

Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR)

Evaluation of Performance Over the First Ten Years and the Contribution the FRRR Makes to Rural and Regional Australia

August 2010



THINKING

DOING

LEADING



FRRR's first 10 years highlights significant successes ...

The Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) has distributed over \$25 million in grants over its first ten years.¹ During this period, the FRRR has demonstrated strengths in the effectiveness, efficiency and reach of its programs as this evaluation reports below.

The FRRR was created in 2000 to support the renewal of rural and regional communities in Australia. Over the past ten years, the FRRR has grown significantly, both in terms of the number of grants and the total value of grants awarded each year, as shown in Figure 1. In 2008/09, the FRRR awarded over 800 grants totalling over \$4.9 million.

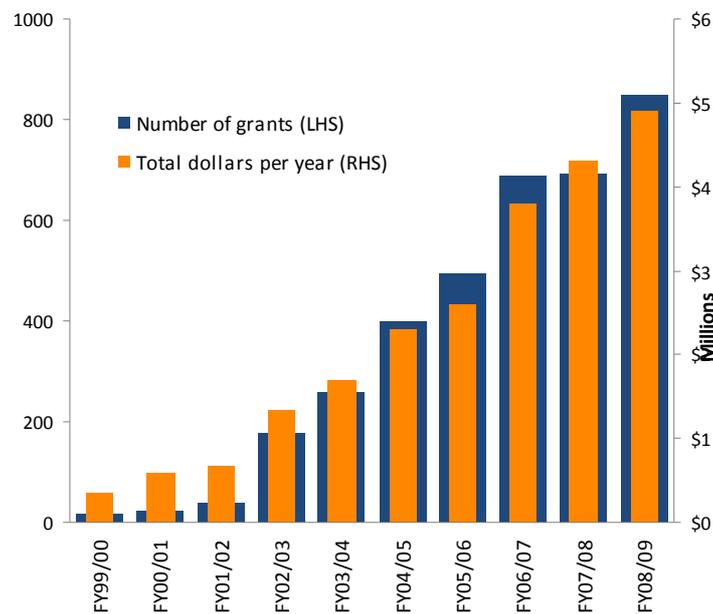


Figure 1: Number and amount of grants made per year

FRRR highly effective in facilitating project success

The success of the FRRR grant making programs and capacity building was supported by qualitative feedback from stakeholders and survey responses from applicants. The proportion of projects that were rated as “successful” or “partially successful” by grant recipients averaged over 98 per cent across all FRRR programs. This represents almost unanimous support for the effectiveness of projects by recipients. A key source of data for this project was a survey of grant applicants. The survey was completed by over 1,600 applicants. The survey asked recipients to assess the success of their project as either “successful”, “partially successful” or “not successful”. Of the successful applicants, 84 per cent rated their project as having been “successful”, 14 per cent rated their project as

¹ This evaluation has been funded by the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation with support from FRRR and additional pro bono support from the Nous Group.



having been “partially successful” and only 2 per cent rated their project “unsuccessful”. A high proportion of grants were successful across all programs and all categories of grant size.

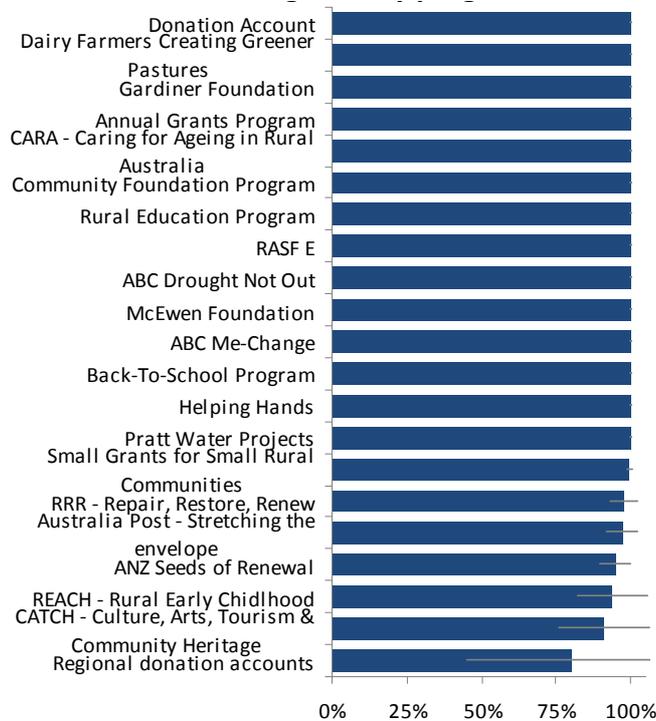


Figure 2: High proportion of project success across all programs²

Figure 2 shows that FRRR projects were overwhelmingly rated as successful across all programs.

