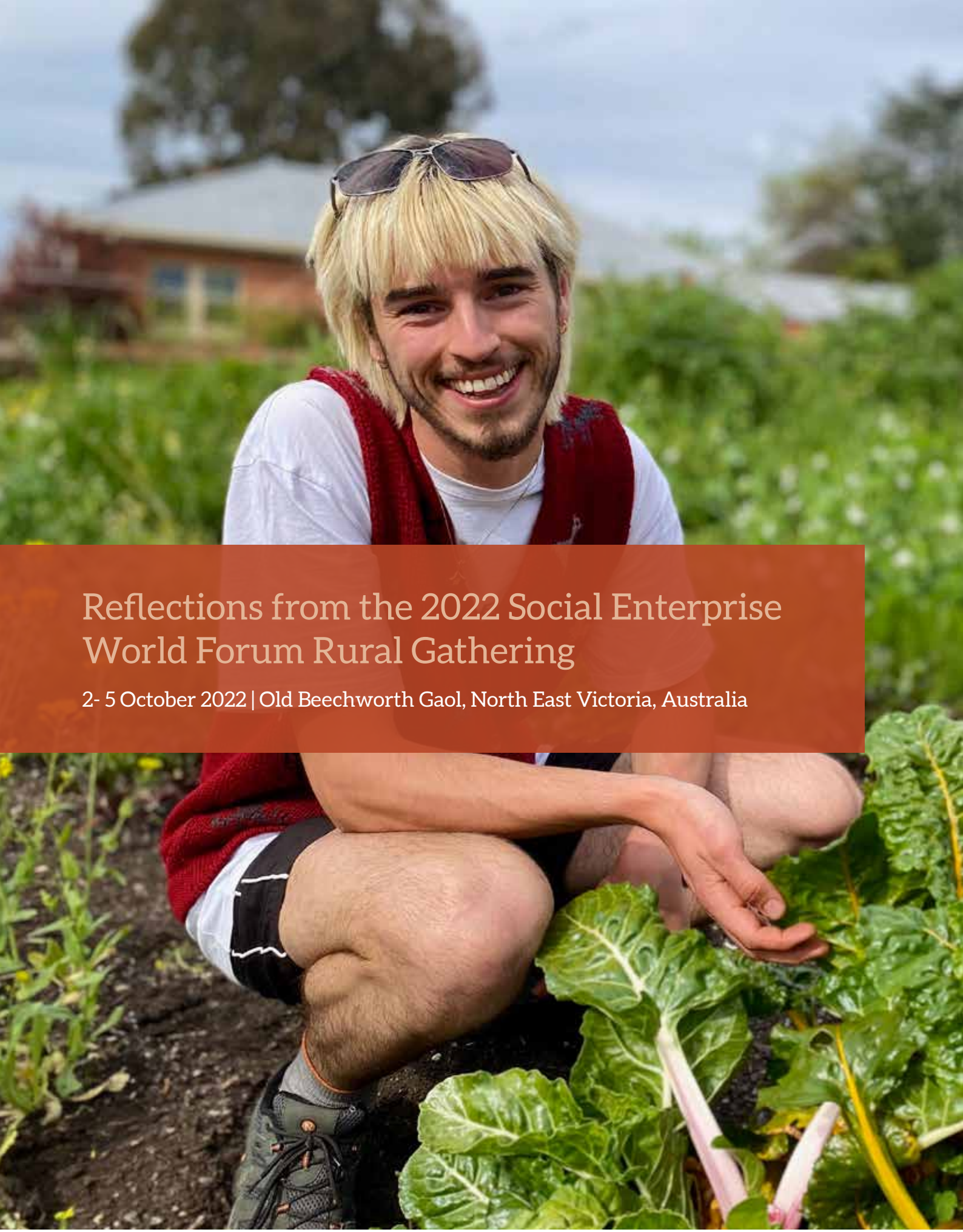

Reflections from the 2022 Social Enterprise World Forum Rural Gathering

2- 5 October 2022 | Old Beechworth Gaol, North East Victoria, Australia

HOSTED BY ACRE Thriving Rural Futures · Social Enterprise World Forum

KEY PARTNER Bendigo Bank

SUPPORTED BY Victoria Australia · FRRR Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal

Accelerating opportunities for rural communities seeking a new furture

Rural communities across the globe are seeking to address complex issues and create new opportunities.

The 2022 Social Enterprise World Forum Rural Gathering explored and unearthed ways to support and accelerate community-led rejuvenation approaches in rural Australia and internationally.

