale of 1-5 for strategy.

Strategy Development Mission and Goals				Our Stage:
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
The organisation has a clear mission and strategy but we had to do unplanned things that weren't in the strategy, to manage the impact of the bushfires and/or COVID. Several of our planned goals will have to be put on hold, while we rebuild.	The organisation has one main activity, which it delivers. The organisers don't talk about goals.	There is an understanding from the Committee / Board about their mission and goals, but the staff don't have any real knowledge of it.	The mission and goal is printed and up in the workplace for all to see and senior staff and Committee / Board members use it to help with planning.	The organisation has a clear purpose and activities are aligned with that. The strategy underscores the senior staff reporting and all the external Communication to stakeholders. The organisation can measure when they have achieved their goals and outcomes of what they want to do.

A sixth tool was added in October 2021, which involved videos documenting the most significant changes within the communities.

# The IRCF model

The components of the IRCF model emerged in response to the four principles of engagement and included the following elements to support locally-governed NFPs:



## Community Roadmap:

Each local community is involved in a co-design process to develop a roadmap, which identifies local needs and sets community goals in relation to program's strategic priorities - *people, strategy, systems and efficiencies*. This roadmap is then used to guide and inform decision-making.



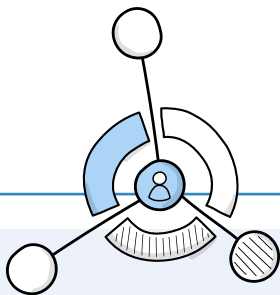
## Partnership grants:

Opportunities to apply for funds occur multiple times throughout the program. These grants support capacity building initiatives tailored to the needs of individual organisations.



## Program evaluation:

Conducted by an external organisation, this was designed to support ongoing learning and evolution.



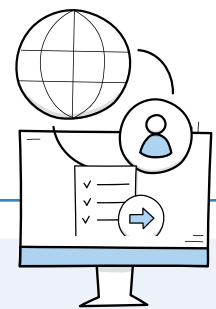
## A Community Facilitator:

A local person contracted by FRRR in each community. The role of the facilitators is to coach, mentor and facilitate collaborative conversations between participating organisations. The facilitators also act as an important intermediary between participating organisations and FRRR funding, and other capacity-building initiatives.



## Collaborative Toolbox grants:

These grants were for projects that would benefit multiple organisations and have a collective impact. Toolbox assessment was expedited as grants were directed via an organisation previously funded that could coordinate training on behalf of a group. A byproduct was that capacity building and development initiatives could be organised as needs arose and delivered quickly, maintaining momentum.



## Digital Hub or on-line peer learning platform:

Conceived in the original IRCF Model, this was intended to be used for a range of communication, learning, networking as well as evaluation functions. However, once the program was underway, the hub proved not to be viable given varying levels of digital literacy of participating NFPs, communication needs being better met via the Community Facilitator role and other more face-to-face communication mechanisms. Instead, a subsection of the FRRR website was created and included program progress, announcements and updates.

## Program management

In the five years of the program, its management evolved. As a pilot, the FRRR CEO maintained oversight of the program and a close connection to it and, as FRRR grew and IRCF expanded into other regions of NSW, the People Portfolio Lead role was created, who took on more of the program's oversight. There has always been a dedicated Program Manager who has worked closely with the community organisations and stakeholders.

On the ground, each community has also had a locally based facilitator. Several other members of the FRRR team also provided guidance to applicants and grantees, including a Program Support Officer. A list of the [team behind the program](#) is on page 78.

The pilot has been guided by an Advisory Committee, including Jenny Wheatley, Emily Fuller and David Hardie from VFFF, alongside Fiona McKenzie from Orange Compass, a well-respected consultant in systems change work; Matt Linnegar, CEO of ARLF; and Patrick Moriarty, formerly Executive Director of the Institute of Community Directors Australia. The IRCF Advisory Committee provided guidance and insight on delivery and for the first three years, made grant recommendations to the FRRR board. As the program expanded into the NSW South Coast, the committee expanded to include representatives from The Snow Foundation. The group generally met twice a year and visited program communities.

Alli Mudford – First IRCF Program Manager at an early workshop in Junee



One of the first meetings of the Advisory Committee  
(L-R) Patrick Moriarty, Annabel White, Fiona McKenzie, Natalie Egleton, Jenny Wheatley and Alli Mudford.

## Community selection

In 2019, FRRR and VFFF desktop research identified several potential pilot NSW communities. Alongside broad community and socio-economic data, the organisations drew on data about the need for, and gap in, capacity building support and broader granting requests in each place to create a long-list of potential locations and invited expressions of interest. Subsequently, the communities of Tumut, Junee, Nambucca Valley, Moree and Leeton were shortlisted.

As part of an 'IRCF Roadshow', the program team met in-person with NFPs, community groups, local councils and other regional bodies, seeking to understand the challenges local organisations faced in remaining viable and sustainable. They explored issues around people, internal systems and infrastructure, strategy and effectiveness and how enhancing these factors (the strategic priorities) would help the communities respond to local challenges and opportunities. As [this video highlights](#), locals were excited about the concept.



Over six months, the program team supported them to put initial capacity building projects into action, thanks to a \$60,000 start-up grant. It was intended to support preparation for the next phase of the IRCF program, with collaboration between NFPs strongly encouraged. The communities were also invited to express interest in participating in the ongoing program.

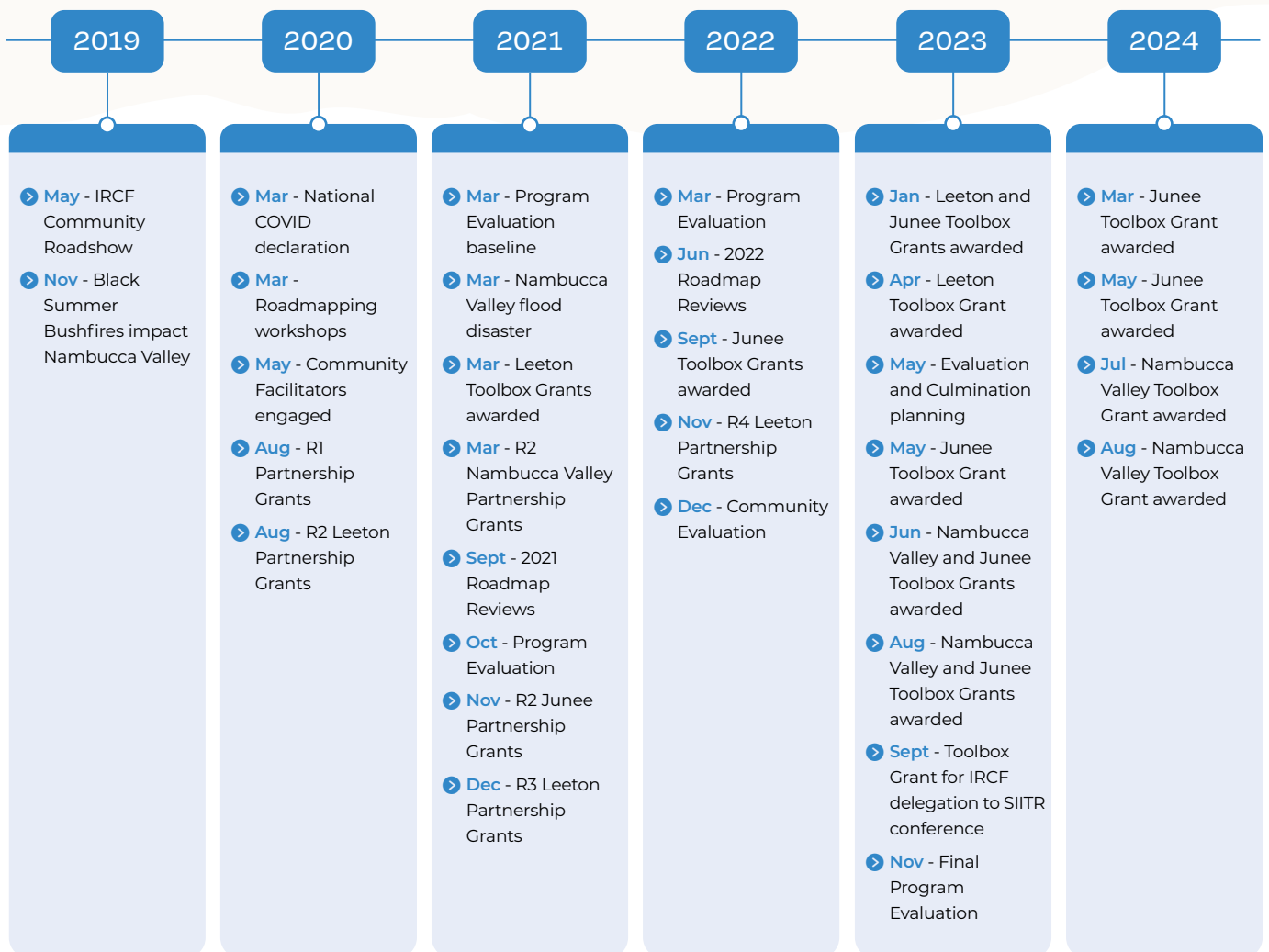
After a careful and detailed review of the evidence, as well as considering the level of interest from local NFPs, support from the local Council, and the energy and readiness of community leadership to embrace collaboration and change, the communities of Junee, Leeton and Nambucca Valley were invited to join the five-year IRCF program pilot.

There were also notable outcomes for Moree and Tumut through site selection start up grants.

- Training and development enabled **Moree Family Support Inc** to identify local initiatives to support staff development using local consultants and a positive shift in staff morale.
- Development of **Moree Aged & Disability Services Incorporated's** risk management plan, as well as reviewing their business and strategic plan gave everyone a stronger sense of their governance role and a sense of overall organisational purpose, all of which benefits clients and their carers.
- **Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited** was able to continue work on Justice Reinvestment with a community engagement lead. Years after this grant, and despite COVID, the organisation reports this work continues and goes from strength to strength, with more Aboriginal workers and a stronger community leadership group. The organisation says the funding came at the best possible time for them and put them in the position to step into growth.
- The **Tumut Regional Chamber of Commerce Inc** focussed on bolstering committees with tools to run successful, professional events in the region. This included an events manual resource that will have long-term benefits. By sharing resources across multiple organisations, committee members have upskilled, assisting them to plan events more strategically.

## Program Timeline








### VFFF Pilot Communities



# Community journeys - Nambucca Valley

Cared for by the Gumbaynggirr peoples for thousands of years, the Nambucca Valley, lies in the mid-north coast of NSW. It includes stunning natural landscapes of mountainous hinterlands, rainforests, rivers, estuaries, beaches and national parks. Visitors are drawn here to experience nature and engage in activities such as fishing, surfing, bushwalking, birdwatching and boating.

The Nambucca Valley LGA takes in Nambucca Heads, Bowraville, Macksville, Valla Beach and Scotts Head, and many smaller villages. With a combined population of more than 20,000 people, the community is supported by many NFPs, including 55 registered charities. The main industries are health care & social assistance, education & training, retail, manufacturing, rental and real estate services. The Valley also has fruit, dairy and livestock industries.

Type of organisation	Participating Organisations	# org's
 Community Centres (Disability, Aged Care, Family Services, Housing, Youth Support, Social Wellbeing Programs, Digital Access or Multi Cultural Support)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Lifetime Connect Inc *</li> <li>&gt; Nambucca Valley Phoenix Limited **</li> <li>&gt; Bowraville Communication Technology Centre</li> <li>&gt; MiiMi Aboriginal Corporation **</li> <li>&gt; Mujaay Ganma Foundation Aboriginal Corporation *°#</li> <li>&gt; Jaanyмили Bawrrungga Aboriginal Corporation **</li> </ul>	5.5
 Aged Care and Senior Citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Nambucca Senior Citizens Club Inc.*</li> </ul>	1
 Education Providers, P&C's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Alithia Inc.*</li> </ul>	1
 Culture, Arts, Tourism, Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Nambucca Valley Phoenix Limited **</li> <li>&gt; Unkya Local Aboriginal Land Council **</li> <li>&gt; Muurrbay Aboriginal Language &amp; Culture Co-operative **</li> </ul>	2.5
 Men's Craft Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Nambucca Heads Men's Shed Inc.*</li> </ul>	1
 Progress Assoc. / Chambers of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Bowraville Innovative Social Enterprises Precinct Inc.</li> <li>&gt; Valla Beach Community Association °</li> <li>&gt; Bowraville Community Development Association Inc.*</li> </ul>	3
 Youth Focussed Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; ShoreTrack Ltd **</li> <li>&gt; Nambucca Valley Youth Services Inc *</li> </ul>	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>16</b>

° Organisations that received auspice or operating venue from Nambucca Valley Council - 2

+ Organisations offering employment pathway programs - 2

\* Organisations registered with ACNC - 13

# Local Aboriginal Lands Council, Indigenous Corporations & First Nations focussed outcomes - 5





Nambucca Valley Youth Services Inc

At the beginning of the program, local people were asked to reflect on the type of community they wanted to live in. Their desires could be summarised as a community that is part of the solution.



Representatives were also asked about what they wanted from the program:

Question	Nambucca
What do you want to do with the funding?	Capacity building, employ staff, equipment
Why do you want to do this?	Build organisational sustainability and capacity, meet an unmet community need
What makes your community strong?	Local Aboriginal culture, sense of community and collaboration
What would make it stronger?	Greater appreciation and leveraging of local Aboriginal culture, increased cooperation and connection between organisations
What makes things work here?	Cooperation, use of local role models
IRCF - what has been positive and effective about the program?	Responsive, flexible, capacity building approach

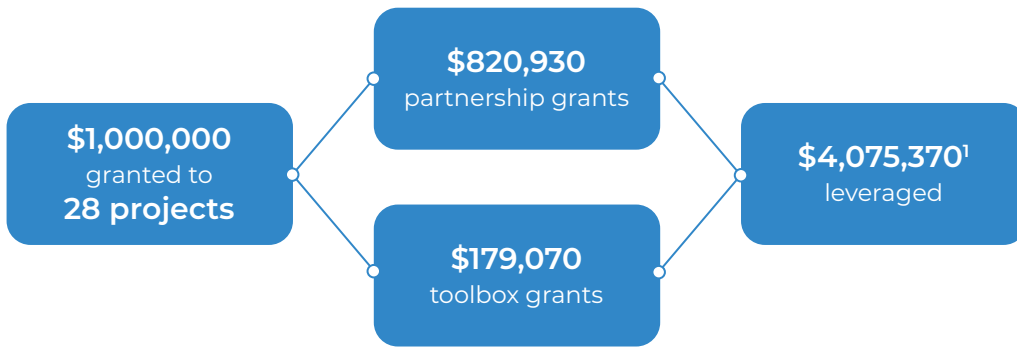
As part of the initial work, external stakeholders were also asked for their perspectives on the Nambucca Valley's NFP sector. These people were not affiliated with any organisation funded through the program. Some of the key points they made were:

- They respond to what it is that our valley needs. There is some fantastic leadership, but it would be good for them to tell the government what needs to happen rather than chasing funding from the government and just doing that.
- Many organisations work on a volunteer basis for years - there is competition from bigger organisations. It's hard to get funding.
- NFPs give the community hope.

