



Central Desert Regional Council

Final

Doing Small Business in the Bush

22nd December 2017

Attention:

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1. Introduction

The project originates from a conversation between John Gaynor, Director of Community Services for Central Desert Regional Council and a small group of senior Warlpiri men on a long drive from Alice Springs to Yuendumu in 2016. The conversation moved to the men asking questions about different kinds of business, 'What is a company? What is a partnership? What is a Joint Venture? etc. John then went about answering the questions based on his knowledge of the topics. One of the men, Otto Sims then asked. 'How come you white fellas know this stuff?' John reflected that for many Aboriginal people on remote communities they don't have the fundamental knowledge and understanding about the Western business language and as such are 'locked out' of many opportunities of which they are skilled and capable. This project was formed out of this desire to respond to the questions that the Warlpiri men in Yuendumu were asking about how to conduct businesses in their community.

2. Methodology

The design of the workshop was informed by the following practice principles:

1. The workshop is grounded in practical oral and visual communication based learning activities which have a focus on visual and storytelling tools;
2. The workshop design is directly informed by the nature and strengths of its audience. It is anticipated that this audience will bring considerable cultural authority and knowledge to the workshop which will be built upon;
3. The workshop will be delivered in Warlpiri with a focus on key concept/ language definitions and comprehension. Support and supplementary information may be provided in English where no Warlpiri language equivalent exists.

Matrix approached the design and delivering of the Doing Small Business in the Bush workshop as follows:

	Task	Description
Project Establishment	Preparation of detailed project plan	Develop detailed project plan including tasks, timelines, dependencies, stakeholders, communications, risks and risk mitigation strategies was prepared and agreed with the main stakeholder.
	Establishment of advisory and learning group	<p>The following people worked with the consultants on the development of key learning materials and communication of key concepts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Otto Sims (attended every learning group and was chosen as the main facilitator for the workshop) • Ned Hargraves (initially attended the learning group (3-4 sessions) and assisted with the animation voiceover) • Cecily Granites (attended 4 sessions) was the main language translator from English to Warlpiri in writing • Jezabelle Presley (attended 3 sessions but had to leave the community and could not attend further sessions) • Armstrong Gorey (attended 1 session and did not return) • Donisha Rockman Granites (attended 1 session and then was away at boarding school)
Workshop Design	Establish what training would be delivered and how it would be delivered	<p>Workshop design was done collaboratively with the above group and consisted of the following phases:</p> <p>Analysis – the first phase of material development involved the collection and analysis of information about what work was already being done in this space, understanding the audience for the training and establishing the learning outcomes.</p> <p>Design – the design phase involved rolling workshops that covered three main activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Deconstructing key business terminology b. Understanding the context that the learning group were working in and answering their questions. c. Identifying the best ways to communicate the new information for the participants who would attend the workshop. <p>Develop – creation of visual aides and documents to be used in the delivery of the training. This included the translation of materials into Warlpiri.</p>

Testing Workshop	Deliver the workshop once to test the concepts developed in the design phase	<p>Trial Delivery - Once the workshop design was completed, the 'dummy run' of the workshop was conducted with the Learning Group. The purpose of this was to test the workshop design, clarity and timing, as well as provide the facilitators with an opportunity to practice their facilitation skills.</p> <p>Evaluate An important part of the testing phase was to collate feedback to use in the improvement of the workshop.</p> <p>Re-Design – incorporated feedback into the materials and workshop design before finalisation.</p>
Delivery	Deliver the workshop	<p>Delivery – the workshop was delivered in Yuendumu in late September. One facilitator attended on the first day and one facilitator and five participants attended on the second day. An abridged version of the training was then delivered. Poor attendance by the facilitators was due to sorry business. The workshop was advertised with flyers and on local radio however it was the personal invitation by the facilitator that engaged people to attend the second day.</p> <p>The workshop was repeated three weeks later. The Kurdiji (Yuendumu Mediation Centre Staff) were informed that attendance was mandatory and that they would be paid to attend as professional development. Three facilitators, six participants and three external visitors attended the first day. Two facilitators, two participants and two external visitors attended the second day.</p>

3. Reflections

3.1. Motivation to attend the Learning Group sessions and the workshop

The Learning Group consisted of a group of six community members who attended anywhere from one session to all four sessions and then actively in the delivery of the two-day workshop. For those that did show up they were keen to learn and wanted to learn more. From all the participants in the learning group, there was a strong message of 'why don't we know this stuff? Why have we never been taught it?'

