

WMLIG Community Foundation

COUNCIL NAME

Murray River Council

WEB ADDRESS

<https://www.murrayriver.nsw.gov.au/Home>

SIZE

11,865 square kilometres

POPULATION

12,000

Overview of the project

In 2020, MRC developed an [Adverse Event Plan](#) (AEP) via input from the local community to prepare for and recover from the impact of adverse events – be it drought, flood, fire or pandemic. To support the AEP, Western Murray Land Improvement Group (WMLIG) has developed a Community Foundation Scoping Document and Business Plan funded by Murray River Council's (MRC) through the [Building Our Communities in Advance](#) Project.

The project builds on resilience principles of the AEP, which states the need to **'plan in the good times to be prepared for the bad times'**, **'support continuous learning and improvement'**, and prepare for a **'community led recovery'**.

It is envisioned a Community Foundation would provide ongoing funding to build the capacity of the community to prepare for 'chronic stresses' and 'episodic shocks'. Chronic stresses are slow moving stresses such as drought or the effects of National water reform processes on irrigation dependent communities (a regionally specific issue) that weaken the community on a day to day, or cyclical basis. Episodic shocks are sudden, short-term events that threaten a community such as fires and floods. A Community Foundation would enable funds to expediently hit the ground to support self-reliance and a community-led recovery from the impact of an adverse event.

The Community Foundation Scoping Document provides an overview of the structure of community foundations, governance models, current NSW resilience policies, and University of Sydney modelling and overarching general themes that were stated as community desires for the development of community foundations.

How the project was carried out

A literature review was conducted to inform the Community Foundation Scoping Document. Considerations arising out of the Scoping document were incorporated into the Community Foundation Business Plan.

Outcomes now and in the future

Current opportunity:

WMLIG has included the Community Foundation opportunity in the 10 year MRC Community Strategic Plan for consideration to support an establishment resource in future funding programs.

Opportunities moving forward:

It is proposed that a 'two-entity' governance model is established in the future. WMLIG would provide the overarching governance and administrative support for an independent Community Foundation that develops its own business structure, mission and governance. This separate community-led entity (Community Foundation or Co-operative) could broaden community programs wider than WMLIG mission in supporting NRM, sustainable agriculture and community capacity building outcomes. WMLIG however is scoping social enterprises that can provide funding to the Community Foundation, as well as for existing Landcare focused activities. WMLIG can convene action-oriented groups, remove barriers and prevent duplication and assist with economic, social, cultural and environmental development funding.

In the future, WMLIG would welcome funding (estimated cost \$80,000) to establish and support a skilled working party that would examine the most appropriate legal entity for a Community Foundation – one that can deliver on a determined mission and publicly agreed goals. The working group would aim to have



REFERENCES

WMLIG Community Foundation Scoping Document.

developed a full business plan, including funding options, within this timeframe and be in a position to hold its first Annual General Meeting.

WMLIG would support the Community Foundation to:

- Establish a five member interim working group (recruited using a skills-based process) for a set period of time while further community consultation is undertaken. This could be from:
 - a member from WMLIG – bringing community knowledge and data capture; strategic planning; business planning; governance expertise; administrative support; geographic and demographic knowledge; understanding of the philanthropic grant process; and ability to access a range of vital networks.
 - a member of the business community – whether from the small to medium business sector; industrial, retail, finance/banking sector, or legal with business planning expertise.
 - a member representative of the general community with a track record of working in community organisations that represent and understand a range of community stakeholders; is governance-trained; understands the need for efficient systems; and has a demonstrable communications network.
 - a member or members who can represent the major stakeholders – agriculture, the environment, and/or Traditional Owners, for example.
- Conduct expressions of interest for a fully constituted Board would be invited and put to the vote.
- Support the appointment of an independent Chair.

Once a Community Foundation is established, there is potential for “themed sub working groups” to define, develop and combine project concepts. This will create a need to re-engage volunteers post COVID pandemic with a strategic campaign.

Benefits and lessons learned

With a clear business plan, the most effective and skilled governance structure in place; an in-depth understanding of its mission and community demographics; a consultation process that has already determined priorities and can continue to do so; and strong risk management (to prepare for chronic stresses and episodic shocks); such a foundation could be positioned to be a key player in community resilience-building and growth. It is planned that the foundation would have reserve funds ready to hit the ground to support self-reliance and a community-led recovery in an adverse event.



Critical to the fundamental role in building and strengthening communities are volunteers. During the COVID-19 pandemic there has been an estimated reduction of at least 45% in volunteer availability nationwide. A regionally focused re-engagement campaign to set up a community foundation could provide the opportunity to attract volunteers back where their input can be demonstrated as having an important impact on a holistic, democratic approach to community program funding, wealth building, resilience building, recovery, and a hands-on role in the community's future.

Another consideration post COVID is the amount of urban people moving to the region for a sea change. People have a range of different backgrounds, skills, knowledge and perspective and are seeking new social and professional networks. Involvement in a Community Foundation provides these opportunities.

More information

Contact

Name: Roger Knight
Position: Executive Officer
Phone: 03 5453 1577
Email: admin@wmlig.org