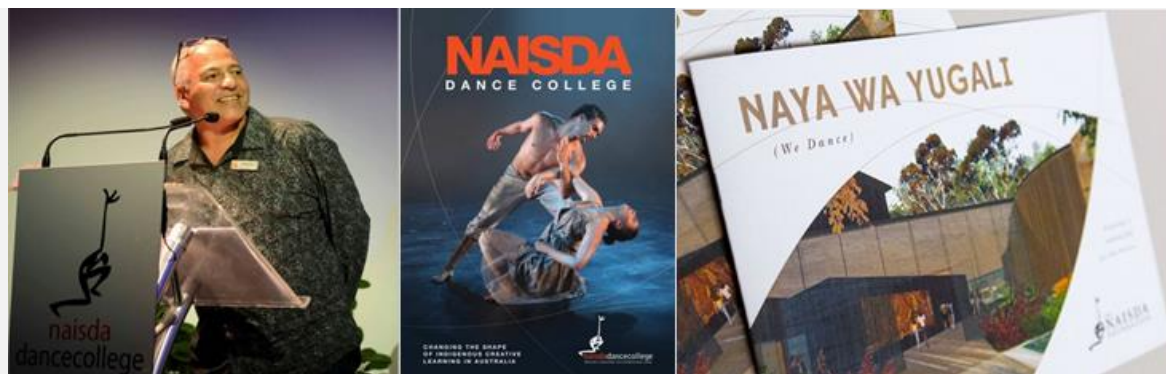


Case Study – strengthening Indigenous organisations



NAISDA's Kim Walker and plans for Naya Wa Yugali

NAISDA: Measuring Value as Social Return on Investment (SROI)

Background

NAISDA is Australia's premier dance training college for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander young people. Since 1976 it has provided accredited training in cultural and contemporary dance, as well as other disciplines related to the performing arts. NAISDA is a modern and dynamic organisation and the training it offers is based on rich cultural connection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of learning, living and respect for Country. A cultural residency at NAISDA transforms the Developing Artists (students) as individuals, and contributes to successive generations of culturally proud and skilled Indigenous artists who shape the ongoing cultural development of Australia.

Jawun has partnered with NAISDA since 2012. Jawun secondees have supported NAISDA's growth and development by building capacity in marketing, finance, IT, business strategy and organisational policy.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is an internationally recognised approach for understanding and measuring the impacts of a program or organisation from the perspective of material stakeholders. A monetary figure is used as a proxy to represent the value of outcomes that they experience. Historically, NAISDA has been underfunded when compared with other mainstream arts training organisations in Australia. NAISDA saw the need to benchmark itself and began considering SROI as a measurement tool in 2014, working with Westpac secondee Mikkal Sveum and Suncorp secondee Greg Conyngham on the initial concept.

SROI became critical when plans for NAISDA's most financially ambitious project to date were announced in 2016. The proposed Naya Wa Yugali centre ("we dance" in Darkinjung language) will be a gathering place where Indigenous artists from across the world can meet and exchange ideas, knowledge and skills; a learning hub, offering a unique understanding of the development of Australian and international contemporary Indigenous dance for Australian students and arts practitioners. It will enable a broad range of courses including stage management, design and music composition and it will host a professional company on site.

A series of Jawun secondees – in particular Leigh Wilkinson (Westpac), Caroline Mason (Telstra), and Tanya Sargeant, Heath Rosen, Stephen Tierney (APS – Defence) – worked on defining the scope of the project and on developing a financial strategy to enable the purchase of the land and to underpin the long term financial stability of Naya Wa Yugali. This work identified the need to unlock significantly more funding for the development than had been secured up to that point.

Approach

2017 saw the SROI project start in earnest, linked to efforts to raise funds for the Naya Wa Yugali centre based on evidence of NAISDA's impact. Sequential secondments throughout the year brought a diverse set of skills to bear. The approach adopted by NAISDA incorporated the following work.

1. Boundary setting and impact mapping

First, secondee Bernadette Valenzuela (Westpac) did the ground work for a data-led research and scoping process. In close consultation with the NAISDA team, she identified key stakeholders and

developed engagement strategies for collecting the data. She identified the outcomes relevant to the key stakeholder groups and appropriate arts industry, education sector and indigenous benchmarks.

