



FRRR

Foundation for Rural
Regional Renewal

Junee

Data Collection # 5

November 2022

Investing in Rural Community Futures

Overview

By November 2022 all ten Junee funding participants had completed or were in the process of completing a number of their grants. A new round (Round 3 Partnership Grants) of successful grants was announced for four Junee organisations in November 2022. One of these was the June Show Society however due to timing they are not included in the November evaluation data collection. For all organisations, they were able to articulate the impact of their IRCF grants at a more detailed level while also considering how the momentum established in Junee can be maintained beyond December 2023 when IRCF concludes.

Despite volunteer levels not recovering to pre-Covid levels, there is a heightened level of activity and energy in Junee amongst most participating organisations. Fuelling this energy appears to be the increased collaboration and communication between community organisations participating in IRCF and the community more broadly.

The Junee Community Workshop held on 16th November had attracted a staff member from Marathon Health (not involved in IRCF) who was keen to be involved in the collaboration taking place. In addition, a workshop participant identified that outsiders could see changes in Junee. While there is increased interagency collaboration and community connectedness, several organisations are still struggling with internal capacity (ie, too much reliance on one person), a non-functioning Board, or a business model which is not sustainable. There is ongoing internal work still to be done.

The significant changes identified by the participating organisations to date range from increased collaboration between organisations to a general increase in community spirit, to increased service delivery, business sustainability, volunteer levels and access to community venues. A sample of these are captured below:

- *Increased awareness and increased communication between all service providers in town. This has markedly increased service delivery - we aren't doubling up; we are working collaboratively.*
- *There's a renewed sense of hope in our community. The community is more positive - there's a positive vibe. This could be because of the networking. The positive vibe attracts different people to be involved and to move to the area. Some organisations like JBT were in a bit of the doldrums. They've now revitalised and that's impacted other organisations. The funding of the community liaison position has been a success - he has been networking, has a lot of expertise and enthusiasm. All of this has a flow on effect to the positivity of the community.*



- *The energy in the community has increased - there's a real buzz and community spirit has returned. During Covid there wasn't as much interaction between people and that really impacted energy levels.*
- *It's helped a lot of NFP organisations survive. We would not have survived. It would have been years down the track to get things done. FRRR grants that have come into Junee would have slowly folded or just kept going. The JCC... with their grants they have been able to help a lot more in the community. We've been able to give a lot more social activity... we would have battled on... the way that FRRR have shown themselves and the people who have come in have helped people. There are a lot of senior citizens in Junee. In 2022 we did a bus trip with 40 seniors..... we got 30 of them to become new members. We have to try and find other things to bring to other people.*
- *(It's) Definitely been the volunteer participation in the place, it has increased. Perhaps the change in the organisation's structure has happened at the same time. For the Mosaic (database) people seeing that there was a big difference in what we had before and what we have now. It improved the confidence that people have had to operate in the space.*
- *The Community Centre, they have been helped financially by the energy savings they are making which has given them greater stability to be ongoing and to keep that organisation going so it can assist this community and the other communities they are helping. The Senior Citizens Hall, the building, has been made sound again and will bring it forward for another 40-50 years, which would not have happened if it wasn't for the intervention, because of the amenity provided now in the hall, people are using it from different organisations and for longer periods of time.*

Grants Development Officer, Nicholas Pyers was asked what he thought were the most significant changes to date for Junee- see in this video:

<https://vimeo.com/user112240275/nicholasjune>

There are two data collection rounds remaining for IRCF and it will be significant in terms of the on-going impact of the funding in Junee, to see how organisations use this increased capability in communication and collaboration to build a sustainable working together mechanism which suits their own needs.

It is noted that the Stakeholder Breakfasts were not held in any of the three communities or data collection # 5. It was considered not essential to hold this for this round of data collection, but will resume for data collection in #6 planned for May 2022.