The central theme of the Rural Gathering was *'community-led rejuvenation through social enterprise.'*

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Executive summary

- The 2022 Social Enterprise World Forum Rural Gathering presented an exciting opportunity to accelerate change for rural communities.
- Held for the first time in the Southern Hemisphere, the Rural Gathering took place in North East Victoria – a rural region that is a hot bed for social enterprise in Australia.
- From 2-5 October 2022, social enterprise practitioners, policy makers, and impact investors explored and unearthed ways to accelerate community-led rejuvenation opportunities for rural Australia and internationally.

Background

Established in 2008, Social Enterprise World Forum is the flagship event for the global social enterprise community, providing space for purpose-led people, policymakers, philanthropists, intermediaries and entrepreneurs to connect, learn and be inspired.

Each year, Social Enterprise World Forum moves around the world to offer delegates challenging, topical programs featuring local, national and international expertise.

Australia hosted the 2022 Social Enterprise World Forum.

The opportunity for rural communities

Hosted by ACRE (Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship) in association with Social Enterprise World Forum 2022, the Rural Gathering took place in North East Victoria – a rural region that is a hot bed for social enterprise in Australia.

More than 120 social enterprise founders, policy makers and impact investors drawn from rural and remote Australia, Canada, Scotland, Ireland and India participated. During the Rural Gathering participants explore and identified critical ingredients for accelerating community led rejuvenation in a rural setting.

This report provides an overview of the Rural Gathering programmatic approach. It also includes a synthesis of approaches and insights generated during 'deep dive' discussions focussed on these core themes:

- **Impact investments rural style**: methods, models and mechanisms
- **First Nations practice:** sharing and learning from Traditional Owners
- **Network entrepreneurship:** the role of intermediaries and impact networks for collective action in rural communities
- **Tourism-led community initiatives and buy backs:** solving local issues and creating catalytic impacts in rural communities

Rural Gathering supporters

Bendigo Bank was the key partner of the Rural Gathering. The event was also supported by the Victorian Government and FRRR (Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal) who enabled the attendance of delegates from bushfire impacted communities across Australia. Westpac Foundation, the East Gippsland Community Foundation and Paul Ramsay Foundations provided additional bursary support.

Next steps

The Rural Gathering incorporated development of a manifesto for influencing and accelerating community-led rejuvenation policies and approaches in rural communities across the globe.

In late 2022 ACRE honoured a commitment to finalise the Manifesto on behalf of participants by preparing a 'first cut' that identifies universal principles and synthesises conversations and contributions collected during the Rural Gathering. ACRE then hosted a series of virtual conversations to invite feedback and ideas. ACRE will convene an international working group to finesse and release a final version of the Manifesto prior to Social Enterprise World Forum 2023 in the Netherlands.

Understanding the needs of rural communities

Although rural areas contain most of the planet's natural capital, many people who live in rural communities face the reality of significantly poorer education and health outcomes, higher unemployment rates and growing digital disadvantage.

(Source: 2021 World Social Report, published by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs).

- 80 per cent of people who live below the poverty line globally live in rural areas.
- Approximately one-fifth of rural people live in extreme poverty – a rate that is four times higher than for the urban population.
- The growing risk of severe weather events – droughts, flood and bushfire – is having a disproportionate and demoralising effect on rural economies.

The transformational impact of community-led responses

The answer to rural decline is not more government intervention.

The key lies in developing a 'whole-of-community' entrepreneurship ecosystem that backs community-led rejuvenation.

Increasingly rural communities want to create place-based solutions that will foster more dynamic local economies and create opportunities for young people.

Social enterprise is often a starting point for addressing service gaps and creating market opportunities that would not exist otherwise. By pursuing double or triple bottom line results, social enterprises and social entrepreneurs act as change agents, gradually shifting a local economy toward one that promotes sustainability and broadly shared benefits.

In the early 1990s remote and rural communities in Scotland, Canada and India that were experiencing structural change and depopulation started transforming to thriving and resilient using the business model of social enterprise.

The 2022 Rural Gathering offered participants diverse, dynamic and deep opportunities to explore the central theme of community-led rejuvenation through social enterprise, with a focus on developing enterprise capabilities in the next generation, learning from First Nations people, building networks and the enabling role of government and philanthropy.

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The Rural Gathering program (2 – 5 October 2022)

- The Rural Gathering program incorporated an immersive field trip across North East Victoria to meet founders of diverse and vibrant rural social enterprises that are solving local issues and creating opportunities.
- Immersive field trip participants were later invited to share back insights at a Rural Gathering Forum that brought together Australian and international social enterprise policymakers and practitioners, impact investors, philanthropy and government.
- The Forum culminated with development of a Manifesto to identify core principles, policies, approaches and models for accelerating community-led rejuvenation in a rural setting.