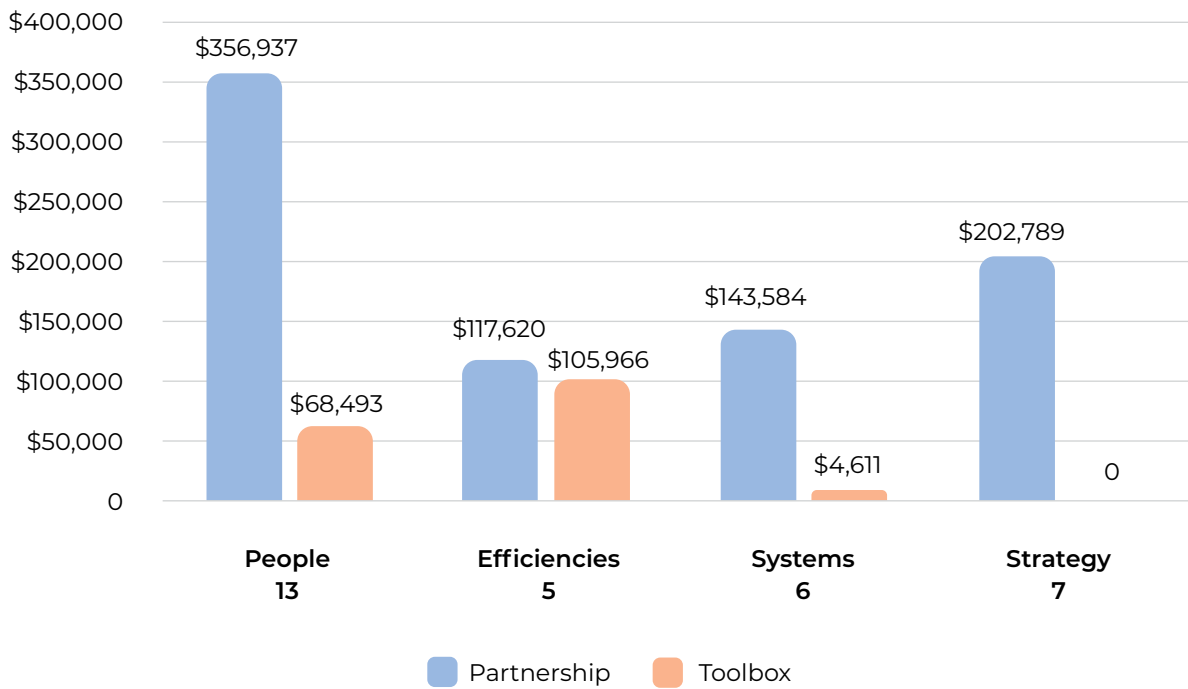


An IRCF facilitated conversation unpacking transport in the Nambucca Valley.

# Granting



## Nambucca Valley IRCF Funding



## Employment outcomes

The funding created 40 employment opportunities – 8 fulltime, part-time or casual roles were created; 25 contract roles; and 7 consultants were engaged.

## Roadmap priorities

For the Nambucca Valley, the following were the enduring goals of each strategic pillar:

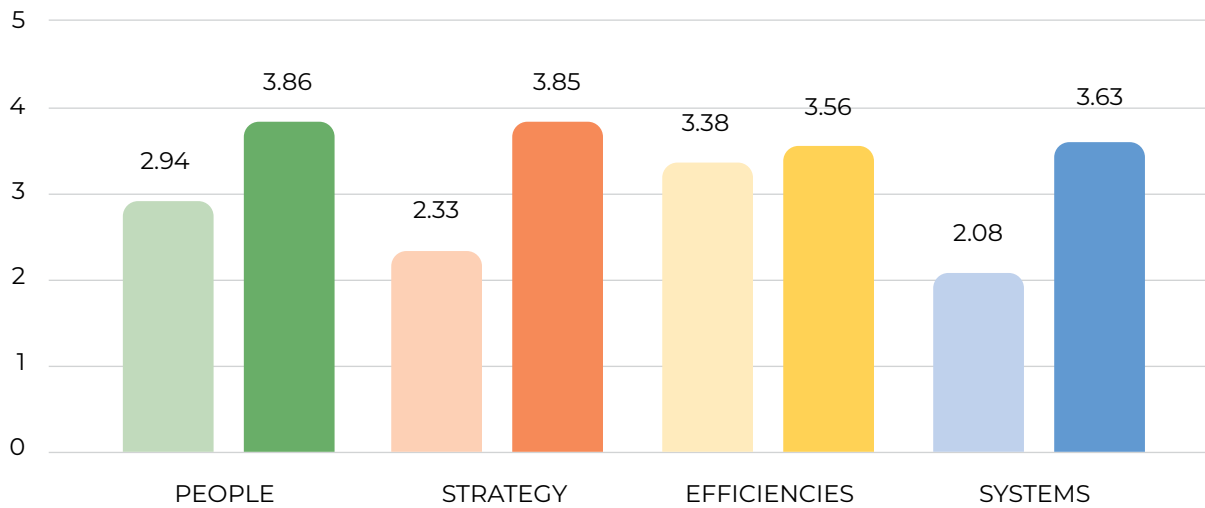
- **People:** Empower youth voice through mentoring and training.
- **Strategy:** NFPs to undertake financial sustainability planning, exploring multiple revenue sources.
- **Efficiencies:** Source joint funds for collaborative projects.
- **Systems:** Improve digital systems to be fit for purpose including a Digital Community Hub(s) to enhance digital systems, communications shareable resources for NFPs including a skill registry.

1. Secured as either direct additional grant funding or increasing fundraising – due to their involvement in the IRCF program. Note, this was the value as at November 2023, the time of the final evaluation.

## Impact on individual participating NFPs

As part of the evaluation, the funded NFPs in each community self-assessed their capacity against each pillar at different points in the program. The assessment uses a five point scale across 12 areas of organisational competency, resulting in a score out of 60. The table below shows a mean of this score across the funded organisations. The aggregated scores, which are subjective as they are self-assessed, show an increase on all pillars from the baseline (lighter columns) to final data collection (darker columns).

### Nambucca Valley - IRCF Pillars, baseline to Nov 23



Nambucca Valley NFPs saw a significant increase in their Systems (policy and procedure, equipment / tools, financial management) capability from baseline to the end of the program.

Several NFPs increased their capacity across these pillars. For example, in terms of Systems, one organisation completed a large policies and procedures project, another developed a suite of policies and several Nambucca NFPs acquired key pieces of equipment that improved their operations and efficiency.

The increased financial management capability at a number of Nambucca Valley NFPs is of note; two organisations rebuilt their finance systems and changed accountants following a difficult period. Both organisations reported greater confidence and understanding in their financial reports.



# Lifetime Connect Incorporated

\$60,000 Efficiencies



Lifetime Connect is a community centre. They auspiced the Hand in Hand committee, which was initially formed to create a community map utilising the Harwood Community Change model.

In response to multiple disruptions in the early phases of IRCF - namely natural disasters and social distancing health orders – the community pivoted to creating a virtual community hub. This project is an example of the benefit of a place-based program that can respond with flexibility to community need.

To develop understanding of the project shift, a scoping and feasibility study was delivered by Regional Development Mid North Coast. With the digital hub confirmed, a project officer was engaged to coordinate community input, as well as contractors; web developers, graphic designer and other creative industries to provide media and artistic content to support the brand and expression of local culture.

The Hand in Hand project evolved into The Valley Hub, a digital platform that connects Nambucca Valley community support in one place, profiling local not-for-profit organisations, businesses, events, resources and culture and Country.

## Organisational outcomes

A key success of this project was the partnership that developed with Bowraville Innovative Social Enterprise Precinct (BISEP) to deliver the virtual community hub, then other collaborative initiatives. BISEP was also able to leverage a \$350,000 bushfire recovery grant to expand the scope of this project.

**“The Hand in Hand project was a highly collaborative partnership project. The local Aboriginal community was consulted, businesses, and NGOs were included. Lifetime Connect has been able to be more collaborative rather than driving the project. The project morphed from a series of community consultations to the single point of information which is what the community wanted.”**

## The Valley Hub - A system that builds social capital

"The impact of the Valley Hub is only just starting to be seen. There has been a real blossoming of people where they have gained confidence through engagement. Sharing what people do in this Valley with each other can only be beneficial.

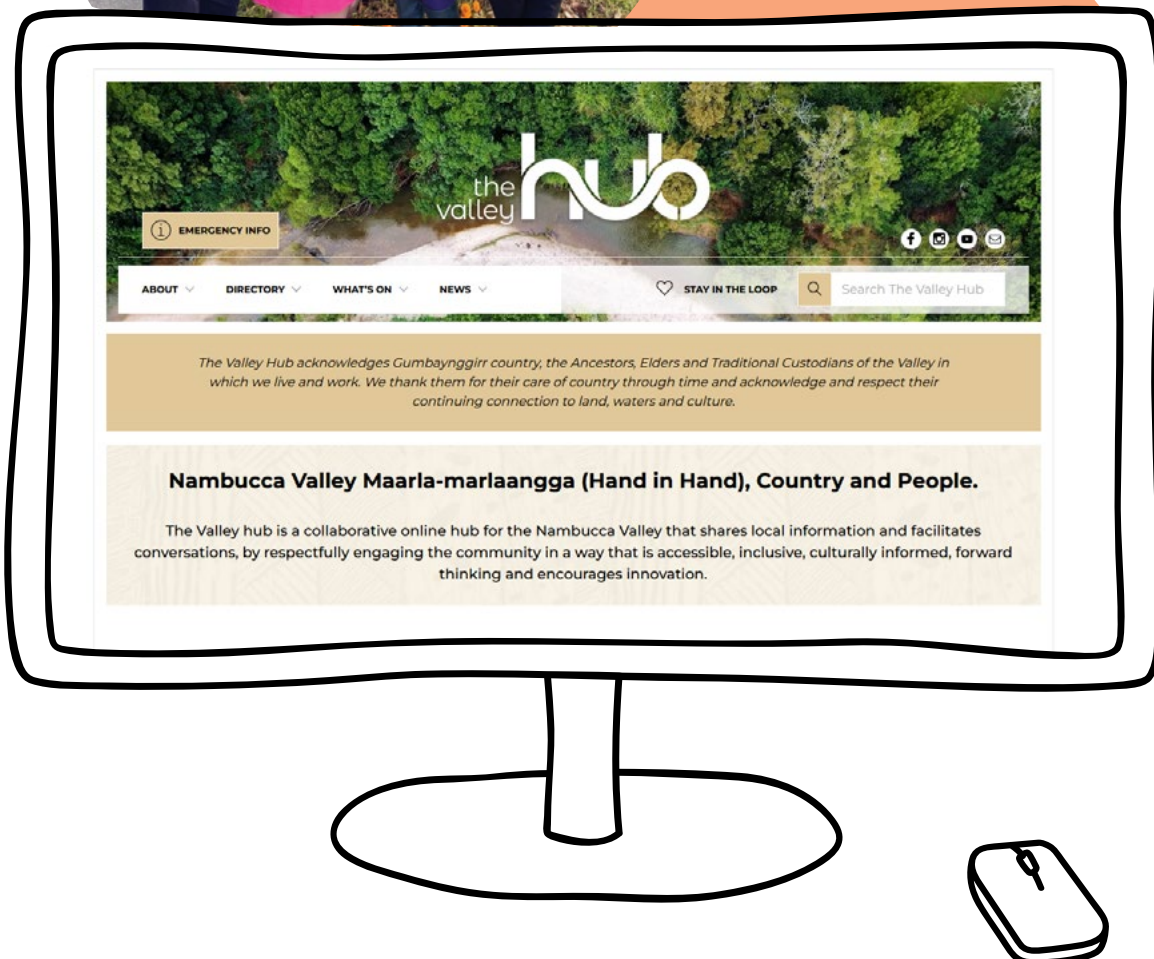
"The hub really acknowledges Country and the First Peoples, which was sorely needed.

"Community unity and stitching everything together. That's what's happening in the process. Building social capital!"

BISEP

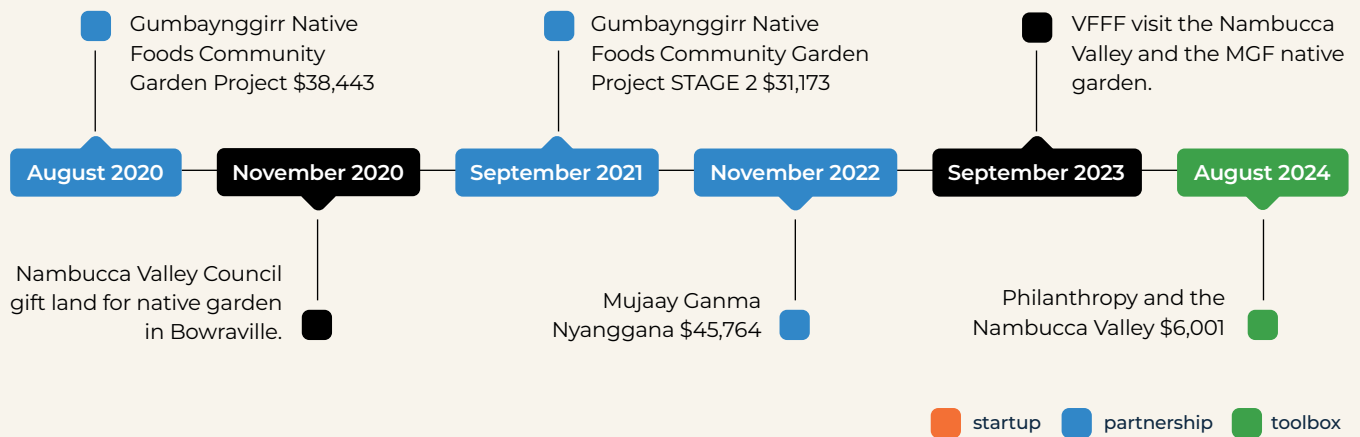


IRCF Program Manager Nancy Sposato with team members of BISEP and The Valley Hub.



# Mujaay Ganma Foundation

\$121,381  
People and Systems



Mujaay Ganma Foundation (MGF) received several grants to build significant internal capacity, which is likely to be sustained beyond the life of the funding. They used the Native Foods Community Garden as the focus for employing two young Gumbaynggirr project officers. They are now embedded in the organisation and the Mujaay Ganma way of doing things, creating succession pathways for the organisation. Through mentoring by experienced project managers and Elders providing ‘on the job’ learning and reflection, Mujaay Ganma has used its cultural authority and knowledge to build a workplace grounded in Gumbaynggirr cultural practices and values.

In addition to wages for project officers, mentors and Elders, funds also supported first aid training, digital and project-based equipment and travel expenses.

## Organisational outcomes

Through the support of IRCF, MGF has developed highly skilled, experienced and confident Gumbaynggirr project managers. They have also strengthened their ability to apply for grants and diversify revenue, including regeneration contracts increasing income and employment opportunities, while continuing care of Country.

“The young managers can feel that it is possible to create the income necessary to become sustainable. They are always thinking of what might be possible rather than feeling it is not worth trying... ‘cause it won’t happen anyway. That is a really big change!”

## Value of cultural ways of living better understood

The flow on of strengthening MGF is in being able to continue to fulfil its purpose - caring for Country by custodians; building pride in the community, as they see what their young people are doing; and increasing value in cultural ways of living, all of which has given Elders hope for the future. These efforts have also lifted morale in the community. Below are three awards attained by the organisation and Wurinda Gill, Trainee Project Coordinator in 2023.

- Young Indigenous Citizen of the Year for the Nambucca Valley
- Tidy Town NSW Winners Biodiversity Conservation Award and
- Tidy Town NSW Young Legend Award

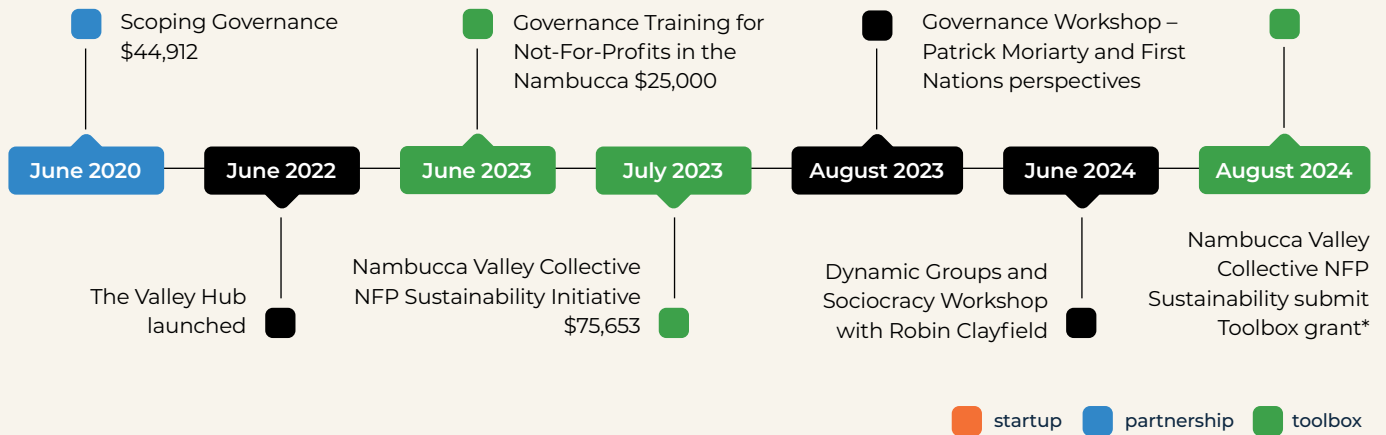


The Mujaay Ganma Foundation team in their Native Garden Nursery, with some of the FRRR team.