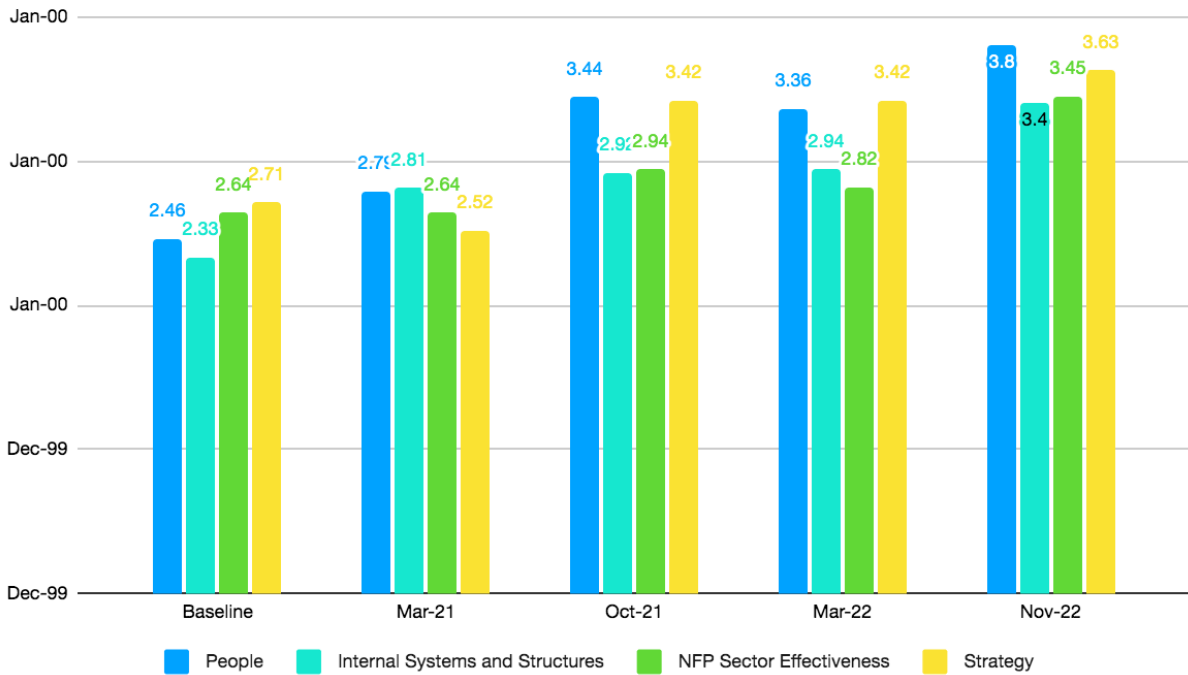




**Progress Against Pillars compared to baseline
October 2020 (Baseline) – November 2022**

Average of responses from self-assessment survey completed by all participating NFPs in Junee

JUNEE PROGRESS AGAINST IRCF PILLARS
Nov 22



As part of this evaluation, the change and impact on the capacity and sustainability of the individual NFP organisations involved in the program is being measured by using a series of tools. One of these tools is an organisational self-assessment for committees to collectively discuss the current health of their organisation. It was designed specifically for the program looking at the four pillars of People, Systems, Efficiencies, Strategy. The assessment measures each pillar using a five-point scale out of 12 areas of organisational competency, giving organisations a score out of 60. We use an average of this score across the funded organisations to monitor the overall health of these organisations and to track any impacts the program may have. All funded organisations take part in the self-assessment.

Areas of greatest capacity building need:

In the lead up to the exit of IRCF from Junee, the most common response from NFPs about how to manage the exit featured maintaining the Grants Development Officer role embedded at JBT which has been held continuously by Nicholas Pyers. Organisations made comments such as:

Don't exit!! Nicholas Pyres seems to be our communicator here in Junee. Nicholas should be the person we should be speaking to, to see about grants. We should all band together and see how we can survive post FRRR....Other grants are available but we don't hear about them.... should let the council know about this. There should be a big forum to sort this out and show our appreciation. It has made a big difference.

Having Nicholas in the connector role, sitting in the role and if he can be financed that would be great

In reflecting on the Most Significant Change people noted, **increased communication and collaboration**







(willingness to work together) between services, a mechanism for feedback support for grant / submission/ potential projects: ongoing mechanisms to maintain these impacts seems sensible. For Junee that seems to be the provision of an ongoing community level grants development/support role but also a neutral party/ies who can maintain exchange of communication, information and interagency collaboration. A mechanism to maintain a Roadmap type process annually was also suggested. The purpose of this was to maintain that shared community communication/collaboration tool and be a focus of bringing organisations together on a semi-regular basis. This may also address the Historical Society’s suggestion of an annual Event Planning Day. Further investment in or support for Community Facilitator type role or Grants Officer role would seem to have high ROI and sustainability of organisational growth identified to date.