The objectives of the 2022 Rural Gathering were

- **Knowledge:** Building understanding and recognition of social enterprise as a lever for community-led rejuvenation in rural communities.
- **Know-how:** Influencing and accelerating community-led rejuvenation policies and approaches via development of a Manifesto.
- **Networks:** Developing a collaborative network to foster community-led rejuvenation models internationally.

The Rural Gathering program offered participants multiple opportunities to explore local and international models and best practice approaches to community-led rejuvenation through social enterprise in a rural setting.

The event incorporated an immersive field trip, Social Enterprise Schools showcase and market day, interactive workshops, Q&A with panel members and development of a Manifesto.

Key stages

The Rural Gathering program commenced with a Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony at Old Beechworth Gaol – a site that is being re-purposed as an exemplar of social enterprise, impact investment and rural rejuvenation through community-owned assets.

A group of Australian and international social enterprise practitioners and policy makers then joined a two day immersive field trip across North East Victoria to meet founders and visit vibrant rural social enterprises, including Indigenous and student-led enterprises. The group visited Yackandandah, Corryong, and Bright.

The next stage of the Rural Gathering program brought together some of the world's most experienced and effective social enterprise policymakers and practitioners with philanthropy and government. Participants attended a dinner with keynote speakers and entertainment, followed by a one day networking forum session at Old Beechworth Gaol. Significantly, young social entrepreneurs also took centre during this stage of the landmark international social enterprise gathering.

With the support of Social Enterprise Academy (ACRE's learning and development partner), primary and secondary students organised and hosted a Social Enterprise Schools* market day during the Rural Gathering. Students from these schools set up stalls and traded with Rural Gathering participants and members of the public.

The market provided a chance for students to explain the 'why' behind their social enterprise. The market day also included the unveiling of a new online market place to boost e-commerce opportunities for students who are part of Social Enterprise Schools.

**Social Enterprise Schools is a collaborative, hands-on program that empowers young people to make a difference to causes they care about through running their own social enterprise.*

Reflections and insights

During the Rural Gathering participants identified critical ingredients for accelerating community led rejuvenation in a rural setting. Participants joined 'deep dive' discussions to explore principles for action on the basis of four core themes

- **Impact investments rural style:** methods, models and mechanisms
- **First Nations practice:** sharing and learning from Traditional Owners
- **Network entrepreneurship:** the role of intermediaries and impact networks for collective action in rural communities
- **Solving local issues and creating opportunities:** how tourism-led community initiatives and buy backs can create catalytic impacts in rural communities

This report provides a synthesis of discussions and insights generated during 'deep dive' sessions held during the Rural Gathering.

During the Rural Gathering participants explored a central theme of *'community-led rejuvenation through social enterprise'*, with a focus on developing enterprise capabilities in the next generation, learning from First Nations people, building networks and the enabling role of government and philanthropy.

Theme #1:

Impact investments rural style

methods, models and mechanisms

Private debt, publicly traded debt, and private equity can play a role in strengthening rural economies, helping to generate social and environmental impacts and financial returns. Impact investments are often directed towards strengthening of infrastructure, improving financial access, and building up human capital through targeted project funding. Participants at the Rural Gathering identified ways that impact investment can more effectively support emerging rural entrepreneurs and business enterprises who want to create quality jobs, revitalize place, and nurture a broader set of opportunities to transform a local economy.

"... social enterprise is a really important aspect of rejuvenating small towns because it gives communities the opportunities to be involved in something they know will work in their community. It's not something that's been brought in from outside..."

Sara Jenkins, Coordinator, Corryong Neighbourhood Centre (Australia)

INSIGHTS:

Normalise and embrace risk. Offer generous runways and timeframes. Involve community in exploration.

Identified challenges

Power and capacity imbalances: Impact investment models rarely consider what a rural community needs or the pace at which the community can move. Investment processes need to factor in building trust and shared understanding. Impact investors can more effectively support a rural community by shifting from an urgent, 'save the community' mindset to one that values shared processes – ie 'with' not 'for'.

Unrealistic timeframes: Investment timeframes and targets are largely driven by return-on-investment aspirations or investor balance reporting sheets. These may not align with community capacity or aspirations.

Inappropriate reporting frameworks: Regulatory reporting requirements for impact investment do not match social enterprise models and rarely recognise investment impact beyond the monetary investment. There is a need for generic measurements that are relevant to social enterprise and to broaden framework for measurement and expression of impact.

What's needed: effective policies, approaches and models

Identify investors with connection to place: People who are connected to a place by birth, experience, ancestry or interests may want to invest in rural economies. These are people who already care about a destination, town or location. 'Connected investors' are paving the way for new and exciting rural social enterprises.