# Bowraville Innovative Social Enterprises Precinct Incorporated (BISEP)

\$145,565  
Systems, People and  
Efficiencies



The primary purpose of BISEP is to facilitate partnerships and sharing resources, although early on in IRCF, just how they could best do this was not clear. Through the course of the program, BISEP consolidated how they would activate their purpose, while trying to respond to community need.

The coordination of the Nambucca NFP Sustainability Initiative enabled the organisation to activate part of their service offering. This initiative brought together five local NFPs to undertake a feasibility study into collaborative sustainability approaches. With the support of Savvy Strategy, the group explored options such as a grants writer, a marketing approach focussed on building the Nambucca Valley as a social impact investment destination and the creation of a community foundation.

## Organisational outcomes

Over the course of the project, the mission and operations of the organisation evolved and were clarified. The organisation began with a group of volunteers and has, over the course of the project, been able to engage the services of project coordinators, specialist consultants, a paid bookkeeper and accountant and volunteers.



\* This grant was auspiced by Lifetime Connect.

## Despite differences, organisations can work together for the greater good

Through the IRCF program, BISEP's efforts in supporting collaboration and governance have increased understanding of how various organisations, even with different operational models, can work together for the greater good.

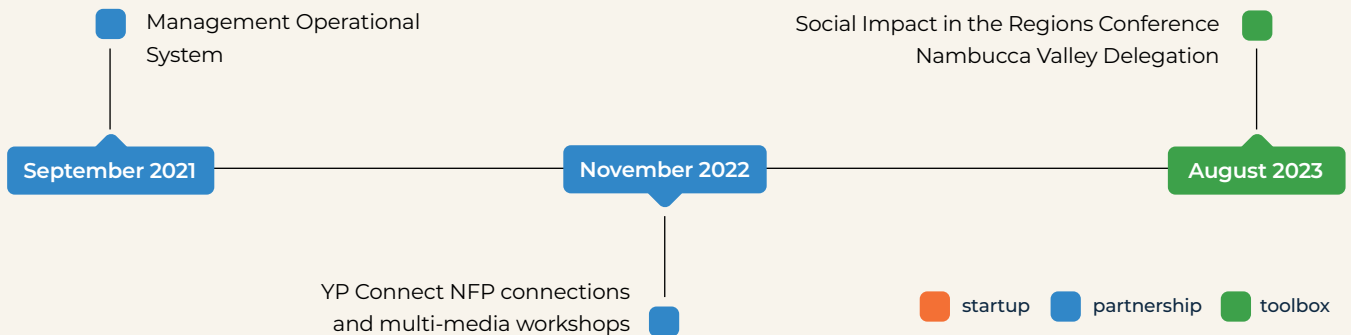
"The most significant change for our organisation is stronger partnerships with other NFPs involved and the ability for us to work from a place where we are all on the same page. Our connection with Lifetime Connect has strengthened and has now contributed to a number of occasions where we are sharing resources in terms of creating and sharing story, advertising services, sharing Grants App, collectively inputting on grants and Lifetime Connect auspicing BISEP for a project using their DGR status to benefit the whole community!"



Governance workshop with Patrick Moriarty.



BISEP committee members



ShoreTrack was established only six months before receiving the IRCF funding. It was inspired by Bernie Shakeshaft and remains part of BackTrack’s Tracker Network where BackTrack mentors locals on the ground to establish their own program, each very different as every community has different challenges but all have the same mission... to help as many kids as possible having a hard time. At their first engagement in the IRCF evaluation process, ShoreTrack was focussed on development of an operational management system.

## Organisational outcomes

Through IRCF Partnership funding, ShoreTrack was mentored by Savvy Strategy to develop a bespoke management operating system, based on a solid strategic plan, to keep them on track and to build understanding of the processes, systems and strategic thinking required to achieve their long-term goals.

“We want to have a better idea of our three to five year goals, so we can acknowledge the resources and staffing we need so we can be on top of it. Making sure systems, policies and internal controls are in place. When we’re asked ‘what do you need’ we’ll know exactly what we need to take on more young people, to build our capacity. We want to be able to help as many young people as possible in our community!”

“(We’ve got a) better understanding of the profitability of the program, how to allocate money and better report to external agencies. We feel more confident having conversations about where we are going.”

Being part of IRCF meant that ShoreTrack could set themselves up with robust systems, processes, and goals that allowed them to find funding for their programs and think well into the future.

## Marginalised young people are thriving, re-engaging in community and learning

ShoreTrack now works with more than 70 marginalised young people aged 10-24 focusing on preventing or reducing contact with the justice system and re-engaging them back into community and learning.

They are also actively advocating for effective frameworks, like their own, that support improved life outcomes for young people in rural communities. One example of many was participating in the SEGRA In House Session for Members of Parliament hosted by the Hon. [Kristy McBain MP](#). The event highlighted case studies that have successfully solved a local or regional challenge and that could be applied elsewhere in regional Australia.

"Participating in IRCF helped us understand our mission, how we work as a business, how we need good governance to tell our story and be involved in the community. Anything that underpins our practice came from the original IRCF grant. The connections we've made - we met the Fairfax team, the FRRR team, the evaluators and connections beyond our community. If we didn't have that capacity, we wouldn't have been able to approach Siddle Family Foundation and now we have an ongoing relationship with them."





ShoreTrack trainers and program participant, Sept 2022

# Leeton

Leeton is on the lands of the Wiradjuri people, bordering the pristine Murrumbidgee River. Located in a major food production area, they are part of the 'food bowl of Australia'. The town is surrounded by agricultural land including expansive cotton and rice fields, citrus orchards and vineyards. The Murrumbidgee River flows nearby, providing vital irrigation water and feeding the Ramsar-listed Fivebough and Tuckerbil Wetlands, which play an important part in the local ecology.

The Leeton LGA includes the villages of Yanco, Wamoon, Whitton and Murrami. The area has a population of 11,343 (2020), supported by more than 200 NFP organisations and 22 registered charities. Leeton has many large farming and export businesses that have a global presence in the food manufacturing sector, which is the largest employer, followed by agriculture and education & training.

Leeton Shire Council has declared the area a Refugee Welcome Zone, meaning it has made a commitment to welcoming refugees into the community.

By Type	Participating Organisations	# orgs
 Agricultural / Show Societies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leeton Show Society Inc</li> </ul>	1
 Community Centres (Disability / Aged Care / Family Services / Housing / Youth / Social Wellbeing / Digital Access / Multi Cultural Support)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leeton Multicultural Support Group °</li> </ul>	1
 Social Welfare (Community Chest / Food Pantry / Op Shop)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leeton JumpStart Fund Inc *</li> <li>Leeton Community Care Development Inc</li> </ul>	2
 Culture, Arts, Tourism, Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Western Riverina Arts Inc °*</li> <li>Leeton Art Society Inc.</li> </ul>	2
 Education Provider / P&C's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whitton Public School P+C Association</li> </ul>	1
 Progress Assoc. / Chambers of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leeton Business Chamber Inc.</li> <li>Leeton Connect Inc °</li> </ul>	2
 Service Clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rotary Club of Leeton Inc (Roxy Redevelopment Project)</li> </ul>	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>10</b>

° Organisations that received auspice or operating venue support from Leeton Shire Council - 3

\*ACNC registered - 2

At the beginning of the program, Leeton locals were asked for their reflections about what type of community they wanted to live in.

WATCH [Leeton Connects](#).



Representatives were also asked about what they wanted from the program:

Question	Leeton
What do you want to do with the funding?	Basic infrastructure and capacity building
Why do you want to do this?	Continuity, and capacity building of organisations
What makes your community strong?	People; generous, supportive, friendly. Strong sense of community. Safe community
What would make it stronger?	Better medical services, support for volunteers, capacity building for NFPs
What makes things work here?	Community support, volunteers, paid coordinators
IRCF - what has been positive and effective about the program?	Getting the grant (3) Funding available within 6 weeks. Strategic advice and support. Evaluation induction via zoom

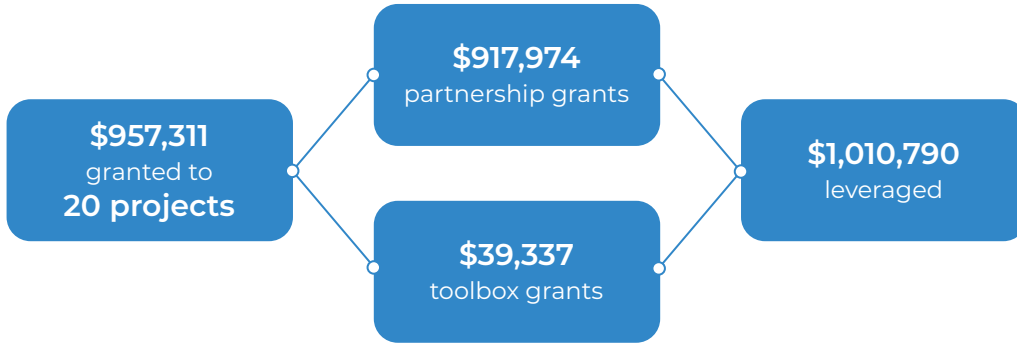
As part of the initial work, external stakeholders were also asked for their perspectives on the Leeton's NFP sector. These people were not affiliated with any organisation funded through the program. Some of the key points they made were:

- For others in the community many still don't understand what Leeton Connect does. People in Leeton need more plain language explanation of what Leeton Connect do.
- Our community wouldn't be our community without them. (NFP) bring volunteers, social connections. Provide services that otherwise wouldn't be viable in a small community.
- NFPs cut out the red tape and reach the people that need to be reached.

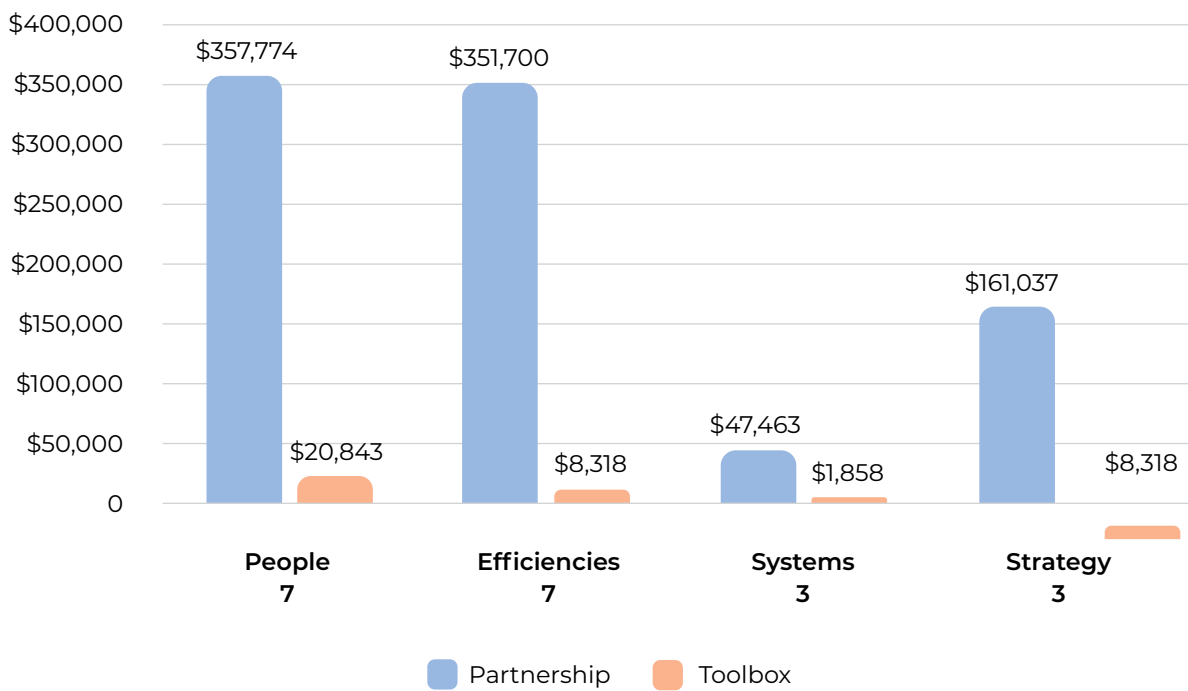


Local Leeton leaders

# Granting



## Leeton IRCF Funding



## Employment outcomes

The funding created 35 employment opportunities – 6 fulltime, part-time or casual roles; 22 contract roles; and 7 consultants were engaged.

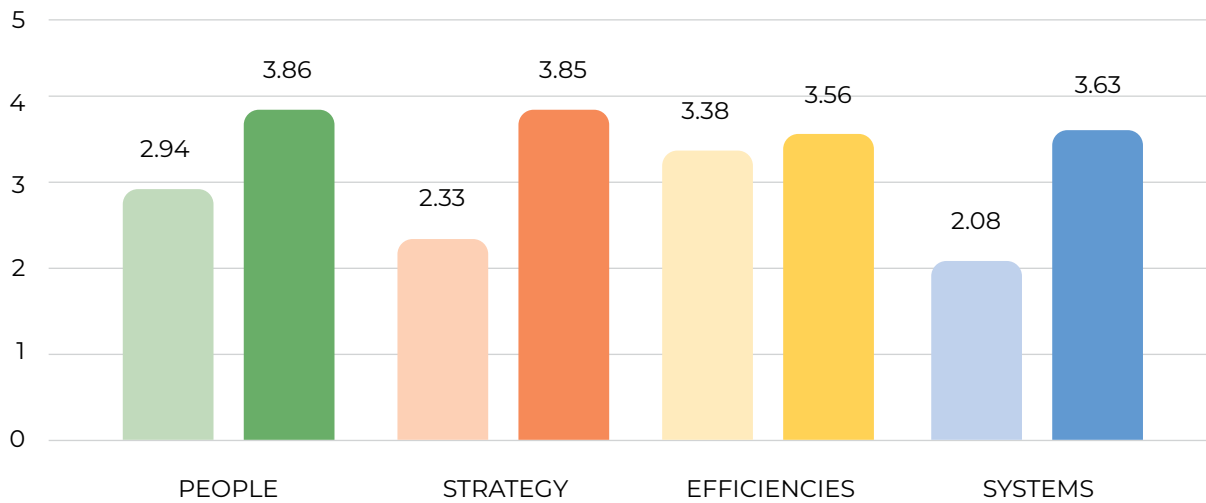
## Roadmap priorities

In each community, the strategic priorities were slightly different. For Leeton, the following were the enduring goals:

- **People:**
  - Promote leadership development and mentoring opportunities to support succession planning.
  - Attract people to capture new volunteers, including young and skilled people.
- **Strategies:** Grant writing assistance is made available to the NFP sector improving wider collaboration to leverage funding opportunities.
- **Efficiencies:** Employ a centralised, neutral co-ordinator for the NFP sector.
- **Systems:** Not-for-Profit sector of Leeton meet a minimum higher standard of governance structure, procedure, competence.

# Impact on individual participating NFPs

Leeton - IRCF Pillars, baseline to Nov 23



Leeton’s participating NFPs had the greatest perception of increased capacity in the pillars of Systems and Strategy. The increase over time in the Strategy pillar could be attributed to an increased clarity of purpose and organisational strategy, particularly from NFPs such as Leeton Connect, Leeton JumpStart and the Multicultural Support Group. At baseline, the Leeton NFPs felt they had competent levels of capacity in their governance and engagement of volunteers, as seen by the score for People.