Bernadette brought significant soft skills to the project, laying the foundations for a culture of transparency, introspection and adaption that would be fundamental to the success of this long-term collaborative project. Frequent and regular stand-up meetings became a hallmark of the project. These meetings, along with regular collaborative working sessions, ensured that knowledge was shared across the organisation. Through these activities, secondees and NAISDA staff could collaborate effectively and NAISDA leadership had visibility on the work and could provide input when required.

2. Collecting data to define and inform outcomes

Following this, secondees Richard Connolly (Westpac) and Erin Flynn (NSW Govt) worked closely with the NAISDA team to refine and deepen understanding of the key stakeholder groups.

Secondee Josephine Ogle (IAG) then shared her expertise in the tools and techniques of Human Centred Design in the process. Her work, particularly the stakeholder interviews and the development of personas and human-centred design work, was completed concurrently with the data analysis and put a human face on the statistics.

This extensive stakeholder analysis and data collection process was key to the final SROI Report and included:

- Developing and distributing surveys to current and former developing artists, their families, homestay families and NAISDA staff seeking feedback on their NAISDA experiences and how NAISDA contributed to their personal and professional development
- Conducting group focus sessions
- Interviewing people from across the key groups individually

Through Richard, Erin and Josephine's detailed work, NAISDA has come to appreciate the full impact of focusing on SROI and how it will lead to a deeper, more effective mode of engagement with the people NAISDA directly affects.

3. Modelling and calculating outcome values

Analysing the collected data, Richard and Erin were able to identify and quantify the findings in a way that would stand up under detailed scrutiny.

As a senior account manager with BT Financial, Richard brought a thorough and rigorous approach to establishing the monetary proxy that is the basis of SROI. Using his professional network, Richard was able to bring in extra resources and collaborate with previous Westpac secondees who continued to show an interest in the project and a commitment to its success.

Erin's fluency with the language of government, her expertise in policy development and her focus on maximising value to the community significantly influenced the final outcomes of the work. As well as putting together the final report, Erin produced documentation and a detailed but accessible case study that will enable other organisations to benefit directly from the work undertaken for the NAISDA SROI project.

Outcomes

NAISDA now has a solid benchmark for the value it provides. This will form the basis of Naya Wa Yugali and other future funding applications, contributing directly to the organisation's plans for expansion, and be added to the NAISDA strategic plan. It will indicate the economic and social value created by NAISDA.

There are plans for NAISDA's SROI experience to be expanded through The Barang Regional Alliance of which NAISDA is a member. This will support local decision making by creating an evidence base to support community priorities around initiatives that add cultural and social value for the Indigenous community. SROI is an emerging field in Australian performing arts organisations and for all services supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and as a result NAISDA's work is paving the way for others. As Erin said in her final report:

"Indigenous organisations are the engines driving change in community. They activate economic and social development, deliver culturally appropriate services, and create jobs for Indigenous people."

NAISDA's experience successfully quantifying and documenting SROI will serve as a blueprint for other organisations."

The contribution of all Jawun secondees who worked on the NAISDA SROI project has ensured that this will indeed be the case. NAISDA CEO Kim Walker has already been able to use the report's findings to articulate the organisation's value to government:

"This work meant I was able to go to government and make an economic argument for the rationale of arts training. We always talked about the benefit and the value for community but it was always a stumbling block when it came to finance. We hadn't been able to show the big picture even though it's very relevant, including to COAG Close the Gap targets.

This work has also helped us see the breadth of NAISDA's reach, which we hadn't done before, and show a strategic direction for the organisation's future – including its expansion through Naya Wa Yugali."

Next Steps

The SROI report is currently with KPMG who are conducting an assurance review as part of their commitment to NAISDA. Once confirmed, the SROI will be a key plank in efforts to gain support for Naya Wa Yugali, and ultimately NAISDA's future development and expansion.

Surveys and analysis will continue so as to ensure that SROI is accurate and valuable into the future.

NAISDA and Jawun will be working with the Empowered Communities alliance members on the Central Coast and nationally to develop their capacity to quantify SROI.

Due to time and resource constraints, some key stakeholders were analysed in more detail than others. Subsequent SROI analysis for NAISDA will extend to include the groups not yet surveyed in depth.

This is the beginning of a new conversation for NAISDA. An opportunity to significantly mature outcome measurement, to quantify and convert intangible value and make real robust growth.

The SROI report will solidify the position of NAISDA in the national and international Indigenous performing arts and training sector and support the organisation's exciting plans for a centre that will significantly strengthen development opportunities for Indigenous artists.

Naya Wa Yugali - we dance!