Develop community-led investment timeframes: Impact investors can build self-determination and contribute to ecosystem of a rural community by recognising the value of a community-led timeframe. This approach will help create an enabled environment that supports multiple pieces in community – allowing planning for sustainability in the longer term.

Recognise the value of social enterprise as a business model: Economic decline is often a driver and catalyst for change in rural and regional communities. New economies can be developed and achieved by taking a more holistic view of social enterprise.

Offer funding to suit different stages of development and timeframes: At the start of an initiative, rural communities need seed funding that can be accessed via simple processes and used in flexible ways, including to support set up of governance which is critical to long term success. As an initiative scales, rural communities need different types of funding to support education, change and impact assessment, remove barriers and build capacity.

Principles for accelerating community-led responses

Start with a relationship focus Effective impact investment in a rural community nurtures a local ecosystem and recognises that the ecosystem moves and flows to shape community integration. Investment models and mechanism need to value all perspectives, needs, outcomes and timeframes equally, requiring

- understanding and trust
- shared responsibility and values
- compatibility and flexibility
- recognition that community often holds the answers
- a commitment to the values of self-determination and sufficiency.

Involve intermediaries

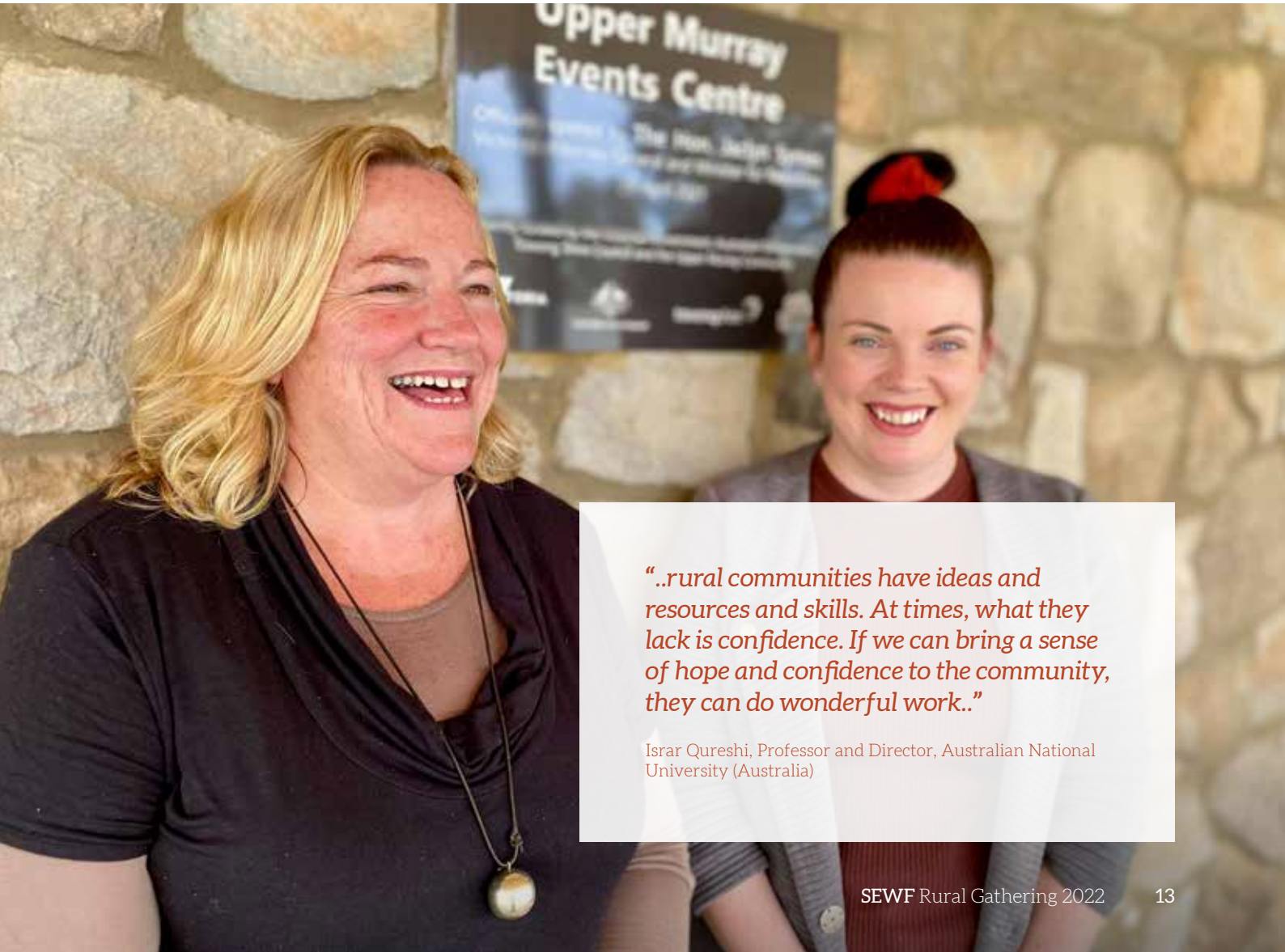
Intermediaries are valuable contributors to community-led rejuvenation. They deeply understand rural communities and can act as accelerators of trust. Intermediary organisations understand rural communities and are well positioned to administer social finance for early stage development initiatives.