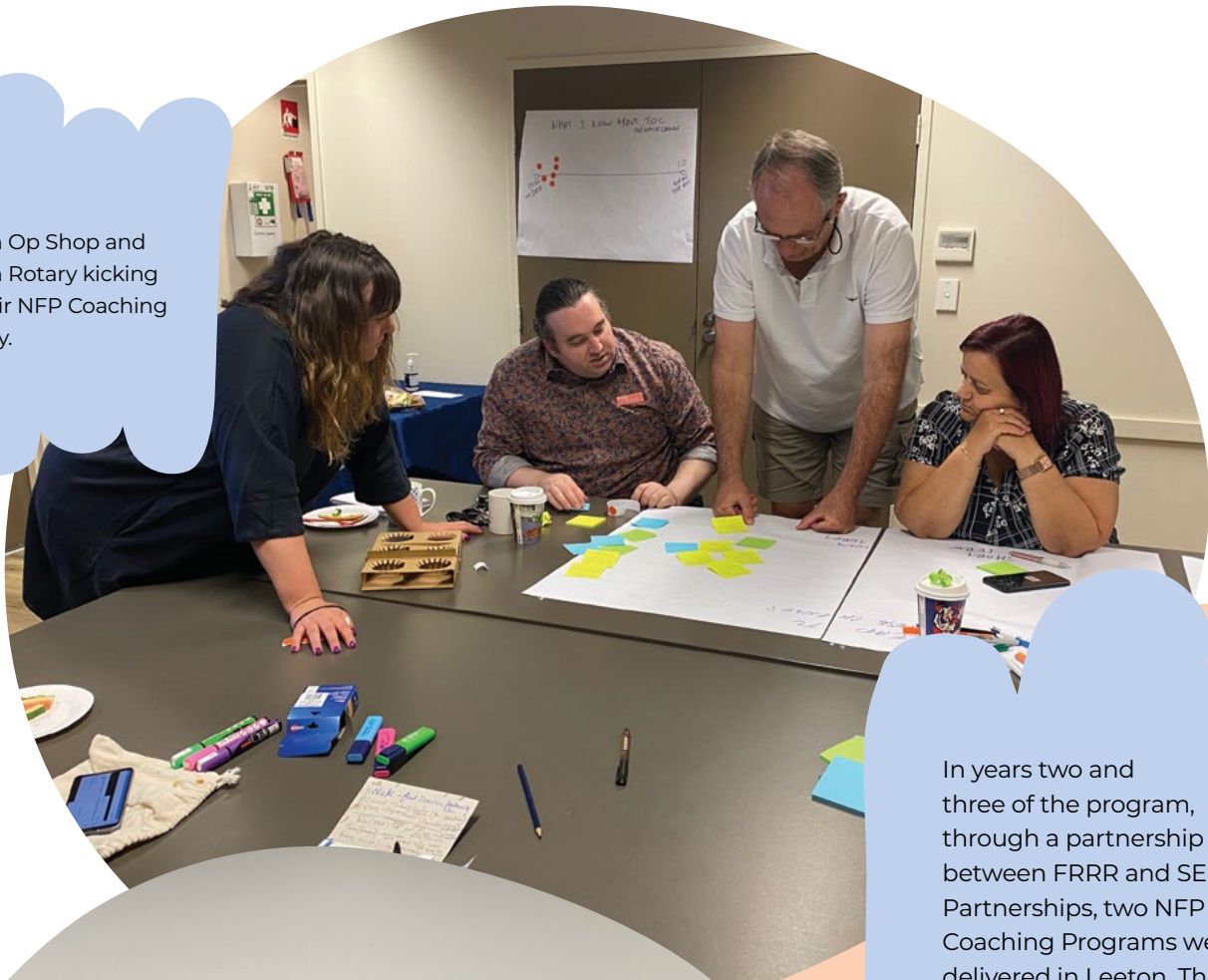
Of note is the high score at baseline for Efficiencies, which includes partnerships and business systems. This could be attributed to the role played by Leeton Council in providing business systems supporting a number of the participating NFPs, such as access to office space, grant auspicing and employment of coordination staff. This support was maintained throughout the program, as indicated in the high scoring of Efficiencies in November 2023. Efficiencies also includes partnerships and while growth in increased networking and partnerships has been an outcome across all three of the communities, it was possibly a feature of Leeton at the time IRCF commenced.



Baseline evaluation workshop, Leeton



Leeton Op Shop and Leeton Rotary kicking off their NFP Coaching journey.



In years two and three of the program, through a partnership between FRRR and SEFA Partnerships, two NFP Coaching Programs were delivered in Leeton. This also included a 'train-the-trainer' element, so locals could offer this kind of support in future.



Leeton evaluation workshop May 2023

# Leeton Connect

**\$443,074**  
Systems, People and  
Efficiencies



Leeton Connect was created during the IRCF program as a networking / nexus organisation to support local NFPs. Initial grants supported the establishment of the organisation and governance structures, while subsequent funding supported a networking and capacity building agenda with NFPs in the community; governance work in other organisations and provision of physical resources (meeting space, events and administration support).

The goal was always to be a 'conduit' of information and a connector within the community.

## Organisational Outcomes

The organisation now has a calendar of networking events, organises generic and tailored training, and has multiple MOUs and partnerships with other NFPs. It's clear that the organisation has fulfilled and even extended its original function.

A key success factor was the coordinator position, funded by IRCF, which allowed a continued focus on Leeton Connect's core purpose - to resource, support and build capacity in local NFPs.

Leeton Connect now has a clear governance structure, strategic plan, full suite of policies and a high level of IT infrastructure and skills. An ongoing challenge is to create an income stream to support continued viability, although in November 2023 they secured 12 months of funding for the organisation and a paid coordinator role. It has proposed a paid membership model and is also exploring income generation through event management and grant writing support.

## Strong NFPs can help others

A notable success that showcases the broader impact of Leeton Connect was supporting another organisation that was closing due to lack of a governance committee. Leeton Connect facilitated a town meeting, which resulted in the engagement of a new committee and volunteers for the struggling service. That NFP is once again fully operational and providing a vital crisis support in the community.

"When we first started, we just wanted to be a trusted entity, to have good branding. It's become what we hoped it would become and it's snowballing."

An engaged Leeton Connect gathering



Leeton Connect – Coordinator Mary Errey & Chair Sue Pearce

# Leeton Multicultural Support Group

\$150,000  
People



Operationalisation of the Leeton Multicultural Support Group (LMSG) \$150,000 (auspiced by Leeton Shire Council)

December 2020

startup partnership toolbox

IRCF funding enabled the employment of an Operations Manager (later referred to as Coordinator) over three years to strengthen the organisation and build locally-led regional migration.

## Organisational Outcomes

Employing a Coordinator enabled a much more planned and structured approach to building sustainable partnerships (especially with other community leaders); consistent and reliable communications; and the transition to being an organisation rather than only a volunteer-run service. Volunteers are still at the heart of the grassroots work but as an organisation, they have become more focussed on programming, advocacy and planned community partnerships.

The Coordinator sees the maturing of the organisation in terms of having “traction and momentum.” The funded role has been a “catalyst and has enabled the Multicultural Support Group to thrive...when you are gaining traction and legitimacy you are enthused to keep going. It’s all about momentum.”

A key success in recent times has been an improved relationship with the Department of Home Affairs. Previously, it was difficult to connect to Commonwealth authorities to discuss migrant visa challenges. Now however, there is a direct line of communication between the Minister and the Multicultural Group.

Another key success has been the increased profile of the group locally and nationally due to media stories, especially the ABC Backroads program in 2022.

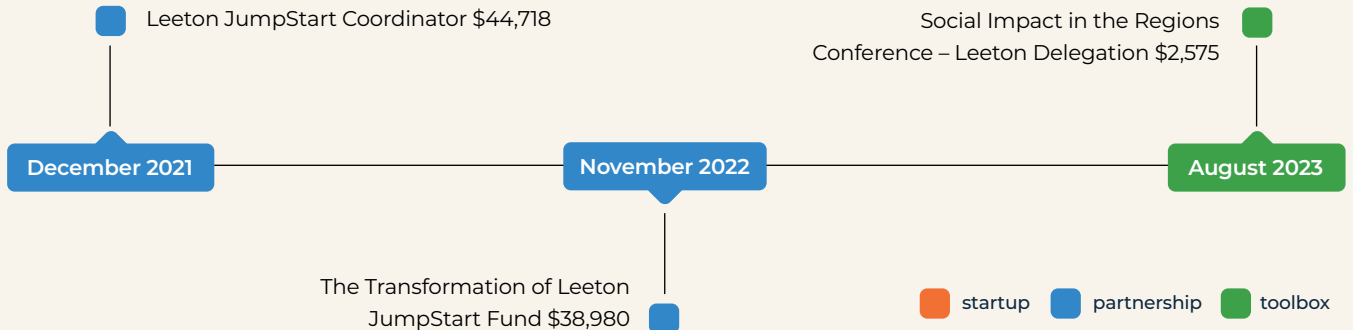
## Grassroots NFP informs policies to support newcomer settlement for regions or towns

A funded role within the Multicultural Support Group enabled the group to support local inclusion of new migrants arriving in Leeton and take up networking and advocacy opportunities. Notably this included a partnership with University of South Australia and Charles Sturt University that supported the delivery of “[Learning from Leeton](#)” newcomer settlement research report in 2022. This is a valuable document carrying the evidence base that would inform strategies and policies to support newcomer settlement for any region or town. Other activities included:

- April 2021 – LMSG attend Welcoming Cities Symposium
- May 2021 – Inaugural Leeton Multicultural Festival
- July 2022 – ABC Back Roads profiles Leeton migrant journeys
- June 2023 – LMSG attend Welcoming Cities Symposium

# Leeton JumpStart Fund Inc

\$86,273  
People and  
Strategy



## Leeton JumpStart raises funds and distributes them to people in the Leeton and surrounding communities who need emergency support.

By joining the IRCF program, the organisation wanted to build the systems, structures and processes to support its ongoing viability. They recognised they could not continue to rely on the goodwill of volunteers for all operations and also needed to upgrade basic office equipment, have secure storage for confidential information and a private space where clients (grant recipients) could speak with assessors.

### Organisational Outcomes

IRCF has enabled Leeton JumpStart to keep their doors open, after volunteer fatigue and low funds at program start. Leeton JumpStart set up better governance and volunteer induction systems, and built their skills, capacity and confidence. The development of a sponsorship approach to fundraising shows a new way of tackling financial viability. By offering businesses sponsorship packages, they raised more than \$76,000.

This was only possible because the organisation had a part-time paid staff member who could focus on marketing and fundraising activities and take a strategic, rather than reactive, approach. Retention of volunteers has been improved through the support of the part-time paid Coordinator.

Two team members also attended the *Social Impact in the Regions Conference*, which led to participation in Tom Dawkins 'Start Some Good' business coaching



A private office for Leeton JumpStart

program. They have improved their information systems and communication to the community.

### Sustainable NFP remain a vital lifeline for the Leeton community

Due to IRCF support, Leeton JumpStart Fund is in a strong position to continue to act as a vital lifeline for the Leeton community, providing immediate financial aid, empathetic support and community connections to those facing hardships.

The organisation has also positioned itself as a strong local leader. For example, they shared learnings from the Social Impact in the Regions conference with more than 100 people, through guest speaking opportunities at Rotary, Business Breakfast and other events.

# Leeton Business Chamber Incorporated

\$100,000  
Efficiencies and  
People



Leeton Business Chamber received two grants – one to support building a digital hub, designed to strengthen the NFP sector and engage the community. The second grant aimed to strengthen Leeton Business Chamber by supporting coordination of the new [Digital Hub](#), volunteer training, governance enhancements and maintaining partnerships.

The Chamber identified several successes, including:

- The digital hub has been developed in partnership with Leeton Council and Leeton Connect. They worked with the Coordinator of the Leeton Multicultural Group to ensure that the platform is inclusive of CALD communities.
- The Chamber is doing things differently – for example, during COVID, they moved their Business Awards online and ran other online events for members.
- They hosted successful networking events, which both business and NFPs have attended. These have been in partnership with Leeton Council and Leeton Connect.
- They secured \$16,000 in local sponsorship and a \$36,000 in-kind contribution from the local newspaper.

## Fostering local industry partnerships to support community outcomes

The Chamber developed a partnership with Sunrice after the firm approached them about their staff volunteering. The Chamber passed this information on to Leeton Connect to share with local NFPs. Sunrice has since come on as a sponsor for the 'Random Acts of Kindness Month' initiative, which involved four businesses each contributing \$1,500 that was given away to local people as a feel-good campaign to boost the local economy and assist families in the area doing it tough over Christmas. The money was spent with local businesses, directly benefiting the local economy.

"Having a paid coordinator has enabled the Leeton Business Chamber to build its brand and enhance our identity within the community. This level of visibility within the community is a direct result of relationships that we have built with other NFPs, business and industry, which has been facilitated by the projects delivered. To continue to deliver the same level of service and continue to embed the Chamber, the development of the governance documents is absolutely vital and a key component of how we will continue to be transparent, supportive and deliver the same level of service and support into the future."

# Junee

Junee, which is located on the lands of the Wiradjuri people, is in the fertile Riverina region and surrounded by agricultural land used for crops such as wheat, canola and various vegetables and grazing pastures. The Shire includes the town of Junee and the villages of Bethungra, Illabo, Wantabagery, Harefield, Old Junee, Junee Reefs and Dirnaseer.

Junee has a population of 6,453 people (2022), with more than 100 NFPs including 16 registered charities. The construction industry is the largest employer, with agriculture and public administration and safety the next most significant contributors.

The township is filled with historic charm. It was established as a railway town in 1878 and continues to be an important railway junction and midway point between Sydney and Melbourne. Residents and visitors enjoy fishing and boating on nearby rivers and dams, bushwalking in local nature reserves and exploring historical sites such as the Junee Roundhouse Railway Museum, Broadway Museum and Monte Cristo (Australia's most haunted house). Sporting activities such as netball, rugby league, soccer and motorsports are popular among locals, reflecting the town's active community life.

By Type	Participating Organisations	# orgs
 Agricultural / Show Societies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Junee Show Society</li> </ul>	1
 Community Centres (Disability / Aged Care / Family Services / Housing / Youth / Social Wellbeing / Digital Access / Multi Cultural Support)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Junee Community Centre Inc*</li> </ul>	1
 Aged Care and Senior Citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Junee Senior Citizens Club Inc*</li> <li>&gt; Coinda Court Aged Care Ltd*</li> </ul>	2
 Culture, Arts, Tourism, Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Junee &amp; District Historical Society Inc.</li> <li>&gt; Regional Heritage Transport Assoc - Junee Inc*</li> <li>&gt; Rhythm and Rail Incorporated (also used FATLAMB)</li> </ul>	3
 Community Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Junee Community Power Inc</li> </ul>	1
 Progress Assoc. / Chambers of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Junee Business &amp; Trades Inc.</li> </ul>	1
 Sporting Clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Riverina Working Equitation Inc.</li> <li>&gt; Riverina School boys Football Carnival</li> </ul>	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>11</b>

\* ACNC registered organisations

Local people shared their reflections about what type of community they wanted to live in, before the program got underway. They are captured in this film, [Junee: Our Strengths and Goals](#)



Representatives were also asked about what they wanted from the program:

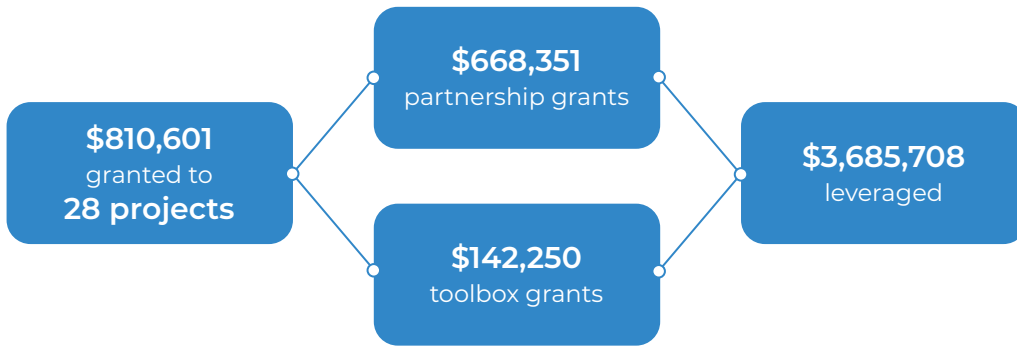
Question	Leeton
What do you want to do with the funding?	Equipment (3), Capital works (2), capacity building (2), staff (1)
Why do you want to do this?	Building community infrastructure, improve service offering, more effective meetings and decision making
What makes your community strong?	More communication and collaboration between groups, fewer silos (3). A central information place (community hub). People having more confidence in their skills.
What would make it stronger?	The small number of individuals and committees who drive events. "When they get together things get done". Council is seen as a leader.
What makes things work here?	Getting funding (3). No political agenda, long term strategic investment in community. Understanding, friendly, approachable. 'Not made to feel inferior'.
IRCF - what has been positive and effective about the program?	Getting the grant (3) Funding available within 6 weeks. Strategic advice and support. Evaluation induction via zoom.