Otto Sims attended every learning group session and acted as the main driver for others to be involved in the program. It was a natural fit for him to become the facilitator both in terms of his own natural speaking and interpersonal skills and his commitment to get his own business ideas off the ground.

Ned Hargreaves was key in the first two sessions in working with Otto Simms and Matrix to establish the workshop design and the focus on language comprehension and like Otto Sims the need for Yapa to run their own businesses in Yuendumu. Ned also provided the voice over for the animations used in the workshop. Like many community leaders Ned had a number of community commitments which took him away from Yuendumu during Session 4 and the first delivery workshop.

Cecily Granites was central to providing the translations for all the business language from English into Warlpiri and PowerPoint slides. While Cecily attended only one of the sessions, she worked with Matrix outside the session times for several hours carrying out the translations. Cecily also enabled her granddaughter Donisha to participate and contribute at Session 2.

Armstrong is a CDP participant and is making a number of products, in particular steel digging sticks/crowbars as part of his CDP Activity hours. He attended and actively contributed to Session 2.

Jezabelle was employed as an Aboriginal Liaison Employment Officer (ALEO) at CDP. She attended Sessions 2, 3 and 4 and provided important feedback on the materials and the right level at which to pitch the materials and the workshop content. Family issues meant she had to leave Yuendumu.

While payment to participate in the learning group was a key motivator everyone and the workshops were very relaxed and conversational in approach, the content was pretty new for most members and quite hard for them to comprehend. If there were community or family matters they had to attend to, it's understandable why they may not have attended all four learning group sessions.

As far as getting interest from people outside the Learning Group, it was easy to understand why considerable and deliberate advocacy had to be done to encourage attendance. Despite many people indicating their intentions to come to the workshop to Otto only four attended on the first delivery session.

It is not surprising that the broad community level promotion (ie fliers in Warlpiri at the key community locations, community announcements on the local radio station, interview with Otto on the radio) for the 2-day training didn't attract participants. The low levels of business literacy evident in the learning group at the start of the learning group sessions indicated a significant lack of understanding and familiarity with the core language of business, financial literacy and legal structures of organisations. The learning group were really motivated and engaged in the ideas and the new knowledge and concepts the sessions were unlocking for them. These individuals either came to the group through their own existing engagement with business ideas or were directly asked to attend and were paid.

The *distance* is large for other community members to consider attending a workshop on ideas about which they don't feel confident, don't have expertise and aren't being paid.

Attendance at something so foreign will come if there is a captive audience (Justice and Mediation group, CDP ALEO staff) or a direct one on one approach by another trusted Aboriginal person with community and cultural authority is made for individuals to attend.

One of the participants who attended the first workshop was deeply engaged in the training as she had been talking with her family setting up a small business at their homeland. She was working and had already started to think about the details of the business. The workshop provided her with relevant information, encouragement and direction for next steps.

Otto Sims spoke to Matrix after the workshops were finished and expanded on his passion to now go and start up something small for his family. He talked about how the workshops had not only connected him to people outside his community who could help but also connected him to others in the community who are thinking the same way.

3.2. Peer Learning and Warlpiri Facilitation

Two of the most powerful elements of this program were the peer learning which took place in the Learning Group and workshops and the facilitation of the workshop in Warlpiri.

When the design of the program was originally being developed, there was a sense the Warlpiri facilitator may not come from Yuendumu or may not be a member of the learning group, but rather be more of a traditional trainer or comes in and delivers the material with no real connection to its development etc. When it became obvious, (at the dummy run through workshop) that Otto Sims was going to be the Warlpiri facilitator, the peer learning element of the program emerged as a strong learning component.

