

Case Study

KPMG Supports Empowered Communities in Goulburn Murray



Background

The Kaiela Institute is an Indigenous policy and leadership organisation based on Yorta Yorta country. For nearly two decades the Institute and its predecessor have supported a sustainable and engaged Indigenous community through empowerment of family and youth.

Empowered Communities was launched at Garma Festival in 2013. With bipartisan federal political support, including funding of \$5 million, Empowered Communities aims to empower Indigenous people in eight regions across Australia to develop their own plans for change, in partnership with governments and the community sector. Responsibility for developing the new model is the joint effort of Indigenous leaders from the eight regions, with the Kaiela Institute the lead organisation for the Goulburn Murray (Yorta Yorta) area.

Approach

From late 2013–2014, the Kaiela Institute engaged Jawun to source three consecutive secondees from KPMG to support the Empowered Communities initiative from a Goulburn Murray perspective. Rick Garotti, Phillip Chan and Ben Tan were all management consultants with expertise in public policy, governance, community consultation, change management and project management.

Rick, the first of the three, built initial awareness and momentum for Empowered Communities with community leaders and government stakeholders. Phil joined the region in early 2014 for nine months, continuing the setup work, supporting the Institute's policy leadership agenda and collaboration across the eight regions involved in Empowered Communities. Ben was seconded for four months in mid-2014 during the governance design phase. Over twelve months, the three secondees were involved in a number of projects to progress Empowered Communities.

Stakeholder engagement

The secondees assisted the Executive Chairman of the Institute and the Empowered Communities Regional Coordinator to engage with Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members, non-government organisations (NGOs), corporate partners and government representatives to build support for Empowered Communities. This included organising presentations, meetings and community gatherings, and drafting communications materials including a prospectus, slide deck and letters. These activities aimed to build awareness and generate support of Empowered Communities across the local community, government and businesses.

These activities culminated in the annual Dungala Kaiela Oration, held by the Kaiela Institute. The oration celebrates Indigenous cultural identity, creates a shared vision for the people of the greater Goulburn Valley, and builds relationships to promote Indigenous social and economic development. This year's oration was delivered by Noel Pearson, focusing on the Empowered Communities journey on Yorta Yorta country and next steps for the initiative. KPMG secondees successfully led the management of this event.

Collaboration

Throughout the three secondments, KPMG secondees contributed to the cross-regional collaboration integral to Empowered Communities, by:

- Developing case studies that capture best practices and success stories of the region's organisations;
- KPMG secondees worked with the Empowered Communities secondees from other regions to share lessons learnt through implementation, with secondees from other regions.

Service mapping

KPMG secondees developed a comprehensive map of all government and NGO services delivered for the Indigenous community in the region. This exercise identified gaps and overlaps in service delivery. This information will inform the work of the future Empowered Communities governance body in developing strategic priorities and action plans.

Regional scorecard development

The secondees also developed a 'scorecard' in the region, measuring progress against a range of indicators, including education, health, housing and economic development. Secondees developed an analytical framework and oversaw the work of four interns from Melbourne University in collecting data and completing the scorecard. This supported the development of a baseline of indicators against which future Empowered Communities progress can be measured.

Governance design

KPMG secondees coordinated the community-led design process for an Empowered Communities governance model. Firstly, the secondees coordinated a pair of two-day gatherings bringing together around 50 community leaders to conceptualise and debate the Empowered Communities model for the Goulburn Murray. These Indigenous-led discussions produced a vision for the future of the community, a draft set of regional priorities, a governance structure to drive and monitor progress against those priorities. KPMG secondees also coordinated a community working group which was created from the first gathering and supported the community engagement in the design process.

A key role of the secondees was to capture the ideas, principles and objectives expressed at those gatherings in a proposal as part of the national Empowered Communities design report to the Australian Government. The community working group then endorsed the final proposal for submission to government.

Draft opt-in agreement

Using the information from community gatherings and leveraging work by other regions, the secondees developed a draft opt-in agreement for Indigenous organisations to support as part of the regional governance structure. This opt-in agreement outlined the roles and responsibilities of each party including: decision making processes; the opt-in criteria; dispute resolution; and expectations for each party. The eight potential opt-in organisations in the Goulburn Murray are currently in negotiations.

Outcomes

The real benefit of the Empowered Communities project, which the secondees helped with, has been to support the Indigenous community to agree on how they want to work together. It has provided a catalyst for a new mode of collaboration, coordinated action and accountability amongst the coalition of Indigenous organisations involved.

Paul Briggs, Executive Chairman at the Kaiela Institute explains, *"Quality of life, longer life expectancy, and good outcomes in our community about what Aboriginal people can reasonably aspire to in living in a place like Shepparton along the Murray River, they're the sort of things that this should be able to influence."*

A rigorously designed governance structure leveraging past experience and grounded in the history and culture of the Yorta Yorta people supports the Empowered Communities initiative from a Goulburn Murray perspective. Secondees also supported a knowledge-building agenda capturing important information about the community and the NGOs delivering services in the region; this is crucial information to inform strategic decisions.

Finally, the significant stakeholder engagement means there are regional champions for Empowered Communities across government, business and the local community.

The KPMG secondees provided key support for the Kaiela Institute's agenda during the preparation and design phase of this initiative. Without this support, with only limited resources the Institute would have struggled to coordinate community collaboration, and take the first critical steps towards providing constructive support to Empowered Communities.

Next steps

The Yorta Yorta community is ready for the next phase of Empowered Communities. The governance structure proposal has been signed off by the community working group and is currently with the Australian Government for consideration. The draft opt-in agreement is being considered by the community partner organisations in the Goulburn Murray region with a view to finalising an agreement in the coming months.

The next phase of Empowered Communities will be to implement the proposed governance structure for the Goulburn Murray. This will require renewed efforts to bring the eight Indigenous organisations together and maintain community momentum. It will also require the setup of operations of the new governance structure, including determining the budget for any new secretariat operations. KPMG is keen to continue to support and build the capacity of the Institute in leading this work, ultimately towards the goals and vision of the Yorta Yorta people.