As part of the initial work, external stakeholders were also asked for their perspectives on Junee's NFP sector. These people were not affiliated with any organisation funded through the program. Some of the key points they made were:

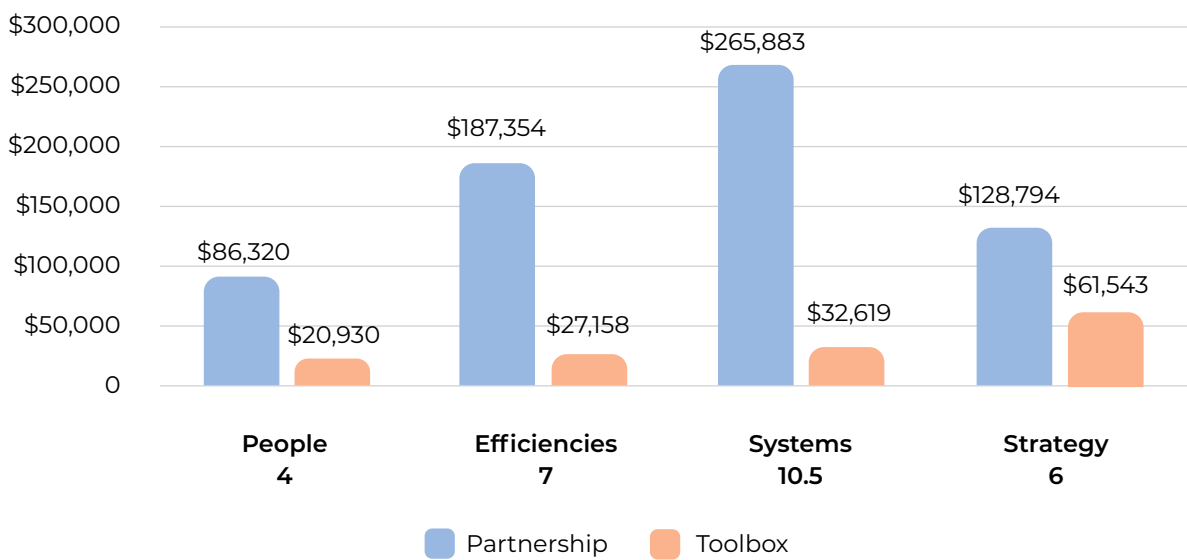
- A Community Hub is needed.
- We don't have a paper now - the newspaper used to include social updates. We can't advertise - not everyone uses social media.
- COVID has made fundraising difficult.
- Interpersonal conflicts can get in the way. Sometimes people do contact the mayor to help mediate or deal with issues.



# Granting



## June IRCF Funding



JCC, JBT and Council collaborating

## Employment outcomes

In addition, thanks to the funding there were 21 employment opportunities – 1 part-time role was created; 17 contract roles; and 3 consultants were engaged.

## Roadmap priorities

In each community, the strategic priorities were slightly different. For Junee, the following were the enduring goals:

- **People:** Increase volunteer engagement through training and mentoring program.  
Improve community inclusion for all residents to engage in NFP sector.
- **Efficiencies:** Employ a Community Development Officer to support grants assistance, event promotion, marketing and communications
- **Systems:** Provide ongoing training and skill development across NFP's in leadership, partnerships and governance.
- **Strategies:**
  - Implement sustainability strategy for village halls incorporating tourism opportunities for viability of village NFPs.
  - Create sustainable collaborative partnerships and space to support NFP's, the wider community and vulnerable people.

## Impact on individual participating NFPs

### Junee - IRCF Pillars, Baseline to Nov 23



This chart shows that Junee NFPs clearly saw their capacity across all four pillars having significantly increased by the end of the project. Junee tended to score themselves lower across many areas of the survey. This is particularly noticeable in the pillar of People, which included the categories of governance, IT capability and use of volunteers. In contrast however, by the final data collection in Strategy, which included use of strategic planning, other planning documents and grassroots responsiveness, they had assessed themselves overall the highest of the three communities. The lowest scoring pillar at baseline was Systems for all three communities, which includes the categories of policy and procedures, equipment and tools to deliver on purpose, and financial management. At the program end, this is scored as one of the higher areas of capacity built.

# Junee Community Centre (JCC)

**\$279,329**  
Systems, Strategy,  
People & Efficiencies



## Organisational Outcomes

JCC has strengthened its financial, digital and governance systems, addressing operational gaps and duplications. These efforts have supported their sustainability and growth. For example by attaining NDIS provision they secured \$140,000 in funding in the six months between March-November 2022. The organisation further benefitted from a wage subsidy that helped bring in an extra resource to undertake some tasks, so the Manager could focus on setting up these foundational organisational systems whilst having the capacity to both identify, secure and deliver on larger goals including a number of key alliances.

## Resourcing leadership and partnerships improves Junee health and inclusion outcomes

Enabling the centre manager to step out of service delivery to attend community meetings, lobby politicians and focus on stakeholder relationships allowed JCC to advocate not only for themselves but the needs of Junee as a whole. For example, JCC successfully lobbied the Commonwealth Bank to retain its branch in the town, which had been set to close in 2023. The Manager has said that once community members could see the benefits from this stakeholder work, it *“remove(d) questions about relevancy of advocacy and collaborative work”*.

The Manager was also central in the reactivation of the Local Health Interagency meetings. Group activities have been critical to improving communication between the local hospital, service providers and the community. There has also been an increase in mental health promotion, disaster readiness planning and NDIS support improving health outcomes for the community.

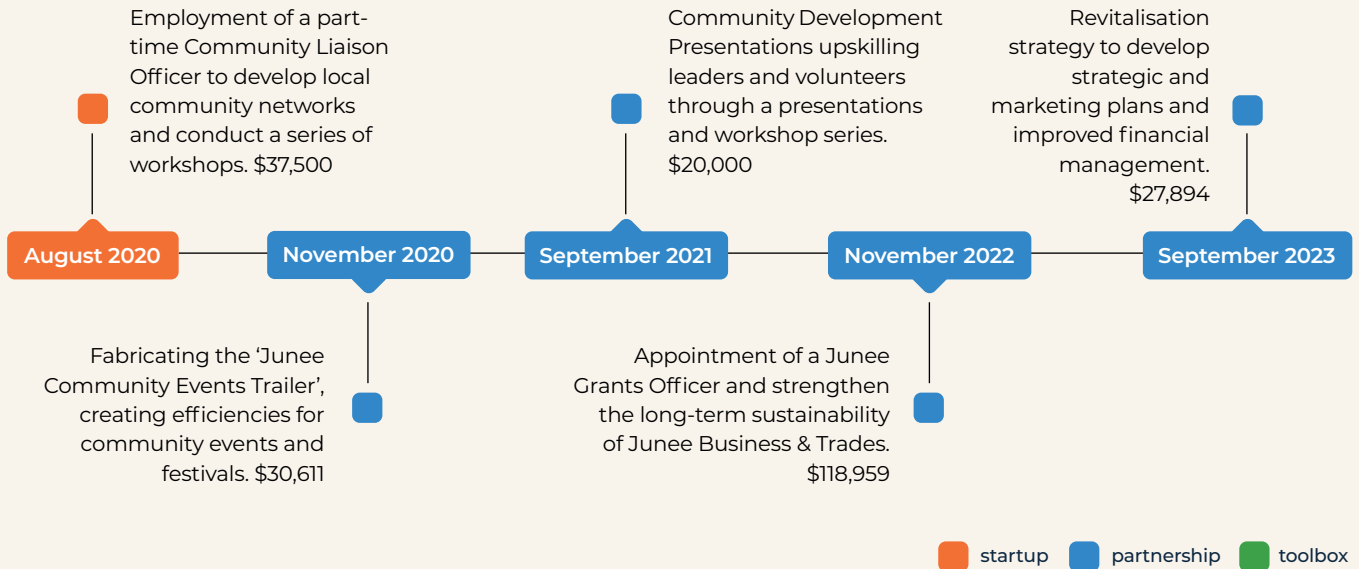
JCC's increased profile and diversification of partnerships has also led to new connections. By the beginning of 2023, conversations were underway with the local First Nations community. This was evidenced at the May 2023 evaluation Community Workshop and the November 2023 evaluation External Stakeholder breakfast, where a local First Nations stakeholder spoke to a desire from that community to form connections with more mainstream community organisations.



The local Health Advisory Committee meeting

# Junee Business & Trades Incorporated

**\$234,964**  
Efficiencies People  
and Strategy



When the program commenced, Junee Business and Trades (JBT) saw themselves as a leader in the community that could provide support for businesses, trades and NFPs to access the resources they needed to thrive and be sustainable. This led to their first grant, which (among other things) enabled the employment of a part-time Community Liaison Officer that evolved over time into a Grants Officer position.

## Efficient human resourcing builds fundraising capability and leverages over \$3M.

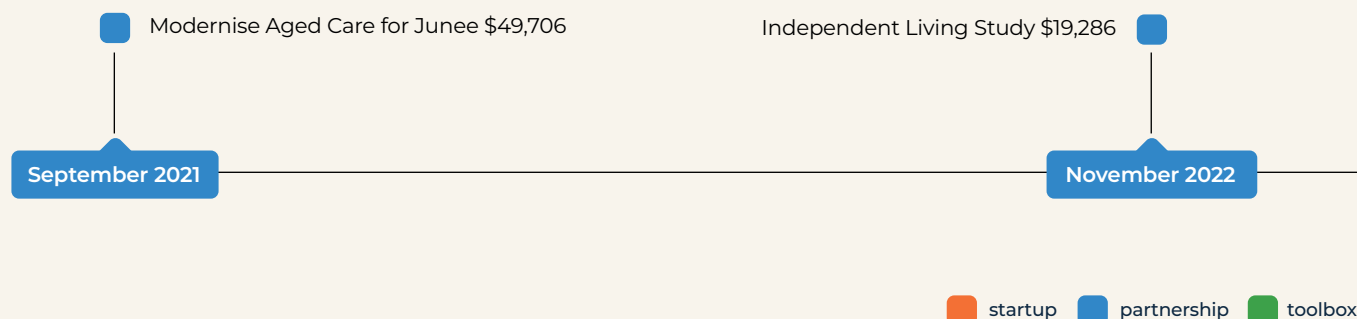
The Grants Officer role played a significant part in leveraging \$3,658,708 in funding from non-FRRR grant sources into Junee. While the Grants Officer isn't solely responsible for all these extra funds, their skills in grant writing, communicating grant opportunities to NFPs and coaching and supporting some organisations in their grant strategy, definitely contributed to this outcome. This role also worked closely with the Community Facilitator in Junee to support Junee NFPs.

JBT believes that IRCF has benefitted the wider community, with NFP and volunteer groups now working more closely together for deliverable outcomes. These groups are now more aware of funding that is available from FRRR, as well as State and Federal government.

"A lot of (NFPs) are now looking at small grants as a starting point. Groups are talking to each other and seeking letters of support - this wasn't happening before. People are getting their heads around how to write grants. People asked JBT to proofread grant applications, which wasn't happening before."



Members of the Junee Business and Trades group were an active program participant.



## Cooinda Court sought funds to modernise its aged care systems by installing new technology to improve management of medication systems, clinical care records and communication.

On entering into IRCF, the organisation already had a robust board, which was likely strengthened by the accountability requirements of the Aged Care Standards. They require high levels of corporate governance and due diligence, especially around decision making and financial management.

### Organisational Outcomes

The IRCF investment in the IT and Care Management Program has been central to Cooinda meeting the increased regulation of the aged care sector as well as the need to attract and retain appropriately skilled board members and executive staff. The new IT infrastructure also increased data security.

Staff report that the new care management system has led to streamlining information collection, and that management and upskilling has positively impacted on their confidence and increased literacy. The Board can access documents across the whole organisation, which is a requirement of the Aged Care Standards.

### Junee retains quality care for local elderly people

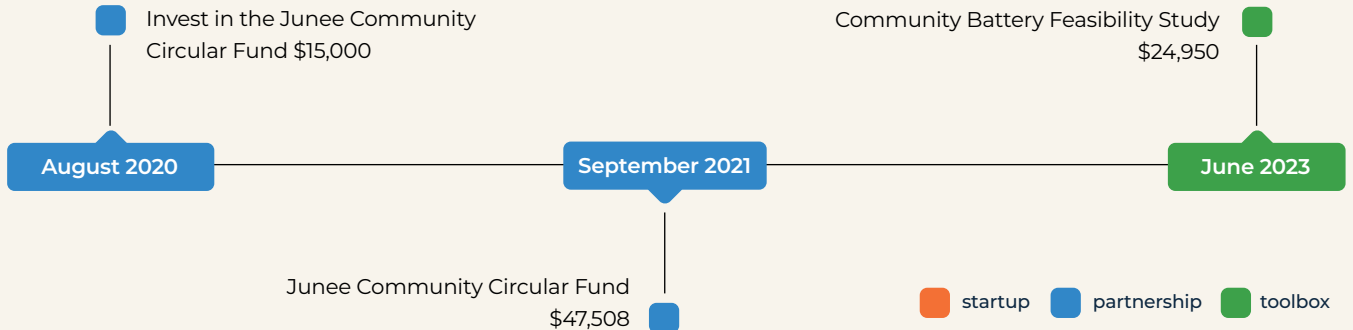
Following the installation of the electronic care system and training for staff in using it, Cooinda reported better connections with the hospital and doctors, reporting that 'the new software enables the doctor to be more involved... it's a spin off'.

At their accreditation visit prior to November 2023, Cooinda achieved 100% compliance with the Aged Care Standards, ensuring the continuation of local aged age. This is a significant achievement, largely supported by the IRCF funded IT upgrades.

"It allows our elderly to be with their family, but also in familiar environments. They used to be sent away, and that could have been up to two hours a trip for family. And if they have a spouse, then that spouse very seldom could make that journey. And these people never survived long. "So, it is very important for us to keep our community members here because they've been a part of our community, when we were young and defenceless, they nurtured us. And that's what we do now. We look after our residents in an environment that's solely theirs, where they are protected, and we advocate for them."

# Junee Community Power

\$87,458  
Efficiencies and  
Strategy



Junee Community Power (JCP) introduced a circular funding model to allow local not-for-profits to install solar power on their premises, reducing their operating costs. They also gained access to equipment to complete energy assessments on buildings, which is now part of their service model.

They have successfully supported two community organisations to apply for funding to install solar power and improve energy efficiency. The organisation is fully volunteer-led and in the later stages of the program has accessed some administration / coordination and feasibility support through IRCF.

## Organisation Outcomes

JCP has had real success by partnering with two local community organisations – Junee Community Centre, which had solar panels installed in November 2020, and the Senior Citizens Centre, which was brought into the 21st Century including solar installation and energy efficient upgrades.

**“Junee Community Centre has paid back the circular Fund, years before we expected. This has enabled the next bigger projects or small ones. We can go back to the Community Centre to look at what else they need.”**

They also assisted the Senior Citizens Centre to apply for funding for re-wiring, a new fridge and stove (funded through IRCF). As a result, community members are now using the Centre more often and for longer periods of time.



Over the course of IRCF, the organisation has refined its processes. JCP clarified the Circular Fund's business model, confirmed their vision and purpose and streamlined meeting and reporting procedures. A solicitor was also engaged to formalise loan contracts with participants.

### Shovel ready to support community through the renewable energy transition

As the IRCF program concludes, JCP remains incredibly active. The group is working on disaster preparedness, with Junee and Illabo Showgrounds both being considered as places of last resort during disasters etc. JCP is working closely with the Riverina Eastern Region Organisation of Councils (REROC) as a potential partner and received funding through IRCF to undertake a feasibility study to support this work.



"When government funding becomes available for community batteries later in the year, we're in a shovel ready position now to make an application, we've got the costing and we've got the feasibility already done."