Because of Otto Sims's own cultural and community authority in Yuendumu and his understanding of respect, he approached the facilitation with a highly developed understanding of how to have a senior community elder in the workshop (ie Harry Nielsen or Eddie Robertson) and give them the appropriate respect and space required.

Otto Sims was a facilitator in every sense of the word in that while he had learnt a lot from the Learning Group workshops he also wasn't expert and had learnt how to guide the small group through new ideas. Because he was Otto Sims and not an 'outsider' there was an immediate rapport in the workshop, no shyness to ask questions and a boldness to speak up.

From Matrix's perspective, it felt like we were developing training but the Learning Group were changing their community and the development of the workshop was the conduit for this to happen. We suspect there was more engagement and talking about the topic under the trees at night after we had left the community and that this is where some of the real value in this work lies.

The delivery of the workshop in Warlpiri had varying levels to it. All the training resources such as the business terminology and all the key words had been translated into Warlpiri as had the PowerPoint slides. When Otto Sims was rehearsing the workshop, he spoke in

English despite our encouragement to practice in Warlpiri. In the actual workshop he gave all the translations in Warlpiri and when the group talked amongst themselves to clarify a point or to give a local example they all spoke in Warlpiri. When a more difficult concept came up such as 'Economic development' the group spoke in English.

We suspect that the use of English took place for several reasons. One, being that Otto Sims wanted to make sure that Nerida Nettelbeck, who supported Otto Sims with the PowerPoint and gave support when he requested it, could hear what was being discussed so they he 'got it right' in front of the group.

The other reason was that there are very few direct translations of any of the business language in Warlpiri for example, there is no Warlpiri word for 'business'. To understand many of the business concepts, English words had to be used.

The space that Matrix had to create was one where they were almost invisible and could be drawn upon when needed while the dominant dynamic in the workshop was a group of colleagues working their way through a self-guided / Otto Sims guided learning program.

3.3. Financial and Business Literacy levels

One of the participants in the training was a middle-aged woman with a number of business ideas and a demonstrated understanding of business supply and demand and the street smarts required to run a business. When the income-costs- profit-loss financial literacy section of the training took place it was obvious she had no understanding of the difference between profit and income or costs and income.

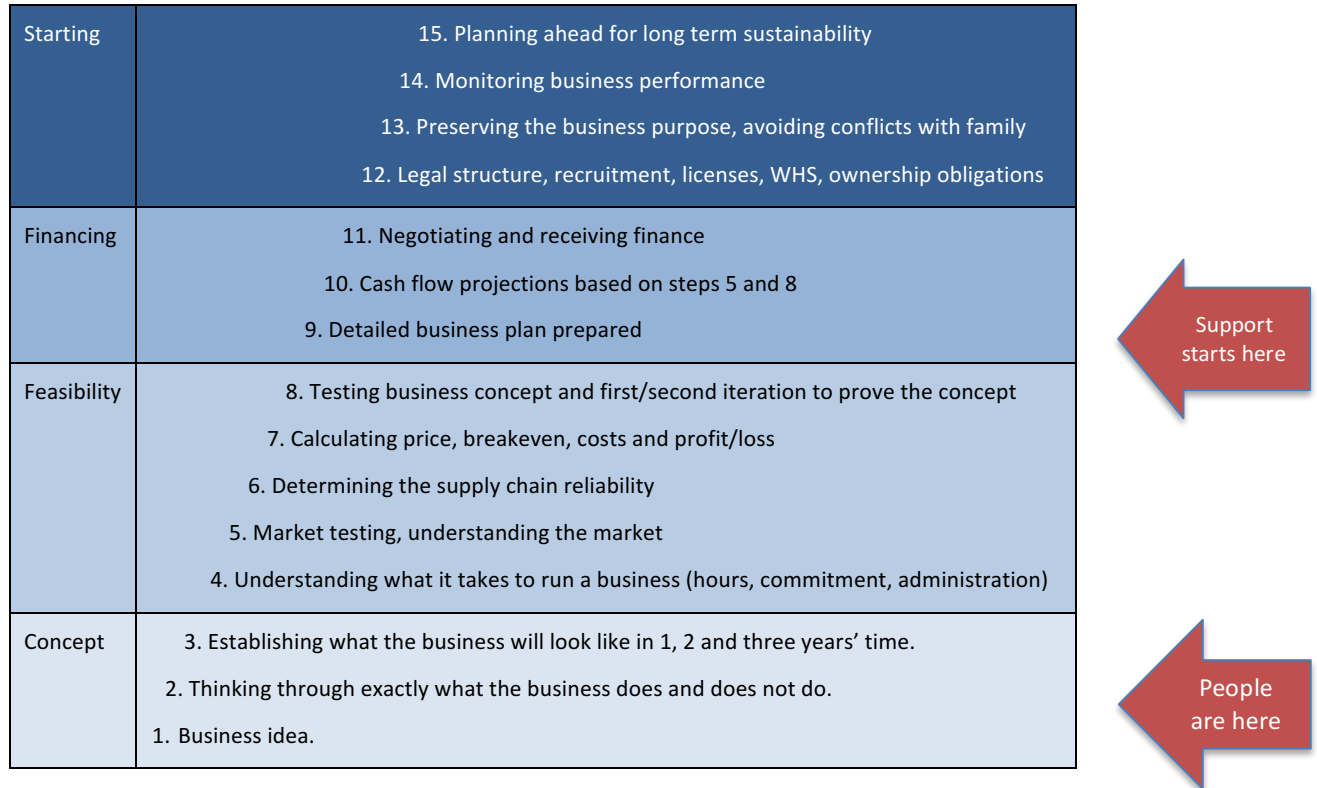
The Learning Group sessions and the workshop revealed great enthusiasm for a number of business ideas which people seemed to have had for a number of years- but no capacity to take the ideas to the next level of implementation. One of the next levels is increasing people's financial literacy so that the business literacy comprehended in this training can then be implemented in practice.