A key determinant of project success was whether funding support was received from the FRRR. As part of the survey recipients were asked to rate whether the project was successful on a scale of 1 to 10 from “not successful (1)” to “very successful (10)”. Recipients were also asked to rate whether the project proceeded as planned on a scale of 1 to 10 from “not at all (1)” through to “exactly as planned (10)”. Projects that were very successful were far more likely to have proceeded exactly as planned and vice versa.

The importance of FRRR providing resources to organisations who might not otherwise receive them is shown in Figure 3. The left hand panel shows that for successful applicants, the project generally proceeded as planned, and was successful. By contrast, for most unsuccessful applicants (right hand panel) the project did not go ahead as planned and, where this occurred, the project was less likely to be successful. The inference from these results is that an FRRR grant was often pivotal to projects occurring and to a successful outcome being achieved.

² The lines at the end of the bars are 95 per cent confidence intervals of the true value. They are an estimate of the margin of error of the value based on the sample size. While some programs have slightly lower reported rates of project success, this is can be largely attributed to the relatively small number of survey responses. Once this is taken into account, the rate of success for these programs is not statistically different from the overall FRRR average.

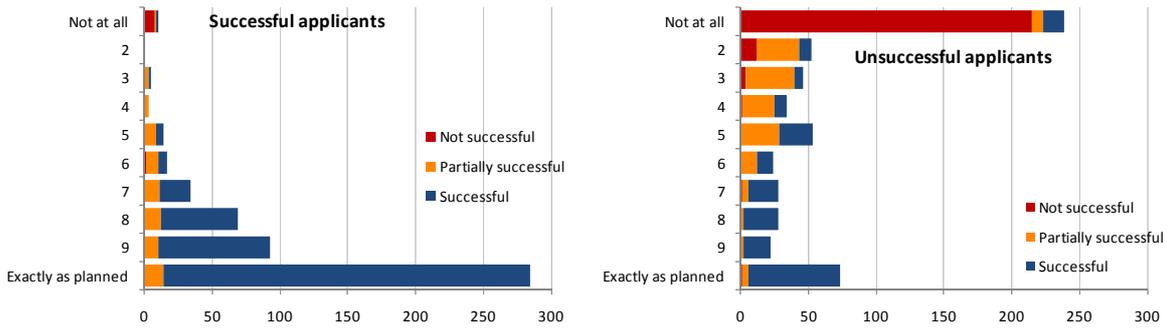


Figure 3: Implementation, success and FRRR involvement

FRRR involvement was often crucial to a project’s success, even where it received funding from other sources. As shown in Figure 4, over 90 per cent of successful applicants surveyed rated the FRRR’s involvement as “very critical” or that the outcome would have changed without FRRR funding. Figure 4 shows that the proportion rating the FRRR’s involvement as critical tended to be higher the larger was the size of the FRRR grant.

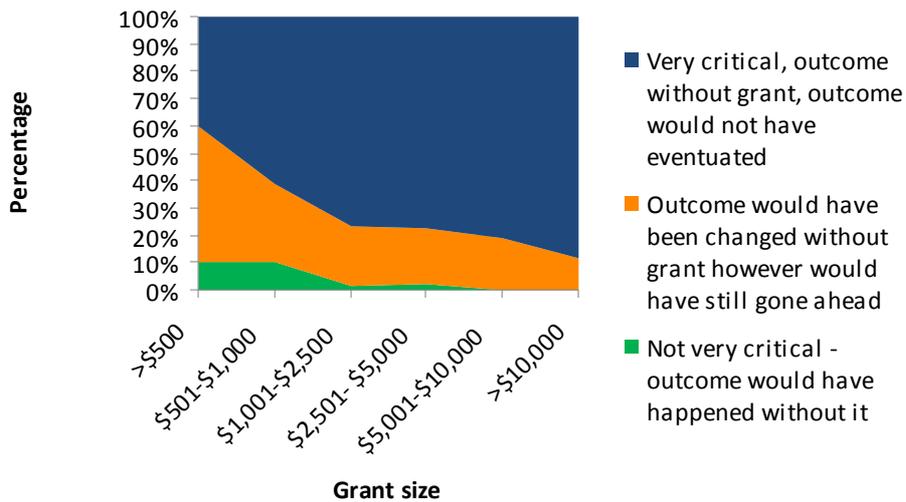


Figure 4: Proportion of projects for which FRRR funding was critical to success

FRRR programs exhibit high levels of efficiency

FRRR’s administrative processes are rated highly by grant recipients and stakeholders and data shows organisational efficiency has improved considerably over the past seven years.