Involve community in the whole process

Recognise and value proximity and local knowledge. Devise processes that support equity, including community involvement in investment assessment processes. This will help to build a shared understanding of impact. Start with recognising skills in community and find ways to enable these. Value connections, ability and engagement.

Adjust impact investment focus and timeframes

Investment timeframes need to appropriate to community, not investor balance reporting sheets. Developing a community-led timeframe will create an enabled environment that supports multiple pieces in community – allowing a rural community to plan for sustainability in the longer term.



"..rural communities have ideas and resources and skills. At times, what they lack is confidence. If we can bring a sense of hope and confidence to the community, they can do wonderful work.."

Israr Qureshi, Professor and Director, Australian National University (Australia)

Theme #2:

First Nations practice

sharing and learning from Traditional Owners

"Tribal and Indigenous economic activities have always been grounded with social and environmental outcomes at their heart. What we have seen recently is a growing shift in western values to align with traditional, intergenerational mindset. We have been social entrepreneurs for 1,000 years – we welcome this new movement to join us".

Te Pūoho Kātene, Executive Director, Te Pūtea Whakatupu Trust (Aotearoa New Zealand) – Social Enterprise World Forum 2022

The 2022 Rural Gathering program offered participants diverse, dynamic and deep opportunities to explore the central theme of community-led rejuvenation through social enterprise, including learning from First Nations people. Indigenous social enterprises and entrepreneurs play a vital role in community-led initiatives, contributing greatly to economic development across sectors, from tech to health to environment and more. These social enterprises develop solutions that drive sustainable growth within their communities; solutions that redistribute wealth, provide employment, protect their land and more.

INSIGHTS:

Nothing about us, without us. If we want to increase the volume of conversation around First Nations we need to have louder voices.

Identified challenges

Restrictive criteria: Support and funding for First Nations communities is often channelled into trauma and disadvantage, rather than success. This narrative restricts capacity for set up and growth of community-led initiatives.

Disregard for community knowledge: First Nations communities want approaches and responses that are devised from within, not from outside. Self-determination and genuine listening needs to be elevated. System, policy and design needs to be by First Nations people for First Nations people.

Lack of knowledge, truth telling: Many people lack understanding about First Nations people and their aspirations. Classism is an ongoing challenge. At times, non Indigenous people appear afraid to engage, participate and be active in this space. Relationships and partnerships build when people acknowledge and learn from the past and value First Nations people and their knowledge.

Poor digital connectivity and literacy: Many remote First Nations communities lack access to digital infrastructure and connectivity. Older members of the community have low literacy about processes and technology which can prevent participation and engagement. Many agencies and organisations do not understand this reality and use approaches which discourage participation, especially when those that rely on digital inclusion.

What's needed: effective policies, approaches and models

Understand through a land/country lens how cultural obligations and responsibility can be supported: Encourage conversations and awareness about First Nations culture in areas where conversation is muted or lost.

Expand knowledge: Learning and understanding is powerful - make business a part of First Nations community.

Be part of the solution: Recognise that social enterprise can be used as a vehicle to rectify social injustice for First Nations people.

Offer education around start-up models: Devise and offer communal approaches and make time for people to share deeply about what is needed.

Use these steps for success:

- Increase capacity in community
- Increase knowledge gains
- Sacrifice to get this knowledge
- Increase understanding and valuation of western community practice to be able to effect change
- Change in the reciprocity between cultures
- Develop a shared vision
- Value opportunities for intergenerational knowledge sharing
- Ensure First Nations people have a seat the table from the start

Principles for accelerating community-led responses

1. Slowly, gently (Yalmo yalmo)
2. Listen, learn, share
3. Take time

"..as First Nations people, our ways of knowing and being are basically the principles of what we are basing social enterprise on. And we've been doing this for a really long time. It's just a western way of saying community. The message I want to send is nothing about us without us. Give us a seat at the table and let us work together to form solutions.."