Diagram 1 below charts out a 15-step business development process from having a business concept through to being ready to start the business. From the Doing Small Business in the Bush training the participants who engaged with the training were mostly at steps 1 and 2. To our knowledge most of the currently available support for Aboriginal people to start up a new business is at step 9. The gaps between steps 1 and 9 is the next opportunity for further support and capacity building.

Aboriginal people have not had a very long time to engage with the market economy, to learn how to go to work each day, to hear stories of business success and failure within their families or from their neighbours or to understand, work with, and apply numbers in everyday life let alone calculate break even points, prepare budgets or do cash flow statements. The Learning Group members all had many ideas for businesses that they thought would run but it was clear that their knowledge of each of the steps required to start a successful business was limited. It will be crucial to provide support throughout the

early stages of business development in order for Aboriginal people in remote communities to successfully develop their remote economies.

Diagram 1: Steps to being able to establish a business



3.4. Portability of the training to other locations

While for this first project the Learning Group existed to develop the training program, the outcomes from the Learning Group were more than this:

- a) There are many benefits from the facilitator/s coming from the learning Group;
- b) The Learning Group workshops fulfilled a Learning Needs Analysis role to enable Matrix to fully understand what level of business, literacy and language literacy Learning Group members held;
- c) It also provided Matrix with an understanding of the local issues and politics which were impacting on community members.

If Matrix were to do this program in a new place- either Warlpiri or other language group, we think we would do a community engagement process, not a training program. Whilst the development of the training provided a vehicle to bring people together and focus attention on the basic language of business getting people to attend the training has been really difficult.

We would engage Otto Sims to travel to a new community with Matrix for a couple of days and run the following process:

1. Identify people who are interested in running their own business
2. Identify and photograph local businesses
3. Get the support of local business managers to be part of the training
4. Ask those who want to do the training the best time and place to deliver it
5. Return on the date of the training with as many external supports as possible (Joel (Department of Business), Glendle (CDRC), Jason (Central Land Council) and deliver the training in one day.
6. Then follow up on the second day with support, ie direct help with business plans, workshopping business ideas, based on what has come from the workshops and for Warlpiri communities link to any bigger supports which have become available in Yuendumu, ie Incubator support.