Survey respondents rated the FRRR’s application process very highly. This was true across both successful and unsuccessful applicants. This is shown in Figure 5. All five aspects of the application process received a rating of successful from at least 95 per cent of successful applicants and all five aspects received a rating of successful from at least 85 per cent of unsuccessful applicants.

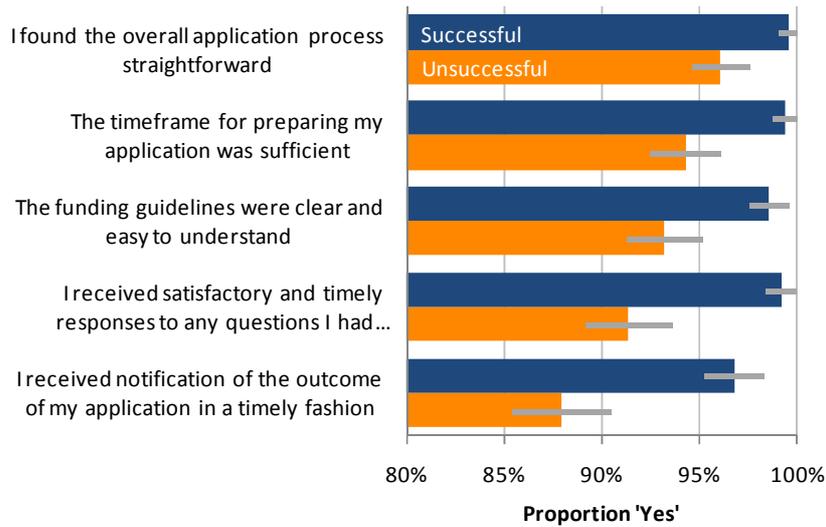


Figure 5: Satisfaction with FRRR processes

FRRR programs have extensive reach in rural and regional Australia

The FRRR provides services (both grants and capacity building) to a wide range of geographic areas, sectoral categories and recipient types across Australia.

The FRRR's reach is evidenced by:

- Wide geographic reach, which appears to be extending over time.
- The maintenance of a spread of funding across the major categories of community activity in rural and regional Australia.
- The FRRR having reached many individuals and community organisations who had not received any alternative support from government or other philanthropic organisations.

Basic measures of geographic spread indicate that a large and increasing number of communities have received FRRR assistance. Figure 6 shows that the number of unique postcodes receiving grants from the FRRR each year has grown substantially since 2000. Almost 500 unique postcodes received FRRR grants in 2009.

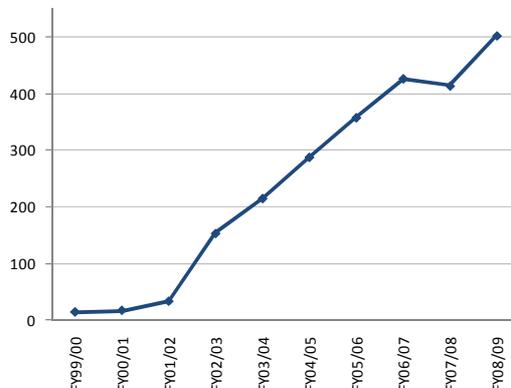


Figure 6: Number of postcodes receiving FRRR grants each year



The FRRR provides grants to a wide range of activities

Over the past ten years, the FRRR has maintained a spread of grants across the main sectors of community activity in rural and regional Australia. The FRRR awards grants in six categories: Education; Social; Economic; Health; Environment; and Culture. All six categories have received at least \$2 million in grants over the past ten years from the FRRR.

The FRRR is the first source of support for many recipients

A high proportion of recipients that applied for FRRR grants, have not previously received support from any other philanthropic organisation, or public sources of funding. Out of the survey recipients, over 75% of recipients of FRRR grants had not applied for grants from either government or other philanthropic organisations. Increasingly, it appears that smaller, largely volunteer based community groups are more able to access funding for small projects via programs operated by the FRRR than other sources.

... The successful FRRR model should be extended and supported

The FRRR has achieved considerable success in its first ten years in terms of the effectiveness, efficiency and reach of its programs. This success is a good basis upon which to build the organisation over the next ten years by:

- Extending the FRRR's proposition to additional areas
- Deepening the partnership model and extending to new partnerships

It is recommended that FRRR extend its proposition where this evaluation has indicated demand. This includes a stronger inter-state presence, increased use of technology and expanding the scope of services.

The key priorities for the FRRR to extend its operations are to build on existing relationships and to strategically develop new relationships. This includes sharing this evaluation and report widely including with the Australian Government.