



FRRR
Foundation for Rural
Regional Renewal

Nambucca Valley

Data Collection # 5

November 2022

Investing in Rural Community Futures

Overview

By November 2022 all fifteen Nambucca Valley 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 Nambucca Valley organisations in November 2022. One of these was Bowraville Communication Technology Centre Incorporated, however due to timing they are not included in the November evaluation data collection.

The **benefits of a long-term funding program and accompanying evaluation process** were seen in this data collection period. The journey (ups and downs) that a NFP can go on over a four-year period is able to be captured in this longer time frame and as such provide valuable data and learnings. For example, one organisation has had a tumultuous time over the last three years and appear to have come out stronger than ever, with a strong Committee clearer and more confident about their roles and responsibilities as Committee members. Similarly, another organisation has shifted focus and moved into a period of pause while suitable funding is sourced. Due to this pause, they did not complete a self-assessment in this data collection.

A dominant theme from this data collection across the Nambucca Valley organisations was the **high number of project and program-based partnerships**. Nine said they had multiple partnerships, with four saying these partnerships are core to their purpose. This is significant for these organisations, when considering at the start of the IRCF, a key quality of the Nambucca cohort was organisational siloing, suspicion and an absence of functional collaboration and communication. The focus in IRCF on partnering, sharing, networking, and planning collaboration certainly landed in Nambucca. For Nambucca the IRCF funded *Sisters Together* collaboration between Mimi, Unkya, Jaanymili and Muurbay (and their female leadership) has also created an energy within Aboriginal organisations which is being noticed and noted as a positive move by other organisations. The evaluation also heard feedback from Aboriginal led non-profits of better working relationships and practices with non- Aboriginal non-profits.

More functional partnerships is described here well by Jaanymili,

There are better partnerships and collaborations between organisations in the community. We share a lot of our resources now. We used to be in competition with each other, but now we all talk more to each other. When there's funding and it's not our core business, we send the information to other organisations. We didn't do that before. When the Valley Hub was started a group of us aboriginal women came together and worked on it. We wouldn't have done that before - it was really satisfying. (Jaanymili)





The significant changes identified by the participating organisations to date range from increased collaborations and functional community meetings, changed mindset about Valley organisations and increased visibility of the Valley Hub. Further detail is captured in the following selected comments;

- *Developing relationships with other NFPs through community meetings. Collaborations have been built with NFPs that have similar values and purpose. We are doing a partnership project with the Valley Hub and because of that we now promote them in the community as well. (Shoretrack)*
- *Changing people's mindset; having an open mind on how we can all be connected and have a shared vision. We had tunnel vision before and were focusing on how we could survive. Now we are connecting automatically to each other and helping. We are checking in on each other to see how we are travelling as individual women. (Jaanyмили)*
- *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 people which were sorely needed. (Mujaay Ganma)*
- *When the program first started it was really exciting. We all came together to meet and learn about what other organisations are in the area and what they do. It sometimes feels that we are invisible in the Valley. FRRR brought people from the indigenous and non-indigenous communities together. If they hadn't started the conversation, it wouldn't have happened. The community hub - you can get on there and see who is doing what. It helps us find local people to employ. The community newsletter has been another great change - it comes every week. It's created relationships between that organisation and us. It's given people a reason to drop in. (Murbay)*
- *Us remaining open has had a positive impact on the community. We've been able to keep collaborating and building a better future for the Bowraville community. Phoenix is seen as a 'go to' organisation in Bowraville. People want to come into the community to run meetings etc so we are seen as a gateway and a local meeting place. There is a support network of providers who help each other and give one another advice. It's a group of women leaders. (Nambucca Valley Phoenix)*

Significant changes from IRCF across the Nambucca Valley have been captured well in this video clip from an interview with Shoretrack: <https://vimeo.com/user112240275/shoretrack>

There are two data collection rounds remaining for IRCF and it will be important to see if unresolved community issues can be resolved by program close and; the level and way in which Valley Hub is embraced to provide the required ongoing support for these organisations.