For Yuendumu, DSBIB is just the beginning and residents like Otto Sims, Robert Robertson and Elizabeth Lechleitner are ready for the next steps. Space needs to be created for them to experiment with micro business, learn through failure and success and be provided with access to frequent support.

In terms of delivery to other communities, more value will be gained by using the program to initiate conversations, get people talking, see who wants to run a business and then start organically with one or two people being supported. It is unclear if the timing is right to run the one day program in the other Warlpiri communities. Lajamanu is probably big enough to run the one day version of the program (as described above) but for Nyirripi are they big enough?

3.5. Yuendumu eco-system

Part of the workshop was for participants to visit other businesses in town and ask the following questions:

1. *What product or services do you sell?*
2. *Who are your customers?*
3. *What legal structure do you have?*
4. *What is the relationship between the business and the land?*
5. *Where does most your income come from?*
6. *Do you make a profit?*

A unexpected by-product of this exercise was the engagement of local business operators in both the 'walking tour' exercise and their general support for the establishment of Yapa owned and run businesses. Peter from the Big Shop was very keen for the empty space adjacent to the Big Shop entrance to be used to support local businesses. The following people/local business were asked if it was ok for the workshop participants to meet with them and ask (previously e-mailed) questions.

Organisation	Key Contact
Centrelink	Brook
WYDAC Mechanic Workshop	Stuart
Peter and Sheryl	Big Shop

3.6. Conversation with Otto, Enid and Cecily

During the second day of the workshop delivery while waiting for participants to arrive an informal conversation about the next steps for the project was held between Otto, Enid, Cecily, Sally, Glendle and Nerida.

1. Otto articulated a desire to set up an organisation that could focus on supporting enterprises. We discussed what the purpose of that organisation might be:
 - a. A place to help people set up businesses?
 - b. A place to purchase, own and run businesses for Yapa to work in?
2. A discussion about setting up a business to do construction, repairs and maintenance at the homelands was held. When asked “who does this now?” Otto replied the construction company but that is run by Kardiya. Even though this organisation is Yapa owned there was still a desire to set up something similar that was just for Yapa to own, to run, to work in.
3. Other ideas discussed were the purchase of a grader, trucks and diggers to respond to the road and pipeline construction projects or for mining exploration. There was a stated desire to have 100% Yapa employment in such a business with just an accountant and a lawyer to support them.
4. It was clear that there needed to be a forum and space where Yapa could discuss the best way forward for them and think about the following:
 - a. Jealousy between families and how it effects businesses - they need time to discuss the effects of this and ways to help stop it from impacting on a business.
 - b. The best legal structure for such an organisation
 - c. Do we need a new organisation or is there one that already exists that could be changed to meet their needs?

- d. The purpose of the organisation; does it own and run businesses? Does it invest in businesses elsewhere? Does it support people to run their own businesses? Does it do the back office functions for people's businesses?

4. Results from the project

The concrete results from the project are as follows:

1. A tailored and culturally relevant set of resources to deliver the training in Yuendumu that are easily adapted for other communities. (slide deck, cake story, animations, pictures and engaging content)
2. A confident facilitator in Otto Sims who is able to deliver the training in other communities in Warlpiri with support.
3. Strengthened connections between Department of Business, CLC and CDRC Economic Development staff and the community members who are interested in running small businesses. The delivery of the training and community development engagement in partnership with the existing business development supports is essential to the efficacy of the program and support for community residents once the training has finished.
4. Enthusiasm for the creation of a business incubator in Yuendumu demonstrated by Cecily and Otto going to ask the elders if they can use the tjurrkurpa around the incubation process.
5. Desire from community members to talk about the best way to establish micro enterprises in their community to take into account family jealousy that could harm to businesses.
6. Connection between the participants and non-indigenous business operators in town - potential mentors and supports for those people that do want to establish their own businesses.
7. A clearer understanding of the support needed for Yapa to run their own businesses (a good accountant and lawyer, more education in marketing and financial management, regular support and encouragement on the ground in the form of an incubator, individuals taking small steps to run lower risk iterations of ventures as a form of learning.)

When Otto Sims called after the final workshop he said, "you have gotten us into second gear and now we want to keep going".