Doug Bell Secretary Junee Community Power and Barbara Guthrie from Junee Senior Citizens

# Capacity building insights

In this section, we draw on the evaluation data about the changes in each of the strategic pillars in each community and look more deeply into initiatives we invested in and the factors that contributed to their success. We also share our key learnings around initiatives to support NFPs and funders wishing to undertake or mobilise organisational capacity building for rural and regional NFPs.

It is important to note that capacity was self-assessed to have increased across all pillars in all communities. This perhaps indicates that regardless of which pillar had the greatest investment, it is the support and *investment across the breadth of capacity building pillars* that led to the overall improvements. The combination of different funding components and a diversity of capacity building activities has increased capacity across all aspects in these organisations, not just one particular area.



Junee Evaluation Workshop 2023


## People

### Investing in current and future leaders

Investment in the People pillar, and in particular the employment of the Coordinator roles, Project Officers, Grant support officer and roles to backfill Managers and create capacity for them, had a significant impact on several organisations' ability to achieve a range of outcomes. This was highlighted in the case studies for [June Community Centre](#), [June Business and Trades](#) and [Mujaay Ganma Foundation](#).

Several grants enabled roles aimed at either leveraging higher order outcomes or investing in succession. Examples included:

- Funding a relief manager at Miimi Aboriginal Corporation meant the permanent manager could take a much-needed sabbatical, while an interim manager brought fresh eyes to operational systems.
- Funding a Project Officer role at Unkya Local Aboriginal Land Council enabled a highly functional interagency meeting to be operational for several months. When the person left that role and no-one replaced her, this highlighted the need for back-up roles rather than relying on one person.



Miimi's General Manager was able to take a sabbatical and engaged trainees in reception roles

### Contributors to success:

- Improvements in governance, purpose and organisational systems (e.g. policies, IT, HR and finance systems) were often required before organisations took on staff and volunteers.
- Development of workplans and instruction manuals supported changes in personnel or developing a team delivery model, encouraging shared responsibility rather than relying on one person.
- Successful engagement of next generation leadership towards meaningful engagement in the NFP sector has been successful by taking a highly relationship centred approach over time.

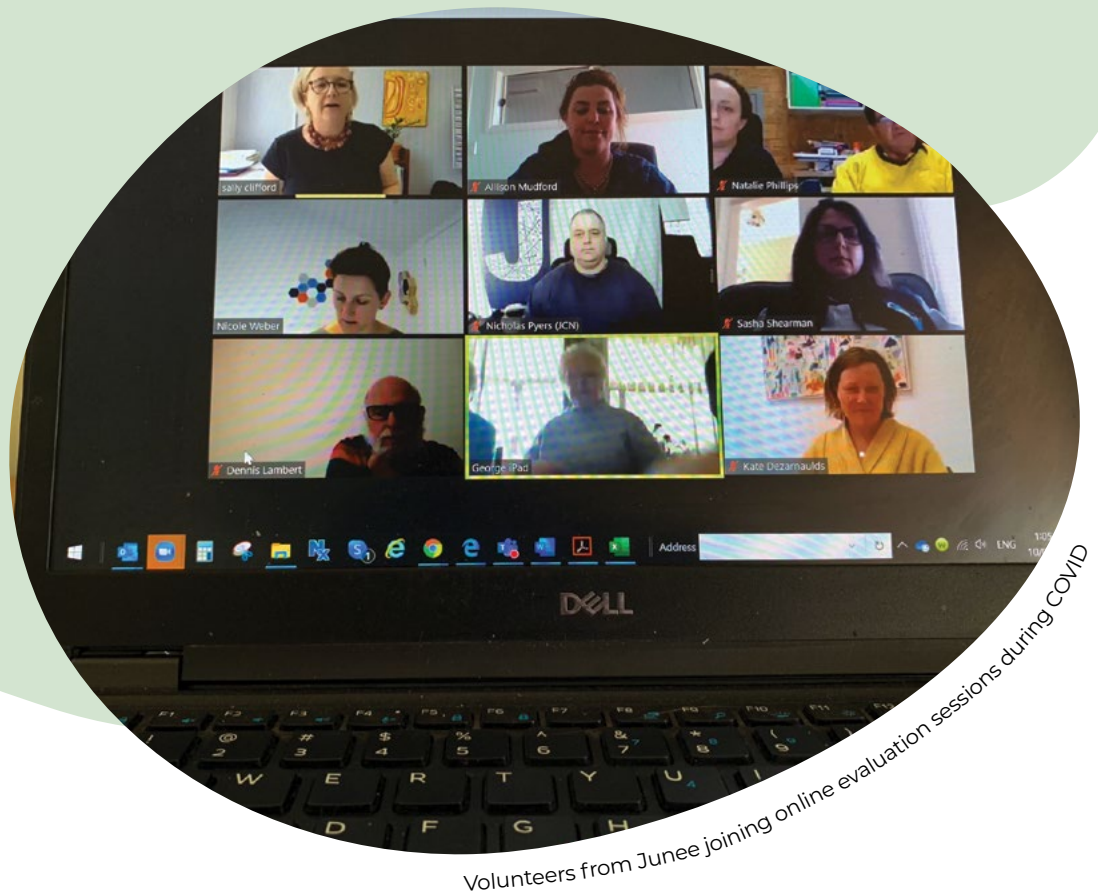
## Key learnings:

- At the program's start and through the evaluation processes, **identify organisations where key person risk exists**, as well as identify **development and support options** to strengthen sector-wide organisational sustainability.
- **Show support for local leadership** by investing in wages, traineeships, subsidies and sabbaticals to enable foundational development work, operational innovation and partnerships. Understand if systems are also required to enhance these engagements.
- **Profile IRCF case studies of relationship centred, next gen trainee journeys** when commencing program in new communities.

## Volunteers

The NFPs participating in IRCF were either 100% run by volunteers or had a mix of paid and volunteer staff, alongside a volunteer Committee / Board. Volunteers often worked across several organisations at governance and operational levels.

For organisations relying heavily on a volunteer workforce to deliver their activities, there were unforeseen vulnerabilities that emerged. For example, when management changed at Junee Correctional Centre, ongoing support from inmates in setting up the Riverina Schoolboys Football Carnival was put at risk. COVID also caused many older volunteers to completely disengage from volunteering. Even after the threat eased, people did not resume their pre-COVID level of volunteering.



Volunteers from Junee joining online evaluation sessions during COVID

Community interest in succession planning strategies, particularly with regard to voluntary board positions, increased in the latter stages of the program. During the culmination phases, there was increased awareness in each community of a group of local leaders having consistently engaged in the program. There was acknowledgement that these people are not an indefinite resource and an active focus on succession planning is needed. This manifested in both seeking to engage younger people but also in proactively investing in capacity and capability development of other people in community.

Partnerships between NFPs and organisations outside the sector (such as with universities, schools and local business) helped organisations find suitably skilled volunteers more readily.

### Contributors to success:

- Organisations with a mindful and structured approach to volunteer engagement (such as induction programs, position descriptions and training) had greater volunteer retention.

Leaders in Leeton identified succession planning as a critical program culmination priority.



Nambucca External Stakeholder breakfast

### Key learnings:

- Encourage organisations to **consider volunteer workforce risks** and the **development of volunteer engagement strategies, procedures and manuals**.
- **Invest in succession planning throughout the program.**
- Leverage **engagement opportunities between local leaders and multiple sectors** to develop connections and solutions towards increasing volunteer engagement. For example leveraging the IRCF external stakeholder breakfast delivered by the evaluation team, which connects the program with larger entities, to discuss NFP needs.
- Actively **share successful approaches to engaging next-gen** volunteers.

## Governance

Several organisations used the program to focus on improving their governance, refine their purpose and to invest in policies and systems, such as IT and finance.

Organisations that appeared more fragile and had a greater risk exposure often relied on one or two key people – typically the Secretary, Chair or Treasurer. While they usually had a clear purpose, these organisations had limited or no internal controls. This is not to say their governance was lacking; rather it was more relationship-based than systems-based and therefore vulnerable to changes in key personnel.

### Contributors to success:

- In general, organisations that are delivering programs and services tended to have more functional governance.
- For some NFPs, this is likely to be because they have external accountability requirements, such as Cooina Court and Aged Care Standards or Unkya Local Aboriginal Land Council, with compliance obligations under the NSW Land Rights Act.

### Key learnings:

- **Deliver a regular program of governance training for the NFP leaders** to maintain sound decision-making skills, as well as community-based leadership and succession planning.
- Explore **partnerships** with councils or larger entities that can provide **operational support** for event or venue-based organisations.

## Efficiencies

### Partnerships

Almost all pilot communities indicated that prior to IRCF, there was little collaboration or partnership between local NFPs. However, that changed quickly. Examples include the Community Liaison Officer supporting networking, co-ordination and resource sharing through [June Business and Trades](#). There was similar activity through the establishment of [Leeton Connect](#).

### Contributors to success:

- NFPs with capability and skills in forming and nurturing partnerships, and that were connected and functional in working with others, increased the impact of investment. Positive attributes included:
  - A strong well-connected leader;
  - Partnerships being embedded in the delivery of their purpose, with great respect for other NFPs;
  - Partnerships being clearly defined and there is mutual benefit; and
  - There being a 'greater good' element. For example, in 2023, the Riverina School Boys Carnival raised \$12,000 to donate to the local hospital, in addition to distributing funds to all the NFPs involved in the community event, which was held at the June Showgrounds.

### Key learnings:

- Accessing and **leveraging organisations with partnership experience and existing networks, approaches and systems** could support outcomes for collaborative projects.
- Otherwise, **start with building partnership capabilities** as a first step.

## Shared business systems

Leeton Shire Council provides a useful model of how a local council can provide foundational systems support for NFPs to build capacity, especially in their establishment phase.

### Contributors to success:

- Indicators of an effective local government partnership may appear as support at a governance-leadership level. For example, evidence of councillors volunteering and serving on NFP Boards and Committees. For Leeton Council, this is seen as 'fundamental' to the DNA of the community and reflecting their respect for volunteers. This extended to the managerial leadership level, with the General Manager passionate about NFPs. They have a high-risk tolerance for supporting grassroots initiatives with business systems (e.g. providing payroll, insurance, space, auspicing staff and template documents) and financial support (grants, contracting NFPs to deliver essential services, such as a cleaning contract).
- Although some shared systems were effective, such as shared EFTPOS terminals, there was a degree of apprehension, with some organisations not sharing business systems or equipment because of concerns about confidentiality in shared spaces or having specialist equipment and loaned equipment not being returned. There was greater openness to online platforms, such as digital hubs and information databases.

**"We take the burden off Boards and committees, so the NFPs can get on with what they are passionate about."**

Leeton Shire Council

### Key learnings:

- **Sharing pilot learnings with local government** at the program's start and fostering ongoing relations about how their existing systems can be highly supportive for grassroots NFPs could build confidence in these partnerships. Larger NFPs could also serve in a similar way.
- **Understand shared business systems may require partnership confidence and the building of this capability.**



Leeton Multicultural Support Group is supported by Council, who are active in promoting their programs and their operations, including office space at the Visitor Centre and providing payroll services.



## Systems

Where organisations received funding to develop policies and procedures, record keeping systems, IT platforms and information sharing systems, there were significant improvements in internal efficiency, service delivery, business sustainability and a flow-on impact in the community. This is highlighted in the [Junee Community Centre](#) and [Cooinda Court](#) case studies plus examples of collective initiatives include:

- There was a measurable uplift in the use of financial management systems over the life of the IRCF program. Grants supported some organisations with subscriptions to a finance package and, in some locations, funded training for MYOB and Xero.
- Similarly, some practical items of **equipment** became shared resources. For example, the Event trailer owned by Junee Business and Trades is now a fundraising tool for local NFPs. In 2023 a three-year loan system was established, with an MOU as caretaker of the trailer. Riverina Working Equitation (RWE) was the first and can use the trailer at no cost for their own fundraising and can rent it out to other NFPs. The trailer's upkeep is covered under a three-year arrangement with a third-party. The trailer is accessible, as it is based at the showgrounds, and provides a fundraising mechanism. Once RWE's three years expire, a new MOU will be set up with another Junee NFP.
- iPad and EFTPOS terminals purchased for show societies and other NFPs have also meant that these organisations have modernised their systems and can operate far more efficiently. With this, there has been an opportunity for volunteers to increase their skills, leading to increased engagement.



Junee Business and Trades event trailer

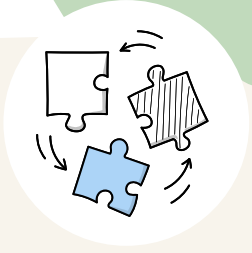
### Contributors to success:

- **Partnership grants** were used effectively to **build foundational systems** in individual organisations.
- Systems-focused initiatives with potential for local NFPs to collaborate can lead to uplift across a number of organisations. Local facilitators and funded liaison officers or coordinators were often well positioned to identify shared needs, to connect organisations that could benefit.
- Identifying accessible storage and the development of policies and procedures for shared resources supported sustainable outcomes. Once again these complementary systems were often supported by local facilitators.

### Key learnings:

- Profiling **examples** of effective systems-focused initiatives funded through the program could increase **understanding** and mindset about systems-based solutions and their ability to improve outcomes in new IRCF communities.
- Offering **financial literacy training** at the start of the program would benefit many NFPs. This would likely increase the confidence of key people to ask critical questions at organisational and contractor level and raise awareness of supportive systems.





## Strategy

### Readiness for strategic planning

Strategic planning tended to happen more successfully later in the program lifecycle. The evaluation identified that organisations needed to mature and, at times, clarify their purpose or deal with internal issues for planning to be effective.

Where organisations received funding to engage professional consulting services, it would have been beneficial to provide brokerage support to increase the likelihood of a quality outcome.

### Contributors to success:

- NFPs that were more sophisticated tended to have plans in place and had improved outcomes from strategic planning.
- Organisations with clarity of purpose and strong unified governance could engage more fully in the program generally.

### Key learnings:

- Find a way, at the start of the program, to **learn about what capacity building expertise is available locally**. Partnering with local business chambers to understand local resourcing could be an efficient approach, as community preference is usually to find local expertise. When it has worked well, this has led to ongoing volunteer mentoring by local consultants as a means of contributing to their community.
- As the program evolved, FRRR increased **its connections to capacity building experts** and is therefore able to broker warm introductions in future. In 2023, FRRR also partnered with The Social Impact Hub to establish [an expertise panel](#) that will assist in connecting NFPs to support SME brokerage.



Nambucca Valley  
Phoenix

# Key learnings

In the following section, we draw insights from the formal evaluation process and our experience to highlight what has made the IRCF model a success and what we might do differently.

## Community selection

NFP organisations need to be ready, willing and able to participate to fully extract value and optimise the investment required to make place-based change. FRRR's selection process involved a mix of desktop research and some limited face-to-face visits to prospective communities. Once communities were shortlisted, they were offered start-up grants.

We have reflected on the process of offering initial grant funding to shortlisted communities through a competitive process. While we encouraged collaborative grant applications, there was an unintended consequence of reinforcing the competitive granting mindset between communities that was not consistent with the intention of the IRCF program and enabling broader systemic changes.

### Key learnings:

- Following robust community research, consider whether an EOI process is the best approach for new IRCF programs. The goal is to include and inform communities of the opportunity, but not burden them. If an EOI process is utilised, ensure communities receive funding to support these efforts.
- Consider facilitated, strengths-focussed conversations or asset mapping to determine if collective capacity building initiatives (e.g. governance workshops) - or start up granting would be appropriate for shortlisted communities.
- From the program's outset, find ways to bring together leaders from within the shortlisted communities. This will foster a strong message of collaborative learning and reinforce they will get the most out of the program if they prioritise engagement and embrace all parts of the program.
- In communications, be mindful of not focussing solely on the funds available, but rather highlighting who the program is best suited to and the required state of readiness for success.

## Longer-term, multi-pronged investment

Multi-year investment helps capacity building flourish. **Time was required for communities to adapt to a different model of capacity building.** When IRCF commenced, some organisations found it difficult to adapt to a funding program that was underpinned by a community development approach rather than the more traditional approach where the funder administers funds and takes a hands-off approach.

The five-year funding commitment from VFFF meant we got to know the groups and could adopt an action learning-style approach to funding - *discussion-application-delivery-reflection-discussion-application*. The NFPs that had the **greatest outcomes from the program** – such as June Community

Centre, Leeton Connect and Mujaay Ganma Foundation are those who took **advantage of the incremental and cyclical funding model**.