Strengthening governance practices in line with the current capabilities of Board/Committee members and supporting Boards/ Committee in **managing key person risk** would be the other two areas where increased capacity building would have value in Junee. There are a number of organisations such as the Senior Citizens and Fat Lamb where foundational corporate governance isn’t as strong as it needs to be to ensure sustainability. Even though Junee Community Power has strong and capable Board members, they did note in this data collection period, they were struggling to attract new members and once the current projects are complete and IRCF cease, additional members will be required to source new revenue sources to grow the organisation beyond the current partnerships. Key person risk exists with the ‘Roundhouse’ (Regional Heritage Transport Association), Junee Senior Citizens and the Junee Historical Society. Succession planning or at least strategic conversation would be valuable to ensure current momentum and leadership isn’t lost.

A recommendation suggested by Natalie from JBT as part of the exit from IRCF that there be a **forum where the community organisations from both Junee and Leeton come together, the networking with the other groups; all the Leeton people come over on the bus to Junee and the reverse. (JBT) Junee has stuff it can share.** There is an opportunity to build on the increased openness for communication and collaboration within each community to be extended to strengthen *inter-community* communication and collaboration.

Results at November 2022

This section reports on the evaluation Theory of Change against the four strategic pillars - People, Systems, Efficiencies and Strategy.

<p style="text-align: center;">People</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">PEOPLE</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Systems</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">SYSTEMS</p>
<p>Governance</p> <p>There is a mix of capabilities across the organisations. Five felt that their Board members knew their roles and responsibilities and five were having discussions about succession planning. Some boards were doing governance training, some not. One NFP said their Board had disengaged and that they needed a leader and someone with time, energy and drive to get the organisation back on track.</p>	<p>Policy and Procedures</p> <p>Seven of the ten NFP said they either have a full set of policies or have the required policies in place.</p> <p>Equipment, machinery, tools to deliver on the organisation’s vision</p> <p>Most organisations say they have the equipment they need, some lend out equipment, some don’t. Five NFPs say they have an Assets Register.</p>





**Stakeholder Engagement/
Collaboration**

Like the other communities there were high levels of collaborations with five NFPs saying they are collaborating with others. Six NFP said they had active partnerships in place.

Junee Historical Society felt it would be valuable to have an annual event planning session where all the NFPs could gather together and plan out the year so they can coordinate dates, volunteers, resources marketing etc.

**Confidence with using computers/
internet**

Six of the ten Junee organisations said that there is high level IT skills and confidence across staff and Board. For one NFP, there is no IT capacity and they rely on another NFP for computer access and support. One also noted that the increased use of video conferencing during Covid has continued their use of IT and video conferencing in meetings etc. For one NFP their IRCF funding was for a POS and IT upgrade and it had a hugely positive effect on their staff and organisation.

Use of volunteers

Many groups noted that their volunteers work across many other NFPs in Junee- this is good in terms of networking potential- although one Board member said she goes to other NFP meetings but in a private capacity, not representing her own NFP- but not good in terms of volunteer fatigue. Four NFPs said that volunteers were central to their program delivery. There is some mentoring/ induction support being provided but not in every case. At some organisations with a set range of tasks to do (ie Senior Citizens morning tea) people say they just tell people what to do. The Senior Citizens did not do that, they 'should write it down'.


Financial Management

Five of the ten NFP's use volunteers (Board members or other volunteers) to manage their finances. The majority also use cloud-based (MYOB/Xero) software systems. Two NFPs use Excel to manage financials and one organisation is not currently active and has no financial activity.





Efficiencies



Partnerships with other organisations or programs

Four NFP noted active partnerships in place with other organisations with two noting MOUs in place.

Shared Business Systems

Nicholas (based with JBT) was noted by two NFP as the resource they shared with others- by way of admin support and grant application support. Other business systems/ items shared include equipment, admin support, mailing lists, communication platform.

Strategy



Mission and Goals

All but one said they know what their Mission is and their current goals even if they may not have it written down. Three felt that their goals were known and recognised by the community at large.

Organisational Planning Tools and Processes

Three NFPs said they don't have a current strategic plan, three said they have a multi-year strategic plan and one said their plan was outdated, one said they were developing a marketing and fundraising plan.

Grassroots problem solving in new and different ways and creativity

Two organisations said they felt they were functioning like positive 'ambassadors' for their community.

