

Case Study

Reshaping the Future for Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation



Background

Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation (NAC) is a community organisation which builds capacity of Indigenous communities and individuals in the Dampier Peninsula, north of Broome in the West Kimberley. Driven by an Indigenous membership, in 1993 Nirrumbuk was incorporated as a Community Development and Employment Program (CDEP) provider for communities and outstations in the region, and has since evolved to provide a variety of services including: employment, training, municipal services, environmental health, construction, youth services and counselling.

Nirrumbuk, through its directors, members and staff, plays a major role in Indigenous affairs in key Kimberley Indigenous regional bodies in health, employment, law, culture and native title. From initially serving the Dampier Peninsula, Nirrumbuk now has a footprint across both the East and West Kimberley.

Similar to many Indigenous organisations, Nirrumbuk faces resourcing challenges. The current Chief Executive Officer, Joe Grande, for example, is also the Chief Financial Officer, HR Officer, website manager and general trouble shooter for the 117 staff. While focussed on delivering services, the organisation has had limited time to establish the long-term strategic vision of Nirrumbuk.

In April 2014, Nirrumbuk requested Jawun secondee support in an assessment of the finance unit and creation of a marketing strategy to enhance Nirrumbuk's profile. Gary Woods, a Senior Credit Manager with a background in credit lending and economics, and Kim Davis, a Channel and Change Management consultant with experience in change management and marketing, both from National Australia Bank (NAB), were sourced to support this project.

Approach

As the first Jawun secondees placed in the organisation, Gary and Kim made efforts to develop strong relationships with staff, some of whom seemed to have doubts about how people from a bank could add value to their organisation.

After speaking with staff and management, the secondees realised while the finance and marketing projects were important, there was an unresolved issue of 10 years that required attention. Nirrumbuk owned three properties in Broome, purchased using government funds in the mid-1990s. As per the policy at the time, the properties had a caveat attached to them which meant they could not be used as security for a bank loan.

Gary and Kim researched options for removal of the caveat, drafted correspondence to the funding body (Prime Minister and Cabinet, Indigenous Affairs) submitting it in the first week of their secondment. These efforts by the secondees helped to build a strong relationship with Nirrumbuk staff from the beginning.

Gary then worked on a detailed overview of the business, making recommendations for growth and identifying the lack of a current strategic plan as a key issue. Kim reviewed Nirrumbuk's marketing activities, highlighting areas requiring new collateral and drafting a suite of materials for use. She also recommended that refreshing the Nirrumbuk website should be a priority.

Gary and Kim's work provided a strong foundation for future Jawun secondments. In August 2014, Sharon Sims, Head of Model Monitoring and Governance at NAB, worked with the different business arms of Nirrumbuk to update the strategic plan, liaising with the CEO to present it in a suitable format for the board. During Sharon's secondment, the Australian Government announced the Indigenous Advancement Strategy funding, so she examined the requirements and prepared the first draft of a submission. She also compiled an evaluation of the Forrest Review, so the organisation was informed about the recommendations of the report, in the event they were implemented.

In November 2014, in line with the new strategic plan, Nirrumbuk prioritised: a financial analysis of one of its business arms, a review of the processes of the financial division and the design and build of a new Nirrumbuk website. Mariah McTigue from KPMG, Assistant Manager of the Audit division, and Chris Beresford, a Marketing Leader from Suncorp with a background in web design, were selected to complete the briefs.

While undertaking the financial review of a Nirrumbuk business, Mariah made recommendations for a submission to SupplyNation to ensure the Nirrumbuk's building enterprises are recognised as leading Indigenous suppliers.

Chris quickly identified significant work was required on the branding of the organisation before the new website project could commence. He examined Nirrumbuk's branding across a range of mediums and areas of the business and compiled guidelines to ensure continuity. Once this work was complete, he drafted content for the new website, engaging the services of a designer on a pro bono basis and securing a web developer at a significantly reduced rate.

Outcomes

As Nirrumbuk's exposure to each secondee grew, so did the appreciation of the value of the expertise and resources accessible through Jawun. Often new tasks were added to the secondees' scope once the Nirrumbuk management understood their skillset. Indeed, all the secondees provided assistance beyond their briefs, such as: financial literacy training for departmental heads, identifying a lack of internal communication tools and outlining the need for a data strategy so organisation could better measure their impact.

In the six months since the first secondees were deployed to Nirrumbuk these tangible outcomes have been achieved:

- Successful application for the removal of caveat from three Nirrumbuk-owned properties so they could be used as collateral for loans
- Six draft brochures produced and redesign of the annual report template
- Preparation of a draft funding submission for the Indigenous Advancement Strategy
- Evaluation of the Forrest Review, which assessed which recommendations affected Nirrumbuk
- New strategic plan signed off by the Board and now being implemented with support from Jawun secondees
- Recommendations for financial efficiencies and areas for growth signed off by the Board
- Brand refreshed and aligned across all mediums and business arms of the organisation, and brand guidelines produced to ensure future continuity
- New website design and development completed, with an estimated saving of \$50,000 through sourcing pro bono and discounted services
- Mini websites create for four of Nirrumbuk's business arms.

Although these outcomes are positive for Nirrumbuk, another significant result of these secondments is the strength of the relationships that have been established. This enduring partnership will enable Nirrumbuk to accelerate their development in the near and distant future.

Jo Grande, CEO of Nirrumbuk, explains the value that secondees have added: *"We are glad we have participated in this process, secondees provide very useful information and a fresh set of eyes on the operations of Nirrumbuk. Their feedback on improving the culture of the organisation will be very useful in making positive change."*

“Sharon provided fresh and different points of view on a number of areas not previously considered. She was very dedicated in obtaining and presenting information that was useful contributing to strategic planning and other projects, presenting the information in PowerPoint format which made it easier for the Board Members to interpret and make informed decisions.”