The five-year timeframe also allowed some NFPs to think more long-term and **elevate organisational thinking from immediate equipment needs to more strategic capability, although this depends on the key people involved**. At the baseline evaluation in October 2020, some NFPs identified the key project (and / or sub-projects) they wanted to achieve during the program and, over the course of the four years, planned, applied for, received and delivered on these identified projects.

A multi-year program also **recognises the 'seasonal' nature of small NFPs**. Some of the IRCF-funded NFPs had projects developed and championed by a person who subsequently left or there was a significant disruption to the organisation. The longer-term program meant the **project could be picked up and if needed, modified** by the new Board or a new staff member. While the program allowed the accommodation of these ebbs and flows, the **skills of the community facilitators** in helping address immediate challenges often prevented the organisation falling over.

#### Key learnings:

- A place-based capacity building program like IRCF should operate for a minimum of five years.
- The model needs the multiple components of locally-based community facilitators, evaluation, regular funding rounds and flexible granting, as well as the relationship-centred approach.
- Equip local leaders to be advocates and spokespersons to build broader understanding in community.

## Consistent participation

NFPs that **engaged with all aspects of the IRCF model** – i.e. the community roadmap; applied for multiple grants; participated in one or more of the development activities; met regularly with their community facilitator; and participated in all aspects of the evaluation - saw the greatest benefit.

#### Key learning:

- Regularly **encourage community groups to participate in all aspects** of the program, by sharing stories from groups that did so in the pilot.

"Go for it. It has been amazing. We have developed as a community, we're just so much closer as organisations working together. And we've built so much capacity. For example, for local council's recent grant round, 70% of the applicants that were successful were trained by Leeton Connect. So go for it!"

Leeton Connect



Leeton Connect actively embraced all aspects of the IRCF program and reaped benefits.



Community Facilitator Claire and Ron, Leeton Connect Coordinator at the Leeton Evaluation

## Community Facilitators

Throughout the program, NFPs repeatedly identified the **community facilitator role as essential** to their ability to achieve **tailored place-based outcomes**.

The role evolved over the life of the IRCF program but they were always seen as a **neutral coordinator** and, as those in the roles developed understanding of the people, purposes and the individual and shared needs of local NFPs, the community facilitators were well positioned to:

- Enhance program understanding and communications between NFPs, FRRR and IRCF opportunities;
- Accelerate aligned partnerships between NFPs, businesses or consultant contractors and other key stakeholders;
- Share relevant information and resources about grants and training opportunities;
- Support problem solving conversations and give guidance on approaches in areas such as fundraising, business planning, grant writing and funding models, which informed IRCF funding applications; and
- In some communities, be an intermediary between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations.

"They are approachable and nothing is too much trouble. She finds out the info and comes back. They have been pivotal to the success of the program. You can't have two wheels running together without an axle - the facilitator is the axle. The coordinators (community facilitators) have knowledge of what everyone is doing and so can help projects link up and work together, and tailor grant applications."

Cooinda Court Aged Care

### Key learnings:

- Retain an embedded '**connector**' role in each community throughout the life of the program. In recruiting that person, consider the following:
  - **Based in the local community** - with the right skills (most importantly), being easily accessible, and with key local knowledge (key stakeholders, community politics and awareness of social and cultural issues).
  - **A connector** – able to work as **collaborative partner in the delivery of projects**, connecting groups into other opportunities and key contacts.
  - **Culturally competent** - While it is beneficial to have an Indigenous community facilitator in communities with a significant Indigenous population, a person who has the relationships with a community and has strong cultural competency is the key quality, whether the person is Indigenous or not. Nambucca Valley had two facilitators for most of the program – one Indigenous and one not.

Patricia Walker and Nancy Sposato, Nambucca Valley Facilitators



"It's important to have the Gumbaynggirr perspective as well as someone who is more versed in the western system of thinking...The role has broken down barriers between the Aboriginal organisations and between us and non-aboriginal organisations. Brought cultural awareness and sensitivity to work between aboriginal and non-aboriginal organisations. (The non-aboriginal community facilitator) helped break down the barriers and talked about benefits of partnerships."

Mujaay Ganma Foundation



Kate Brabin (top right) working with local leaders at Junee Roadmap review.

## Face-to-face support

The principle of activating local connections and support was critical in delivering a program that involved new approaches and systems. Developing relationships and building trust with members of the partnering NFPs led to improved solutions, although initially it was a challenge as groups sought to “present well” to a potential funder.

The combination of a locally-based and accessible community facilitator, the six-monthly face-to-face evaluation visits and the overall place-based approach meant that **communication with ‘real people’ was seen as a distinguishing feature of FRRR over other funding bodies**. It was essential that NFPs felt comfortable to talk about the problems they were managing. In addition, many of the NFP leaders involved were older and in-person communication was especially valuable for these participants.

Having community facilitators who work locally and have face-to-face encounters also helped us to understand what NFPs are managing. Such support needs to continue throughout the duration of the program and especially in the lead up to program conclusion, as NFPs sought guidance, honesty and support as the program concluded.

In Nambucca some organisations acknowledged *“how important it’s been that she has been on the journey with those organisations, from the start.”* This comment reinforces the importance of a stable and constant force in this role and the ability to have witnessed the growth and development (however small) of the funded organisations.

### Key learnings:

- Mitigate key person risk by ensuring multiple roles at FRRR engage regularly with communities over the life of the program. This will ensure there is consistency through any transitions of personnel.
- As part of the facilitator role, consider how to ensure the functionality of the role can be embedded in community, post program. For example, at June Community Centre, a Community Development Officer role was funded to support ongoing connection between NFPs. The role had success through coordinating working groups to support event management of local events.

**“We felt we were heard and that built our confidence and supported us to continue with what we knew from the ground up was going to work. Instead of trying to meet what was wanted out there, we were able to work with what was needed in here and that was a huge benefit. The ability to actually drop the thinking of how to account for the contingency and allow it to happen and unfold. The relationships - the trust that’s in it - makes such a big difference.”**

Mujaay Ganma Foundation



Mujaay Ganma catching up with FRRR People Portfolio Lead Deb Samuels.



Marketing and social media training was provided for staff and volunteers at Nambucca Valley Youth Services Inc.

## Funding flexibility

Communities move at different paces, but things also happen that affect their ability to deliver and engage, so understanding and flexing accordingly is critical to achieving outcomes. FRRR was able to be responsive and adjust the timing of things like funding applications opening at different times ([see program timeline](#)); extending round closing dates; and altering reporting dates. Where it made sense, variations to the grant's use were also made, so long as NFPs could demonstrate continued alignment to scope. Organisations were grateful for this and one Nambucca funded organisation said, *"IRCF was really mindful of what was happening in the community that could impact on delivery - floods, fires, a death in the community."*

In other places, different needs and opportunities emerged. For example, in Leeton two NFP coaching programs were delivered. The concept was to test a train-the-trainer model, with SEFA training a local facilitator to deliver place-based capacity building activities. Two organisations participated in the pilot and in the second program, the Community Facilitator was trained to deliver coaching to three other Leeton NFPs. SEFA's report showed the value of tailored small group and individual learning opportunities that meet an organisation where it is at, as well as having participants choose the topics they want to focus on. This is important to note in terms of the variety of capacity-building approaches within IRCF and the methods that align with an overall community development methodology.

More broadly, NFPs reported that this funding flexibility was a positive and this principle contributed to the trust FRRR was able to build with communities.

### Key learning:

- Retain as much flexibility as possible in adapting the timing of funding to respond to changing circumstances in community.



## Community roadmapping

Roadmapping is a critical element of the program. This is the initial Nambucca Valley Roadmap.

Developing community roadmaps was a co-design opportunity where communities could identify, describe and document their capability building priorities. The roadmaps identified individual organisational needs and where collaboration might be effective. They were refreshed annually over the duration of the IRCF program at workshops where local NFPs were asked to consider the program's strategic pillars: *people, strategy, systems and efficiencies*. They roadmaps were also used by FRRR **as a guide and as a means of responding flexibly to the needs of community**, using them:

- When community facilitators were engaging with NFPs to provide examples of activities that aligned to the strategic priorities;
- To anchor all levels of community engagement in a collective vision and sense of inclusion, which also strengthened FRRR's ability to maintain neutrality; and
- As a reference to guide the IRCF granting assessment process.

The evaluation identified mixed perceptions from the funded organisations, especially early on, in terms of the community roadmaps' purpose and value.

While it became clearer over time, some uncertainty remained, although other groups noted it as an important community asset they want to maintain independently, post IRCF.

"Not everyone knew about the roadmap or understood the process. It was a really different approach. The language that is used is important - in the community roadmapping some of the terminology used was new (like brainstorming and capacity building). Things need to be described in terms that everyone can understand."



### Key learnings:

- The roadmap should remain as a core element of the program, but careful attention needs to be given to the language used around the tool.
- Share the learning journeys of previous communities to help build understanding and garner buy-in to the roadmapping process.

"We could use the roadmap tool going forward without FRRR. Done by an independent, with no egos involved, it evolved more naturally. Long term we'd like FRRR to assist the roadmap, even when funding stops."

## Collaboration

The first benefit of the IRCF program that was identified by participating NFPs was increased communication between these organisations within their community. NFPs told us that some of the previous siloing dropped away and that they were more likely to contact another organisation to talk about collaborating on a grant, seeking support from each other when preparing grants or talking to other groups about a shared problem.

This outcome is especially pleasing, as the principle of collaboration was layered across all the program features. For example:

- All **IRCF granting** opportunities looked favourably on collaboration. A criterion for Toolbox grants in particular was evidence of collaboration between multiple organisations and/or collective impact, such as multiple organisations participated in training.
- IRCF **roadmapping** consolidated the capacity needs of multiple organisations, providing a way for FRRR and the community to identify shared priorities and potential partnerships.
  - A key role for the **community facilitator** was as a 'connector'.
  - Two elements of **evaluation** deliberately included incidental networking between local NFPs and key stakeholders such as Council, local schools and NGO and Aboriginal Elders in the Nambucca Valley.

IRCF Program Manager Nancy with representatives from the Local News Shared project auspiced by Nambucca Valley Council, a collaboration between three community newsletters to build skills and supportive connections. Elizabeth Bond, far left, supported the process as a project coordinator.



June Community Centre has taken a lead role on behalf of the community on many issues.

### Key learnings:

- **Uphold collaboration as a core principle** but recognise that organisations may need to address internal needs before they can collaborate effectively. Leverage granting as a means of activating this purpose.
- **Support NFPs to develop their skills and capacity to build strong partnerships** (e.g. how to identify aligned and ready partners, setting expectations, maintaining the partnership).
- Encourage participation in networking opportunities. As relationships organically build, organisations can take advantage of Toolbox opportunities and more.
- Seek out and **encourage strong support from the local council** to engage with IRCF to provide support to NFPs where they have capacity (such as providing office spaces at no cost or in exchange for services, auspicing grants, providing staff payroll services).

## Structured evaluation

The primary purpose of the evaluation was to test and learn about the delivery of the IRCF Model, to share learnings and provide a regular feedback loop to support the program's evolution and responsiveness. However, in designing the model, we were highly aware that it also needed to offer added value to NFPs, given the time contribution they would be asked to make. In light of this, we sought to embed multiple benefits and purposes in each evaluation activity.

Several NFPs commented on the value of the evaluation activities as a point of reflection to acknowledge their efforts, celebrate their achievements and identify areas of improvement. Organisations used the [self-assessment survey](#) in their own organisations to measure and monitor their ongoing progress.

**"The evaluation process made us feel quite positive and made us see things we can do."**

**"The evaluation makes us think about what we are doing and improves how we look at how we should be running the place."**

The Community Evaluation Workshop, which took an assets-based approach and was neutrally facilitated, provided an opportunity to reflect on progress collectively and provided peer support.

When organisations were actively delivering on their projects, participation was high. However, maintaining the engagement of all grantees in the evaluation process was a challenge. Some found the requirement to be involved onerous and unnecessary and participated only once or twice. However, most were actively involved throughout.

### Key learnings:

- Continue with a multi-pronged evaluation process and actively communicate the benefits and importance of impact measurement and being involved for the duration.
- Consider a 'five years on' check in to assess the longer-term impacts.



Representatives from Mujaay Ganma Foundation joined FRRR for a panel discussion at the Philanthropy Australia conference in Adelaide.

## Advocacy and confidence

One of the core purposes of IRCF is to increase the capacity of NFPs, so they can advocate for themselves more effectively. In the final evaluation data collections, NFPs were asked if their participation in IRCF had an impact in this regard. Almost all organisations said their confidence to speak up and ask for what they need had increased, as well as increased organisational capacity to advocate for their NFP.

**"Very much so. We have faith in ourselves. Know where we stand and who stands beside you. You are so sure of yourself and the things you have put into place!"**

Cooinda Court Aged Care

**"The Social Impact in the Regions conference helped me to see the big picture. This turbocharged my advocacy efforts. Through hearing leadership experiences that have had profound impacts for communities, I realised the impact I could have through my own leadership. Shortly after the conference, we had the Senate Inquiry into the Comm Bank closure in Junee and I could see the impact that decision would have on my community!"**

Jacqui Stevens, Junee Community Centre

There are examples of organisations stepping up in each community:

- As the program's conclusion approached, there was a change in management at the Juneec Corrective Centre. There was concern that inmates providing unpaid labour support to NFPs and Council through work orders might cease. This was identified as a threat to the NFP sector but is now seen as an opportunity for NFPs to advocate for the contribution made by these programs and ensure that those community participation activities continue under the government contract. It was noted that the NFP sector collaboration and shared voice exists because of the IRCF program, and this has put the community in a strong position to advocate for itself.
- In the Nambucca Valley, the success of ShoreTrack has attracted research councils and universities. These relationships have enabled the organisation to evidence the benefits of flexible, relationship-centred certification training for young people with social and emotional needs and for First Nations trainees.
- The Leeton Multicultural Support Group has developed a direct line of communication with the relevant Minister and themselves to discuss migrants' visa challenges.

From the outset, program participants commented on the positive impact of the investment FRRR was making in each community. The cumulative effect of the program elements contributed to the communities' sense that *"FRRR believes in us and genuinely wants to see us succeed."*

#### Key learnings:

- **Retain a focus on advocacy** as an outcome of the IRCF program.
- **Facilitate opportunities** to support leaders to **practice and build awareness of advocacy** benefits. For example, FRRR supported community groups to attend ChangeFest and The Social Impact in the Regions Conference, where they had the opportunity to speak about their work.
- **Build the capacity of NFPs to work with third parties** such as consultants and contractors.

**"It's nice to have someone who doesn't necessarily belong to the community have faith in our community and give us the confidence to survive. There is a positive feeling in the community that we can do things!"**

Cooinda Court Aged Care



Delegates at Social Impact in the Regions conference

## Donor / community engagement

During the program, donor partners visited Junee, Leeton and the Nambucca Valley. These repeated touch points with the philanthropic sector were based on developing relationships and both parties benefitted. Our partners were able to get a real sense of what place-based solutions look and feel like, while local leaders increased their confidence in leaning into these opportunities.

Mujaay Ganma Foundations' IRCF journey culminated in collaborating with FRRR and our donor partners in a presentation on place-based capacity building at the 2024 Philanthropy Australia Conference. While Mujaay Ganma Foundation was eager to attend the conference to learn more about the philanthropic sector, it also provided a wonderful opportunity for the Foundation to advocate for culturally friendly ways of supporting First Nations organisations.

### Key learnings:

- **Continue regular donor engagement** in future program iterations, recognising that opportunities often take time to emerge.
- Continue to **identify and facilitate appropriate opportunities to elevate grassroots voices** within **influential forums**.



FRRR and VFFF visiting Junee or Leeton - 2021



Reference group visiting ShoreTrack Sept 22

## Communication

As IRCF is a different way of working to most funding programs, it's important that communication is effective, from the outset, to build understanding of what the program involves and expectations to creating excitement at what is possible. While much of the day-to-day communication responsibility rests with the community facilitators, there is more that could be done to support them, to ensure messaging consistency and tailoring of messages and channels to audience preferences.