Tiffany Waters, Co-Founder and Chair Yarruu Foundation (Australia)

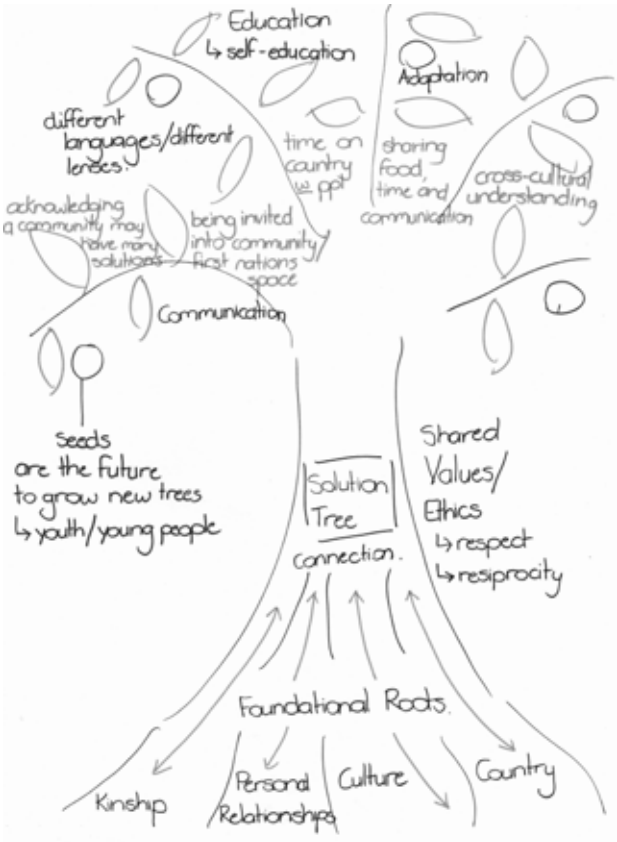


Image devised by 2022 Rural Gathering participants during 'deep dive' discussion about First Nations practice.

Theme #3:

Network entrepreneurship

emergence of intermediaries and impact networks as a growing movement for collective action in rural communities

Productive connections and impact networks can spark collaboration, share ideas and challenges. Complex issues in rural communities can be addressed by bringing together leaders from a range of sectors with the 'network entrepreneurship' skills required to build collective action. COVID has changed the way many metropolitan people think about rural.

"..It takes champions to help people imagine another paradigm, and then spark collaboration. If we can do those things, community rejuvenation occurs..."

David Upton, Co-Founder, Common Good Solutions CIC (Canada)

Identified challenges

Lack of awareness and access: People developing a community-led initiative can be isolated. There are many unconnected networks, so rural communities may not be aware that other places are doing something similar and/or have information about effective approaches.

Fragmented effort: Some individuals push on because they want action. It is important to find ways to get the right people with the right energy at the right time focussed on a problem/challenge/opportunity.

Building understanding about needs: Some rural networks find it challenging to generate profile and advocate their needs with government?

INSIGHTS:

"...you can't achieve systems change on your own...a network means you don't have to learn everything from scratch.."

"Know when to step in an step out.... we can hold on too much to personal networks to ensure it is enduring but a network is not dependent on individuals..."

What's needed: effective policies, approaches and models

Immersive experiences that bring networks together: These experiences can boost resilience, are critical for learning and support development of community solutions that networks can feel part of.

Access to resources: Skilled networks can offer wrap around support services to build capability/capacity in enterprises. Local Councils can open up spaces for rural networks to host events/facilitate conversations. A one-stop shop/centralized place to access resources about community-led rejuvenation in a rural setting would be valued.

Start with purpose and mission: Identify strengths within a community, including older generations and untapped talent. Identity who in the network needs to be around the table to solve an issue

Develop policy that enables community-led responses: Scotland has a long-term approach that provides the stability necessary for the conversion of 'policy to practice', including real outcomes and impacts. Scotland's Social Enterprise Strategy has been in existence for over 15 years. This is a dramatic contrast to Australia, where Victoria was the first state with a social enterprise strategy, created in 2017.

Involve and leverage intermediaries: Contracts can bring intermediaries together.

Cross-pollination of ideas and approaches: The social enterprise sector will flourish if enterprises are prepared to let others look deep within. Internships for young people offer the advantages of fresh perspectives and succession planning.

Funding to connect rural people via networks: As a network forms, it is important to assess what level of convening is needed. It is also important to identify complementary networks. A dedicated and funded group that is responsible for connect networks can support community-led initiatives. In Australia, the Victorian Government provided $1.47 million towards the establishment of the Social Enterprise Network Victoria (SENVIC) which is being delivered as a partnership between CERES, ACRE and Social Traders. SENVIC is building a connected community of social enterprises, facilitating access to learning and development opportunities, and increasing the voice and influence of social enterprise across Victoria.