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.

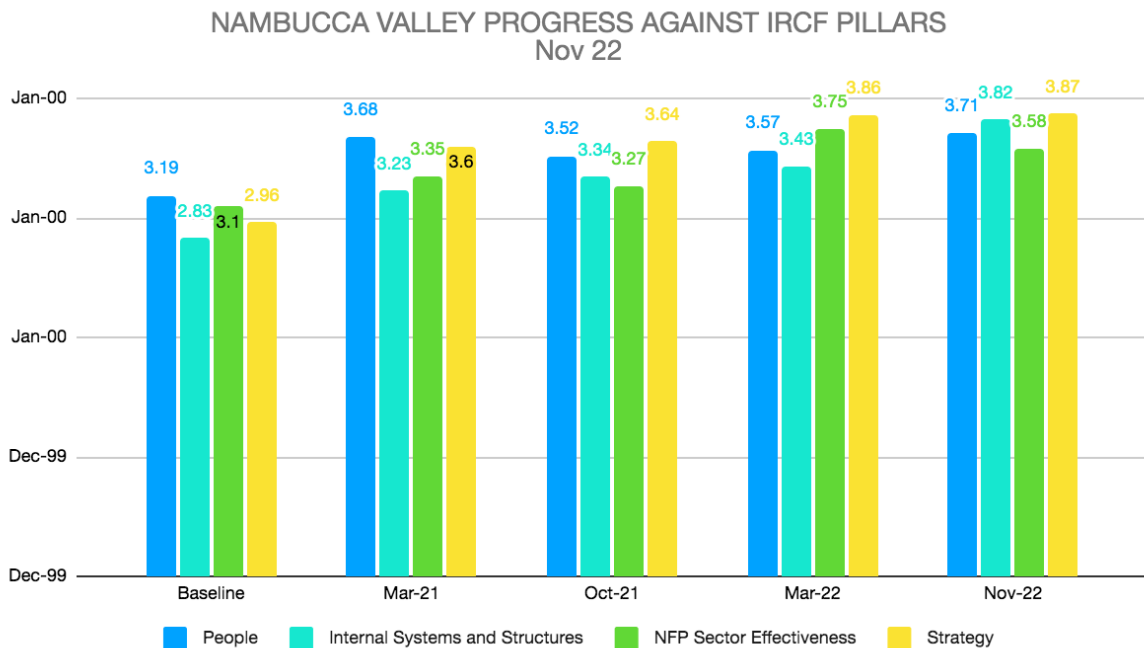
Progress Against Pillars compared to baseline





October 2020 (Baseline) – November 2022

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



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:

Participating non-profits were directly asked in data collection five what they needed to transition out of the program when the IRCF wraps up at the end of 2023 and what role they saw the Community Facilitator playing in the exit. Organisations provided a lot of suggestions, a representative sample is provided below:

- *Need to maintain the momentum. It's easy to get people involved when funding is available. Having a grant writer would be really helpful. Grant writing is hard, particularly for people who don't have great writing skills. Grant writing is a skill set. A grant writer could help write grants or even just look over the applications.*
- *In the last year there needs to be more contact with organisations, maybe have some group sessions to bring people together. Let us give updates on what we've achieved. I don't know what others have done - it would be good to hear that.*





- *More strategic planning at organisational and community level is needed. Support around accessing funds in the future but not at the expense of learning how to become sustainable and independent of grants. There is a lot of reliance on grants. There is a need to diversify the way organisations get financial support; sponsorships or partnerships with businesses who have money and would benefit from collaborating. The community can feel valued from what they do and the business also benefits. It would be good to get support with this.*
- *Focus more on the concrete than the philosophical - what has been done and achieved, and what still needs to be done and how gaps can be filled.*
- *FRRR needs to bring everyone to the table to confront and resolve the issues. By coming into the community, there's some accountability on them. We want them to raise the issues that have been identified through the project. The community roadmap has identified opportunities but we need to identify the roadblocks. There aren't the skills or the trust to facilitate those really hard conversations that need to happen. We feel FRRR is accountable to facilitate these, given they came here and started the conversation in the first place. We need to talk about how we are going to work together, how we are going to deal with the history that is here, and how we can deal with roadblocks on our roadmap.*

A main message from Nambucca as it steps towards transition is a **desire to come together in a facilitated setting/ forum** to talk through difficult community level conversations as well as plan the exit and provide key project updates as part of that.

