

Case Study

Supporting Babana Aboriginal Men's Group



Background

Babana Aboriginal Men's Group is a non-profit organisation which supports both Indigenous and non-Indigenous males to improve their lives which allows them to provide a better future for their families and their communities. Established in 2005 as a result of conflict between the Redfern police and the Aboriginal community due to the death of a young Aboriginal boy, Babana provides a 'safe' place for men to discuss their issues with 'family' or community in an environment which is supportive, culturally appropriate, and non-judgmental.

Babana members meet on the last Friday of each month at the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence in Redfern to discuss issues, followed by a free BBQ. Every Sunday morning, members also meet at an agreed location to 'walk' as a group to improve their health and also talk about anything at all that comes to mind. Breakfast is provided by Babana and is also supported by the police commander for Redfern.

Babana also partner with service providers to deliver health and wellbeing programs, such as Medicare, tobacco control, and all Area Health services. When Jawun first connected with Babana in March 2010, the major issue they had to resolve was to have their own premise or office, or in men's group terms, a "shed".

Approach

Mark Spinks, the chairman of Babana was one of the key community members skeptical of the Jawun program entering the Redfern community.

"I wanted to know what their 'real' motive was for doing this. Are they milking us for our information to use for themselves? I was very wary." – Mark Spinks, Babana Chairman

It was clear early on, that Jawun needed to build trust with Babana and respond to their priorities. Babana had limited resources and no government funding with all staff members being voluntary.. A 'Men's Shed' was only one of many issues Babana faced at the time. However, to build trust with Mark, it was agreed that the Premises Proposal would be the first brief for Babana and Jawun. KPMG who was also supporting 2 other Redfern community organisations through Jawun, quickly found a suitable candidate to support Babana in Lloyd Williams, Associate Director, Real Estate Advisory Services, KPMG.

“This proposal document established the trust early with Jawun and KPMG to give us the confidence to continue in a more strategic direction.” – Mark Spinks, Babana Chairman

With trust established, and an effective premises proposal completed, Babana was ready to tackle other strategic and operational issues regarding the sustainability of their organisation. A brief was provided to KPMG and Brian McIver, an expert in risk management and project management, was matched to conduct the strategic planning workshop and compile the plan.

Brian’s focus was to assess Babana’s current position, their role in the community, and compile a document which outlined Babana’s achievements, and the partnerships they have nurtured. In addition to this, he work-shopped the future strategic plan for Babana and began mapping out Babana’s intended programs and activities for each year.

Following on from the development of Babana’s strategic plan, KPMG provided Greg Stinson, Audit Manager, KPMG, to work on a 12 month operations plan for Babana, which focused on governance support, creating systems for monthly executive meetings and men’s group meetings, and a more detailed plan of activities. KPMG Assistant Audit Manager, Joe Wheeler was brought in for short time to help complete the project.

As Babana was gaining more confidence in their direction and internal governance, so too were external partners and potential funding partners. An employment placement contract was offered to Babana and discussions were proceeding with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council regarding the lease of one of their properties for the Babana ‘Men’s Shed’. James Mabbott, a KPMG Business Development Manager was allocated to support Babana through this important phase of its development. During his secondment, James managed to secure the support of Allens Arthur Robinson lawyers who provided pro bono advice on a DEEWR funding contract and the Metropolitan Land Council’s Lease/License Agreement. This proved to be a valuable secondment and now Babana have their first government funding grant, and also now have their ‘Men’s Shed’. James also assisted with the physical move into the new space.

Another secondee placed in Redfern at the same time as James was Patrick O’Hehir, an Area Manager with Bunnings, who was placed with Tribal Warrior Association. Patrick had been following James’ work with Babana and offered to take a look to see if there was anything Bunnings could do to assist. Patrick introduced James and Mark to the Store Manager of Bunnings Mascot, Diane Armstrong, and on the spot Diane agreed to renovate the Babana shed free of charge. This included an welcoming new courtyard and the promise to paint the interior of the property.

“When I started with Babana Aboriginal Men’s Group we had no home and no employees. At the end of my secondment we had managed to secure a premises for the men so Babana now has a home. At the same time DEEWR provided funding for an Aboriginal Employment Mentor to enable Babana to have a full-time employee. It’s been a great experience to work with Babana because I just know that with these two small steps we have the position to really build on the already great work we do” – James Mabbott, Business Development Manager, KPMG

“I wish we could have kept James! We got so much out of him in such a short time. Even after he finished he stills rings and emails me to see how we are going.” – Mark Spinks, Babana Chairman

Outcomes

Babana Aboriginal Men's Group has achieved 3 major outcomes in the past 2 years with their involvement with Jawun.

1. The First Ever Babana Aboriginal Men's Group "Shed"

The Men's Shed and the newly renovated courtyard provides a space for the Men's Group to move forward in their engagement with stakeholders and provides a safe environment for the men to visit on a daily basis. In the past 3 months since August 2011, Babana now utilize the courtyard as a catalyst for bringing people together.

2. Government funding via the Indigenous Employment Program (IEP)

The DEEWR funding will continue depending on Babana's success in placing people into employment.

3. A KPMG staff member is now the Treasurer of Babana Aboriginal Men's Group

KPMG Accountant Peter Hosier is now Babana's treasurer due to a discussion between KPMG's Catherine Hunter and Mark Spinks. Peter takes over from Babana member Don Clark who unfortunately fell ill and has resigned from the position.

"Collectively I think Babana has been helped to make a huge leap forward, and many of the goals it set for itself it has achieved. I'm sure KPMG helped and the Jawun program much more so, but I wouldn't want to take away from the fact that Babana did this and they should take pride in their achievement rather than anyone else being credited for it." –Brian McIver, KPMG

Next Steps

Babana is now in a fantastic position to focus on their fundraising. They have plans in place for their activities, programs, partner organisations and have an office space and culturally appropriate meeting place to conduct business, something which was only a dream 2 years ago. Mark also has a great relationship with Ebony Allen, who coordinates secondees on behalf of KPMG. Babana also now supports Jawun Director Brad Cooke by providing an office space to conduct Jawun business.

"My current feelings towards Jawun, KPMG, and other potential corporate partners are extremely positive, and I am encouraged by these relationships and believe it will lead to Babana becoming more proactive in strengthening our communities and families." – Mark Spinks, Babana Chairman