An active international network focussed on rural: A common love of place binds rural communities. Social Enterprise World Forum connects people with rural interests each year. An international network would offer additional opportunities to share ideas and approaches, and encourage transfer of innovation.

Principles for accelerating community-led responses

Work at an appropriate scale: Depth is more important than breadth. Impact needs to be at the forefront.

Collaborate: Meet people where they are at. Be collaborative and inclusive, not competitive.

Trust, respect, reciprocity: Effective networks are inclusive, offer peer support, and value others.

"When we talk about networks, what we are talking about is people supporting people, and that is crucial in rural communities. So, if you're going to help a rural entrepreneur genuinely find their path and build the business in the way they want it they have to be connected in with a broad group of people around them.."

Alexie Seller, Co-CEO, Enterprise Learning Projects + Convenor, Impact North (Australia)

".....as rural social enterprises we have a small voice, but if we put our voices together and connect across state lines and international borders, we can make that voice big..."

Harry Sillett, General Manager, Social Enterprise and Operations, Vanguard Laundry (Australia)

Theme #3:

Tourism-led community initiatives and buy backs

solving local issues and creating catalytic impacts in rural communities

INSIGHTS:

- Community ownership/agency provides a foundation for change
- Ownership enables communities to address common challenges and take advantage of opportunities
- Local communities know how to connect the component parts
- Community-led tourism initiatives incorporate understanding, appreciation and connection to 'place', knowledge of assets within the community that can be leveraged, and commitment and willingness by the community to go the distance.

Identified challenges

Bureaucratic pressures: Excessive red tap requirements from funders and a burden of expectation re 'back office' roles prevents rural communities from progressing and scaling initiatives. Communities are not funded for administration and there is often a lack of support for capacity building, especially at early stage development.

Access to capital: Barriers exist for projects outside of major cities. Communities need access to finance, through grants and patient loans.

Misunderstanding of place-based and community needs: communities do not want and will not support tourism for tourism's sake. Initiatives need to be authentic and localised. The impact of a tourism-led initiative or buy-back on community can be overlooked in the rush to attract visitors.

What's needed: effective policies, approaches and models

Intermediaries: These anchor organisations enable opportunities. They are trusted brokers who support and mentor networks, hold relationships and understand the context of place and the big picture. Highlands and Islands Enterprises in Scotland and its relationship with rural communities represents a genuine partnership model that has trust, mutual benefit and low political interference at its heart.

Let the community 'get on with it': Conventional risk matrix used by regulators rarely work for community-led initiatives, especially at early stage development. Funders and Government need to trust communities and provide flexible seed funding at early stages.

Innovative funding models: The Scottish Land fund provides 10 million pounds per annum in grant funding to support local communities own their own assets. The Big Lottery Fund in the UK dedicates a percentage of its profits to community and heritage projects in the form of grants. Their plaque is on many preserved buildings across the UK. Big Issue Invest is a spin-off of the Big Issue, a global social enterprise magazine tackling homelessness. It provides patient finance to projects of community benefit, that would not ordinarily be able to secure commercial finance.

Storytelling is critical: It helps to explain the why, celebrates place, builds understanding and motivates people to continue developing initiatives. Funky branding that is community designed and owned creates a theme that unites. FLOAT in East Gippsland used this approach effectively.

Develop a collective leadership structure: Bring diversity to the table to build understanding about needs and opportunities. Authentic experiences widen leadership opportunities, and people with various skills can work together when there is a shared purpose. Understand the motivation of the tourism business – value, place. Understand the community by using surveys, feasibility studies, involving young people.

Scale pilot enterprises to other like-minded regions: Enterprising approaches can be used to solve difficult issues. For example, community owned housing to address lack of affordable housing.

Principles for accelerating community-led responses

Recognise that local communities are best at owning and managing their own assets sustainably: In Scotland there is legislation that allows communities 'the right to buy' their valued assets when they come onto the open market, whether in public or private ownership. The Development Trusts Association of Scotland provides advice and support to local communities embarking on their community asset ownership journey. In rural communities, this often starts with the retention of a valued local service. Over time, and with the confidence success brings, these groups often extend their interests to bold and ambitious community renewal enterprises.

Invest for impact and value: Legislative change can reduce barriers for private investors. There is opportunity to explore hybrid structures, structural change and use of superannuation as a resource. Community ownership of a key asset can prove to be a keystone to development of a local and social economy. A development trust approach can help pull together holistic approach for a town or a local area.

Offer and use a mix of levers: Government and intermediaries can support tourism-led community initiatives and buy backs in rural communities using a mix of funding, governance, networks, legislation and policy, anchor organisations, diversity and inclusion, measuring impact.