The evaluation also heard that a supported exit from IRCF would include **pathways and information relating to non IRCF and non-grant funding**, not just a handover to another hub-like organisation. This was seen as a key role of the Community Facilitator.

Other than the preparation for the conclusion of IRCF, **the second area of need continued to be Board succession planning, Board engagement and core governance practices.** It's curious that a real strength of the Nambucca organisations is the ability to build and sustain partnerships and attract volunteers for program delivery but struggle with Board member engagement. It prompts the question, is there any opportunity for a collective conversation/ sharing/ capacity building process where the partnerships come together and discuss shared board members, and shared internal knowledge about attracting Board members? Are there some good news stories which could be shared from Boards who have strong boards and are willing to share learnings?



This data collection also emphasised the need for another round of **foundational governance refresher** training which is tailored to organisational capacity and with a focus on risk in the context of governance and board responsibilities. Also requested from the Valley has been a **leadership mentoring program within the community, with a focus on women.**





Results as 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>Board governance continues to be at varied levels of capacity. At least four NFPs said they were struggling with Board engagement and one said they were finding it hard to attract new members. When asked about succession, three said they found this difficult and needed to work on it. One said they did regular board training and three did no board training.</p> <p>Stakeholder Engagement / Collaboration</p> <p>There were high levels of collaboration mentioned with six saying they had active partnerships in place and three with formal MOU's. Several noted that there had been an increase in collaborations and partnerships in the last two years and a real acknowledgement of the value of working together.</p> <p>Confidence with using computers / internet</p> <p>Most NFPs (10) felt they had high levels of IT skill within the organisation. Six said they worked across multiple platforms and at least three were maintaining their own websites.</p> <p>Use of volunteers</p> <p>The state of volunteering was quite positive; three said they had a volunteer induction process, three had volunteer Position Descriptions, four had informal volunteer processes and two had a more formal volunteer mentoring process. One NFP said they hadn't been able to get volunteers involved but would like to. Three NFPs use volunteers to manage the finances.</p>	<p>Policy and Procedures</p> <p>10 NFPs said they had a 'full set' of policies, with one saying they were building their policies from scratch.</p> <p>Equipment, machinery, tools to deliver on the organisation's vision</p> <p>12 NFPs said they have the equipment they need to deliver on their vision, eight have an asset register. Four said they loan their equipment to others.</p> <p>Financial Management</p> <p>Cloud based software MYOB and Xero is used by eight NFP with one using a paper-based ledger. Most said they presented financial reports (in some form) at the board meetings.</p>





Efficiencies



Partnerships with other organisations or programs

In line with the response to stakeholder engagement, nine NFP said they had multiple partnerships and four said that partnerships were central to their purpose. One noted that the local council were key to their sustainability.

Shared Business Systems

The sharing of systems is diverse across all the participating NFPs: two said they shared a communication platform, six shared equipment, two shared admin, two shared training, seven shared spaces.

Strategy



Mission and Goals

As has been consistent throughout data collection, all NFPs believed they were clear about their mission and purpose with eight saying they thought their stakeholders were clear on their goals. Five said they had a formal strategic plan in place, while one said they don't have their mission written down.

Organisational Planning Tools and Processes

Several said they often discuss their goals at committee level, one has a goal setting template. Two are developing a fundraising strategy.

Grassroots problem solving in new and different ways and creativity

Nearly all NFP felt their work accurately reflected the communities they represented, one noting they 'were a voice for their community'.