### Key learnings:

- Continue **face-to-face briefing sessions in community**, especially when launching in new places.
- Ensure communications are **accessible** and explain the benefits and features of the program from the outset, i.e. the value-add of participating in evaluation; the opportunity for incremental strategic growth etc.
- While using digital communication increases efficiency and is appropriate, it is critical to make the effort to regularly engage face-to-face with the people you're supporting, right through until the program's conclusion.
- **Increase communications resourcing** to support program managers and community facilitators to leverage the opportunities that present alongside evaluation findings and create resources that can continually build understanding of capacity building in the wider IRCF community. This may be a **dedicated IRCF team member** (in addition to the program managers) who oversees communications and marketing.
- **Review program terminology** to ensure language clearly references intended meaning. For example, rather than strategic pillars, consider calling strategic NFP capacity building areas.
- Draw on **NFPs who have participated in IRCF as advocates** throughout the program, but especially when launching in a new place.
- While using digital communication increases efficiency and is appropriate, it is critical to make the effort to regularly engage face-to-face with the people you're supporting, right through until the program's conclusion.

Visiting Mujáay Carma Foundation's native garden





Nancy Sposato spoke at Junee's International Women's Day Event.

## Final reflections

Traditionally, philanthropic support for organisational capacity building has been hard to find. The IRCF program has changed that. The program evaluation has confirmed that the IRCF model of providing flexible support and funding to for-purpose / not-for-profit organisations leads to more capable, collaborative and resilient organisations that can effectively advocate for themselves. The model has shown an increase in capacity and capability for the majority of the participating NFPs.

After five years of delivering this program, it is clear that **time, collaboration and connected local leaders** are essential ingredients to success. A relationship-centred approach that includes regular access to people with the right skills, who hold what's best for the broader community at heart builds the trust that is required to support learning and the problem solving, which leads to the most successful capacity building approaches.

Organisational 'seasons' are often where the greatest risks and vulnerabilities lie for small NFPs, and a program that can provide support through these transitions goes a long way towards ongoing sustainability and risk mitigation. This flexibility is also what distinguishes FRRR from other funding bodies.

**Bringing community members together,** with a clear purpose, consistently created beneficial relationship building opportunities and frequently developed into partnerships that generated sector efficiencies. At the end of the program, the desire from NFPs to continue meeting up or to have regular sharing sessions across all the IRCF communities confirms this appetite for connection, sharing and learning with similar organisations.

VFFF's original \$5M was the catalyst for a further circa \$11M in funding in community capacity building, with contributions to subsequent programs resulting in a further \$5.9M invested in the NSW South Coast region, and a recently announced \$5M commitment to roll out IRCF in Victoria.



## The IRCF Legacy

The cumulative effect of the program elements - locally based community facilitators, evaluation, regular funding rounds and flexible granting management with a relationship-centred approach - all contributed to the community confidence and the program's success.

Instilling this belief and the whole of community uplift that the program provides is a wonderful legacy and will fuel momentum for the participating NFPs well beyond the program.

The other drivers of future efforts are the **lifelong learners**, the people who have valued and embraced every opportunity that the program has offered - the local leaders including **community facilitators**. The significant contributions and impacts they have made will inform how FRRR activates this work in other communities.

Another legacy is the increased understanding of philanthropy among many community groups that had not had previous exposure to the sector. Several took proactive steps to engage directly with philanthropists, received funding and establishing ongoing partnerships.

We are also proud of the role the program has played in increasing the resilience of communities. All three communities experienced disaster events - flood, bushfires or COVID - and sometimes all of them. The networks, confidence, skills and capabilities that these communities now have stands them in good stead to withstand all manner of shocks that will no doubt come their way.

"To have someone come in and see you from a completely different aspect and say, I believe that with the right process, we can get you up and running. It's just it's hard to explain that confidence factor, but when someone's got faith in you, you'll do anything!"

Cooinda Court Aged Care



IRCF has helped local groups harness opportunities

FRRR also sees clear evidence of the success of the program in the fact that NFPs in each place are poised to continue to collaborate and improve things for their communities, with a flagship project either in the planning or early delivery stages in each place.

### **Nambucca Valley – Fundraising Collaborative**

A cohort of five organisations funded through the program have developed an exciting partnership aiming to support ongoing capacity building and fundraising for the local NFP sector. Known as The Nambucca Valley Sustainability Collective, they are planning a co-design process supported by Percolab facilitators (formerly Campfire Co-Op) to create a robust decision making framework. The intention of these efforts is to future proof the sector. Scoped concepts include recruitment of a grants officer to develop strategic funding applications and marketing expertise to attract social impact investment to the Nambucca Valley.

### **Leeton – Volunteer Engagement Mentoring Program**

In response to NFPs continuing to grapple with volunteer engagement and retention, there are plans to develop a program that would see people apply to be mentored by an NFP, building their understanding and hopefully becoming involved longer-term. They would receive training, mentoring and guidance. Led by Leeton Business Chamber and supported by leading local organisations, the group hopes to partner with local industry so that the initiative becomes perpetual and supports local NFPs in attracting and retaining volunteers and becomes a source of renewed local leadership.

### **Junee - Inclusive Community Hub**

There was a vision at the start of IRCF for a creating "true hub for the community". This concept has been held through the program by Junee Community Centre, as both the services they provide and those of visiting services from Wagga Wagga could be delivered at the hub. A community Think Tank and Feasibility Study have enabled much-needed conversations within the community and the feasibility study confirmed it as a viable concept. The process highlighted the need and support for a collaborative co-design approach in the development phases, including the engagement of Junee's First Nations peoples. Junee is now moving forward with a clear concept, purpose and steps to support key partnerships and fundraising for the hub to become reality.

In writing this report, our aim was to amplify the conversation about the importance of carefully considered place-based capacity building initiatives. We trust that also provides hope towards finding solutions to the considerable systemic issues that rural and regional communities face and, most importantly, the importance of including local NFPs in decision making.

We welcome the opportunity to explore future collaborations or to simply share more detail about any of the points raised here. If you'd like to know more, please email [info@frrr.org.au](mailto:info@frrr.org.au).

# APPENDICES

## Evaluation framework

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, with data collected and triangulated twice a year, based around an on-site visit to each community in March and October. Other elements of the evaluation framework included:

- 1. Evaluation Induction Process:** Before the first data collection, all participating NFPs were invited to attend via Zoom an induction into the evaluation activities. The induction included an overview of the IRCF Theory of Change, the overall evaluation plan, and the individual data collection tools; and provided an opportunity to meet the evaluation team. It particularly focussed on how to access and complete the on-line self-assessment. The induction was recorded, and the link made available to any organisations or individuals who couldn't attend. An induction was offered and delivered each time new organisations started into the program.

This induction was an essential investment in time at the front end of the evaluation to maximise engagement and participation in the evaluation activities. It was also important as several of the participants weren't familiar with on-line tools and therefore providing this support was a valuable capacity building activity.

- 2. On-line self-assessment survey:** This bespoke survey asked participating organisations to assess where their organisation was placed on a scale of 1-5 in relation to statements aligning to the four IRCF capacity building pillars of People, Strategy, Efficiencies and Systems. The below table shows the areas for consideration in each pillar.

### IRCF Capacity-Building Pillars

People	Strategy	Efficiencies	Systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Governance</li><li>➤ Stakeholder relationships</li><li>➤ IT Confidence</li><li>➤ Volunteers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Mission and Goals</li><li>➤ Organisational Planning Tools and Processes</li><li>➤ Grassroots problem solving in new and different ways, and creativity.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Partnerships with other organisations or programs</li><li>➤ Shared business systems</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Policy and Procedures</li><li>➤ Equipment, machinery, tools to deliver on the organisation's vision</li><li>➤ Financial Management</li></ul>

Organisations were asked to complete and submit the survey prior to the on-site visit. (Ideally, the survey was completed by the Board / Committee or by the Board / Committee and their Manager)

- 3. On-site interview:** Every six months the evaluation team travelled to Junee, Leeton and Nambucca Valley and met with each of the grant recipients for one hour and had two discussions:
  - Discussion 1: *With the provided scores from the self-assessment survey, could they provide the narrative and story behind why they chose the value they did for each area of the survey?*
  - Discussion 2: The evaluation team asked a range of questions relating to their funded project, project success, barriers, next actions, additional funding they were able to leverage etc, plus some feedback on their interactions with FRRR, especially the role of the community facilitators. [Review the full set of questions.](#)

- 4. Community Workshop:** During each on-site visit, a two-hour workshop was facilitated by the evaluation team. It was open to anyone in the local community but particularly targeted local NFPs and community organisations. The workshop's purpose was to provide a lens into the larger NFP sector in their community; explore the conditions and readiness for change; and what was needed for each organisation to move forward with their change and growth aspirations. The workshop was also a tool to explore the state of the not-for-profit sector beyond each organisation.

To help facilitate a change conversation, the Harwood Index: 5 stages of Community Life tool was used in the Community Workshop. The Harwood Index proposes five stages of community life: Waiting Place, Impasse, Catalytic, Growth, and Sustain and Renew. Communities can use the Index as a tool to help determine where they are at in the stages of community life. It is not intended as a scorecard to measure a community's success. Instead, it is designed to be a touchstone for communities as they make decisions about how to move forward. This was the approach taken in the Community Workshops.

Prior to the Workshop, participants were asked to complete a short on-line survey where they rated their community according to the Harwood Index 5 stages. The results were then integrated into the Community Workshop.

For the final data collections in 2023, and in culmination of the IRCF program in December 2023, the Community Workshop was adapted into two parts. Part one was the ongoing use of the Harwood Tool to support a facilitated reflection on community growth and development, while part two involved FRRR presenting proposed culmination activities and end-of-program priorities, which were further explored and tested with workshop participants.

- 5. External Stakeholder Breakfast:** During each site visit, the evaluation team met with 3-10 local stakeholders who knew the community well. The purpose of the external stakeholder breakfast as a data collection tool was to elicit perceptions and feedback from local stakeholders who have no direct involvement with the participating NFPs or their funded IRCF projects. These stakeholders also provide a valuable understanding of the bigger operating environment in which the NFPs are delivering on their purpose.

Stakeholders were asked about their knowledge of the IRCF funded organisations and what they each do; what they believe these organisations need to do to ensure they are sustainable; and how to look after the leaders of these organisations.

- 6. Community Facilitators' Interviews:** The community facilitators employed in each community were interviewed during the data collection visits to each community.
- 7. Community Facilitators' Reports:** Each community facilitator completed a written report on their activity in their community, which was submitted monthly or quarterly through the IRCF evaluation database.
- 8. IRCF Evaluation Database:** The evaluation team built a bespoke database to administer the storage and administration of a number of the data collection tools, specifically the on-line self-assessment surveys, the community facilitators' reports, participating organisational contact details, reports from external stakeholder breakfasts and reports from the Community Workshops.

“(The) process of coming together with other organisations has been beneficial. Evaluation is a good form of reflection. Seeing other organisations reflect is also useful - shows us where we can do better. The Community forum is a neutral space for organisations to come together - people can step back and see things more holistically, instead of just about themselves. Always ready to hear what is going on, not focussed on what you haven't done.”

Mujaay Ganma Foundation

## Participating NFP partner organisations

Participating Organisations by Type	Leeton	Junee	Nambucca	TOTAL
Aged Care and Senior Citizens		2	1	3
Agricultural / Show Societies	1	2		3
Community Centres (Disability / Aged Care / Family Services / Housing / Youth / Social Wellbeing Programs / Digital Access / Multi Cultural Support)	1	1	5	7
Community Power		1		1
Culture, Arts, Tourism, Heritage	2	3	2	7
Education Provider / P&C's	1		1	2
Local Aboriginal Lands Council			1	1
Men's Craft Groups			1	1
Progress Assoc. / Chambers of Commerce	2	1	3	6
Service Clubs (Rotary)	1			1
Social Welfare (Community Chest / Food Pantry / Op Shop)	2			2
Sporting Clubs		1		1
Youth Organisations			2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>37</b>

## The team behind the Program

### IRCF Donor Group & Reference Panel

- Annabel White, FRRR – Panel Chair
- Jenny Wheatley, VFFF
- Emily Fuller, VFFF
- David Hardie, VFFF
- Claire Mannion, VFFF
- Georgina Byron, Snow Foundation
- Megan Parsons, Snow Foundation
- Patrick Moriarty, Strategic Australia
- Matt Linnegar, Australian Rural Leadership Foundation
- Fiona McKenzie, Orange Compass

### FRRR

- Natalie Egleton, CEO
- Deb Samuels, People Portfolio Lead (2022 - present)
- Alli Mudford, People Portfolio Lead (2018 – 2022)
- Nancy Sposato, IRCF Program Manager (June, Leeton & Nambucca) 2021-2024

### IRCF Community Facilitators

- Kate Brabin (June & Leeton 2021 – 2024)
- Claire Williams (Leeton 2020 – 2022)
- Cahli Wall (June 2020 – 2021)
- Nancy Sposato (Nambucca Valley 2020-2021)
- Patricia Walker (Nambucca Valley First Nations 2020 –2023)
- Ali Buckley (Nambucca Valley 2021 – 2022)

## Projects activated

Organisation	Project	Grant & Date Awarded
<b>Nambucca Valley</b>		
Alithia Inc.	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 Aboriginal Corporation	Strengthen organisational capacity by developing systems, leadership and governance structures.	\$30,290 Aug 2020
Lifetime Connect Incorporated	Build community networks and organisational capacity across the Nambucca Valley.	\$60,000 Aug 2019
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Lifetime Connect Incorporated	Develop governance and fundraising capability for the Nambucca Valley NFP Collective to sustainably support the sector into the future.	\$60,627 Aug 2024
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
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Mujaay Ganma Foundation Aboriginal Corporation	Three representatives from the Mujaay Ganma Foundation will attend the Philanthropy Australia conference to advocate for culturally friendly funding approaches and to increase their knowledge of the philanthropy sector to support local fundraising.	\$6,001 Jul 2024
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

## Projects activated

Organisation	Project	Grant & Date Awarded
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
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
ShoreTrack Ltd	Professional development opportunity for four delegates to attend the Social Impact in the Regions Conference; offering learning and networking to strengthen current and future initiatives for the Nambucca Valley NFP sector.	\$2,567 Aug 2023
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
<b>Leeton</b>		
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



## Projects activated

Organisation	Project	Grant & Date Awarded
Leeton Connect Inc.	Consolidate strategic objectives through grants support coordination.	\$56,570 Nov 2022
Leeton JumpStart Fund Incorporated	Employ a coordinator to build capacity and support volunteers and NFPs.	\$44,718 Dec 2021
Leeton JumpStart Fund Incorporated	Build organisational capacity and upskill volunteers.	\$38,980 Nov 2022
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Leeton JumpStart Fund Incorporated	Professional development opportunity for a Leeton delegate to attend the Social Impact in the Regions Conference; offering learning and networking to strengthen current and future initiatives for the Leeton NFP sector.	\$2,575 Aug 2023
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
<b>Junee</b>		
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 Regional Heritage Transport Assoc. Junee Inc.	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
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

## Projects activated

Organisation	Project	Grant & Date Awarded
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
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Junee Community Centre Inc.	Support the organisation to build on the work implemented by IRCF over the life of the program through the employment of a Community Development Officer and an IClick2Learn membership.	\$23,695 Aug 2023
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Junee Community Centre Inc.	Professional development opportunity for two Junee delegates to attend the Social Impact in the Regions Conference; offering learning and networking to strengthen current and future initiatives for the Junee NFP sector.	\$4,826 Aug 2023
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Junee Community Centre Inc.	Leadership development opportunity for JCC Centre Manager to participate in ChangeFest 2024; strengthening current and future initiatives for the Junee NFP sector through exposure to learning resources, networking and sharing of their IRCF successes story.	\$2,195 Mar 2024
Collaborative Toolbox Projects Junee Community Centre Inc.	Embedding collaboration and co-design practices in leading Junee organisations to develop a shared language of working together towards effective and positive community engagement well into the future.	\$4,475 May 2024
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

DYNAMIC GROUPS,

FACILITATION

INSPIRED BY  
COUNTRY

PM

FUN +  
JOYFUL

PROCESSES

WHY ARE MEETING  
BORING?

A FEELING OF  
BELONGING

EM

TOOLBOX

ETHICS AND  
PRINCIPLES

*↓ values,  
getting needs  
met*

A SHARED  
STORY  
OF WH

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