"...there are so many parallels between the struggles and opportunities that rural communities face around the world. Social enterprise has an important part to play in being a vehicle for supporting rejuvenation.."

Finlay J. MacLennan, Development manager, Community Land Outer Hebrides (Scotland)

Principles for accelerating community-led responses

Start with a relationship focus

Effective impact investment in a rural community nurtures a local ecosystem and recognises that the ecosystem moves and flows to shape community integration. Investment models and mechanism need to value all perspectives, needs, outcomes and timeframes equally, requiring

- understanding and trust
- shared responsibility and values
- compatibility and flexibility
- recognition that community often holds the answers
- a commitment to the values of self-determination and sufficiency.

Involve intermediaries

Intermediaries are valuable contributors to community-led rejuvenation. They deeply understand rural communities and can act as accelerators of trust. Intermediary organisations understand rural communities and are well positioned to administer social finance for early stage development initiatives.

Involve community in the whole process

Recognise and value proximity and local knowledge. Devise processes that support equity, including community involvement in investment assessment processes. This will help to build a shared understanding of impact. Start with recognising skills in community and find ways to enable these. Value connections, ability and engagement.

Adjust impact investment focus and timeframes

Investment timeframes need to be appropriate to community, not investor balance reporting sheets. Developing a community-led timeframe will create an enabled environment that supports multiple pieces in community – allowing a rural community to plan for sustainability in the longer term.

Reframe scale: Depth is more important than breadth. Impact needs to be at the forefront.

Collaborate: Meet people where they are at. Be collaborative and inclusive, not competitive.

Create networks of trust, respect, reciprocity: Effective networks are inclusive, offer peer support, and value others.

Recognise that local communities are best at owning and managing their own assets sustainably: Enabling legislation can allow communities 'the right to buy' their valued assets when they come onto the open market, whether in public or private ownership. In rural communities, this often starts with the retention of a valued local service. Over time, and with the confidence success brings, these groups often extend their interests to bold and ambitious community renewal enterprises.

Invest for impact and value: Legislative change can reduce barriers for private investors. There is opportunity to explore hybrid structures, structural change and use of superannuation as a resource. Community ownership of a key asset can prove to be a keystone to development of a local and social economy. A development trust approach can help pull together holistic approach for a town or a local area.

Offer and use a mix of levers: Government and intermediaries can support tourism-led community initiatives and buy backs in rural communities using a mix of funding, governance, networks, legislation and policy, anchor organisations, diversity and inclusion, measuring impact.

Respect the pace at which First Nations people wish to work: Slowly, gently (Yalmo yalmo), Listen, learn, share, take time.

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Next steps

In the face of increasing inequality, poor economic practices and an ever-raging climate emergency, social enterprise is part of a global response aimed at accelerating our transition into a new global impact economy.

The growing movement of social enterprise recognises that the drivers present in rural areas are often quite different to those in the urban areas.

The 2022 Social Enterprise World Forum Rural Gathering reinforced that there are a number of universal issues and opportunities. By learning from and actively supporting each other, social enterprise practitioners, impact investors and government can advance the policy and practice for rejuvenating rural communities.

"..social enterprise is this really neat fit of being able to provide the services we need and opportunities in our community, whilst also not relying on the government or external funders to keep us sustainable. Together we have the best opportunities to bring the heart and soul back into rural communities and make them sustainable long into the future..."

Meg Allan, Co-Founder, The Wilderness Collective, Mallacoota (Australia)

"..social enterprises are a more significant part of rural communities that they are in urban communities. Our role is to convene and to bring together those who are leading rural social enterprise dialogue, with those who are interested in sustainable, resilient, rural economies to ensure that we can share that best practice and go forward together..."

Gerry Higgins, Managing Director and Founder Social Enterprise World Forum (Scotland)

"..we're all grappling with the same thing. We might be at different stages, but the levers are pretty much the same. It's about money and policy and people and capacity – that's world over."

Lorraine Corcoran, Director, Social Enterprise Republic of Ireland (Ireland)

"..the 2022 Social Enterprise World Forum Rural Gathering unearthed ways that rural changemakers across the world are using the business model of social enterprise to solve local issues and create opportunities. By taking a community-led approach, rural communities can build up enterprises that simultaneously create new economic opportunities and deliver social impact for communities..."

Matt Pfahlert, Co-Founder and CEO, ACRE (Australia)

For more information, please visit

acre.org.au

HOSTED BY ACRE Thriving Rural Futures · Social Enterprise World Forum

KEY PARTNER Bendigo Bank

SUPPORTED BY VICTORIA Australia · FRRR Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal