



STORIES OF PRACTICE

STORY #4
JANUARY 2020

Midwest Yamaji Music Aboriginal Inc. (MYMAI) *Community development in action*

CONTEXT

Midwest Yamaji Music Aboriginal Inc (MYMAI) is a not-for-profit organisation in Geraldton, Western Australia. MYMAI support the growth and development of musical and artistic talent in the Midwest region, and create opportunities to showcase First Nations' talent. MYMAI first invited CFD to join them on their journey in 2012, and is currently participating in CFD's first action research project.

This CDF Story of Practice focuses on a five-year funding project between MYMAI and CFD that started in 2014 and was completed in December 2019. Specifically, it focuses on the way in which CFD's Community Development Officer (CDO) worked with MYMAI during the project, and the role she played during each stage of CFD's community development cycle. While the funding project is the focus of the case study, MYMAI also want to develop strong partnerships to support their initiatives and plan to establish an After School Music Program.



Coleesha Jones & Zain Laudehr performing at the 2017 First Nations Festival.

CFD's CDOs are highly skilled community development practitioners who work with communities to navigate a pathway towards achieving their goals. This Story of Practice is just one example of the way CDOs work with communities. Each CDO has their own unique style, and their approach will depend on a range of factors including their relationship with the community, and the nature of the support requested by each community.

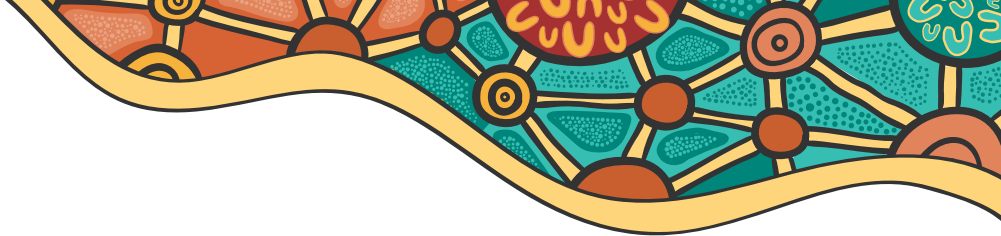
In this Story of Practice, the CDO provided some support to MYMAI to develop funding submissions and video footage to support the applications. While required for this project, this practice is not something that occurs in all CFD regions. In the majority of cases, volunteers are selected by communities to deliver project activities - in this case the CDO had the required skills.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WITH CFD

CFD's community development cycle consists of 1) shared understanding 2) engage and empower 3) connect and build 4) design and deliver and 5) reflect and celebrate. The practical application of this approach while working alongside MYMAI is outlined below.

1. Shared understanding

When CFD's CDO, Emma Mulvaney, first met with MYMAI, they were a relatively new organisation. With CFD's assistance, they had recently developed their dream (or vision) to grow and nurture an inclusive and inspiring community of Indigenous musicians and artists throughout the Midwest to generate positive change through creativity. MYMAI had approached CFD to work with them on this new project, and as Emma observed, appeared very committed to getting the project off the ground.



In the early days of the relationship, Emma spent time getting to know MYMAI. She undertook a number of community engagement trips to Geraldton aimed at broadening her understanding of MYMAI's vision and their initial thinking around a First Nations music festival. As part of these trips, Emma met with MYMAI directors and the broader community, and listened to their visions. She also attended a concert organised by the local Aboriginal Medical Service that MYMAI was involved in, that provided an opportunity to meet some of the local bands.

2. Engage and Empower

Through yarning¹ together, Emma understood that MYMAI's goal at that point in time was to organise an annual First Nations music festival (one of their dream indicators) entirely themselves. The festival was aimed at creating a platform for local talent, connecting with marginalised youth in the region, and bringing together the community to share their culture.

Using a strengths-based approach, Emma identified that MYMAI had a clear vision for the festival and the skills and experience to run the festival. They just needed support with navigating western governance requirements such as funding processes and festival risk management procedures.

MYMAI have always had a huge amount of confidence and skills around how to organise and run the festival. They just needed some support around the logistics and WHS requirements that they fleshed out together. In terms of running the event, they have a huge amount of skills between them on how to do that and have a lot of experience in the music industry.

Navigating through a lot of processes is what we [CDOs] do on an everyday basis."

- Emma Mulvaney, CFD Community Development Officer

MYMAI and Emma determined that the next step was to identify and develop funding submissions to secure funding, enabling them to move forward with their long-term vision of establishing an annual First Nations music festival to support the creative development of young people in Geraldton. This became the focus of the project.

3. Connect and Build

MYMAI and Emma worked together to co-design the project. They spoke about the key steps or things that MYMAI wanted to achieve as part of the project. These became the project objectives:

- Identify funding opportunities to organise the annual music festival.
- Develop a short film showcasing the festival to accompany funding applications.
- Develop funding applications for the annual First Nations Festival.

Indicators recorded what MYMAI wanted to see changed.

Once the project plan was developed, MYMAI and Emma determined that the next step was to find out what funding opportunities existed. To do this, they worked together to explore and identify the types of funding and community support available for the festival.

MYMAI identified a potential funding opportunity with a local native title funding body and did a lot of work engaging with that body. Emma identified funding opportunities available at the government-level, including with the Australian Council of the Arts and the City of Greater Geraldton.

To explore these funding opportunities further, MYMAI and Emma jointly met with the different funding bodies to discuss MYMAI's ideas around a festival, including whether this was something they would support. At the time, doing meetings was very new to MYMAI and was something they requested support with.

1 'Yarning' is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander style of conversation and storytelling that has been used by researchers as a culturally safe and legitimate qualitative research method (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010) (Laycock, Walker, Harrison, & Brands, 2011).



As MYMAI and Emma explored the funding opportunities and requirements further, they realised they needed to take a step back and focus on working out festival logistics as this detail was required for the funding applications.

As we got more into looking into the actual funding submission and developing it, we realised there was actually a huge amount of work that need to be undertaken first around considering all the logistics of the festival...all of the different components involved in putting on a festival needed to be included in the application.

We are going to need to take a step back and we are going to need to flesh a lot of that information out.

- Emma Mulvaney, CFD Community Development Officer

As a result, MYMAI and CFD co-designed a separate but related project focused on events management.

4. Design and Deliver

Emma reviewed the volunteer database and shortlisted a suitable volunteer, Ailsa Paterson, who had a lot of experience with developing funding submissions.



CFD Volunteer Ailsa Paterson and MYAMI Director Glenis Little.

She had an initial phone call with Ailsa to make sure she was a good fit. MYMAI then had a chat with Ailsa and chose her to work with them on the funding submission project.

Following Ailsa's engagement as a volunteer, Emma took her on a community engagement trip to introduce her to MYMAI and hear from them directly around their vision for the festival.

To ensure everyone was on the same page and to manage multiple connecting projects, Emma facilitated fortnightly teleconferences between Ailsa, the CFD event management volunteer, and MYMAI directors. These teleconferences were held for about two months prior to applying for the grants to discuss the ins and outs of the festival, such as location, length, bands and a work health and safety risk plan.

Once the festival details had been worked through, Ailsa and MYMAI started developing the first two funding submissions for the City of Greater Geraldton and the Australia Council for the Arts. This stage involved many conversations between Ailsa and MYMAI and the funding bodies as they built relationships with the funders and navigated the different processes and requirements. Ailsa worked with MYMAI to build their confidence in doing meetings and supported them to develop the funding submission content.

I feel in the end it was a great outcome that we did a lot of this work initially to get MYMAI really thinking logistically about what they wanted the festival to be, how it would work etc. Their was also a lot of work around relationship building and making contact with the funding bodies, prior to the applications being submitted.

- Ailsa Paterson, CFD Volunteer

While the first funding submission to the Australia Council for the Arts was unsuccessful, this proved to be an important learning process for everyone. Ailsa supported MYMAI to get feedback from the funder, and learnt that they wanted to see more creative material from MYMAI to demonstrate they could run the festival.

MYMAI ended up securing funding from the City of Greater Geraldton to run the inaugural First Nations People Festival in May 2016.



Organising the First Nations Peoples festival was one of our biggest achievements as an organisation. It was a lot of hard work, but it paid off seeing all the people that attended and the way everyone enjoyed themselves.

- Glenis Little, MYMAI

Emma attended the festival and worked with MYMAI to create a video using photos and video footage she had taken. This provides an insight into the diversity of tasks CFD's CDOs often undertake. The video was used to support a future funding submission to the Australia Council for the Arts.

The video is great, we are so happy with it, it's deadly. I think it will really help the funding application

- Glenis Little, MYMAI

5. Reflect and Celebrate

Through this process, Ailsa set MYMAI up with the content and template to enable them to apply for future grants. With the groundwork established, MYMAI, with Emma's support, submitted a further six funding submissions during the project period. All of these submissions were successful.

MYMAI secured ongoing funding commitments for the festival and has been able to run a further three First Nations Festivals. Each festival built on the success and learnings of the previous one.

We learnt a lot from last year's festival, it was great to see all the community come together in such a positive way, the event really brought people together, we are learning every year and we are so happy with how the day went.

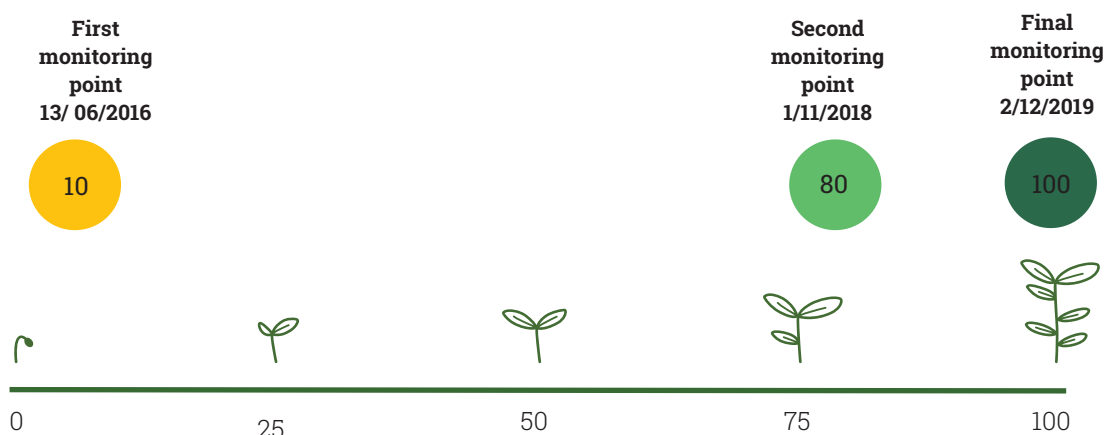
- Catherine MYMAI

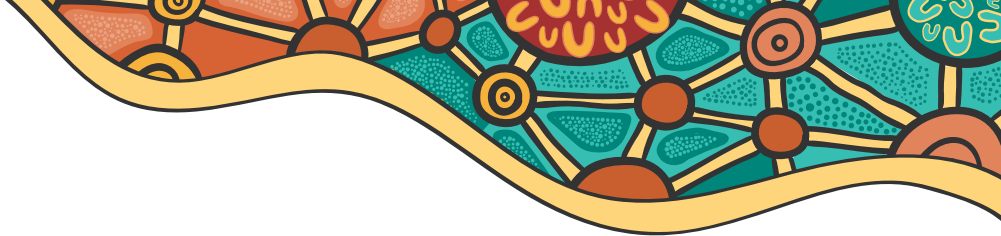
As Emma observed, MYMAI's ability to secure this funding "really speaks to the credibility of MYMAI and the capacity that they've built in terms of managing that funding and running those events". Emma attended three of the four festivals, supporting MYMAI with a range of tasks on the day and taking photos to support MYMAI's funding reports, future funding submissions, and CFD reporting requirements.

Across the course of this project, Emma worked with MYMAI to monitor and evaluate project and dream-level progress. Having at least two monitoring points for each project indicator enabled a clear comparison and highlighted what had changed in the project.

As the project is coming to an end soon, Emma, together with MYMAI, is currently completing the final evaluation for this project. MYMAI has already met all of their project indicators, indicated by a quantitative rating of 100 accompanied by qualitative information such as Emma's observations and direct quotes from MYMAI. They have now achieved one of their dream indicators to organise an annual music festival entirely on their own as demonstrated below, and have made significant progress against other dream indicators such as 'MYMAI develop strong partnerships to support their initiatives', and 'MYMAI secure funding to organise the annual festival and after school music program'.

Progress towards dream indicator: MYMAI are able to organise an annual music festival





The 2018 First Nations Festival marked the first time MYMAI coordinated the entire festival themselves. In previous years, MYMAI had hired an event coordinator to help support and manage the event. The 2019 First Nations Festival marked the second time MYMAI coordinated the entire festival themselves. This year, many of the MYMAI directors were unavailable to attend and support so director, Glenis Little, coordinated the festival pretty much by herself. As a result of MYMAI's significant progress in this area, Emma moved the 'seed to tree' reading to 100.

It's empowering for Glenis to know that strong processes and systems have been put in place by her and MYMAI, so if push comes to shove, she can successfully coordinate the festival herself.



Moorditj Mob performing at the 2017 First Nations Festival.

There are many ways to gain information to support monitoring and evaluation purposes. As Emma observed, yarning during community engagement trips is an effective way to do this. It is important to record snippets of information obtained during these trips that help to demonstrate value.

One time I went up on a CE [community engagement] trip and they were saying we just received so many calls from people who want to be involved in the festival this year...it's like bits of information like that that show the value of the festival in the community.

- Emma Mulvaney, CFD Community Development Officer

MYMAI are looking towards the future and have been doing some thinking around the ongoing sustainability of the festival. They have always wanted to hire a professional videographer to produce a video to support First Nations musicians in the Midwest to strengthen

their professional profile and portfolios; and use as a monitoring and evaluation tool to demonstrate the impact of the festival.

A really important thing that has happened in terms of thinking about the ongoing sustainability of the festival as well – to have a really professional video – that's going to interview some of the performers and the community about the importance of the festival – and we felt that this was really good timing as the festival has been running for nearly 4 years...it's got a reputation now in the community.

- Emma Mulvaney, CFD Community Development Officer

Emma supported MYMAI to develop a successful funding submission to hire a professional videographer to record the 2019 First Nations Festival and create a professional video.

Due to circumstances outside of MYMAI's control, the 2019 First Nations Festival was downsized at the last minute due to the hot weather and fire danger. Despite this, the professional videographer was still able to take some amazing photos, conduct interviews and take footage that will enable MYMAI to achieve its video objectives to promote First Nations artists and musicians.



Barry Anderson from Radio Mama speaking with CFD Community Development Officer Emma Mulvaney at the 2017 First Nations Festival.

CFD REFLECTIONS

This case study provides one example of the way in which CDOs operate, the diversity of tasks they undertake as part of their roles, the systems and processes they support communities to navigate, and the strong and open relationships they form with communities. Creating open and trusting relationships with communities is a critical aspect of CDO's roles, and is what differentiates their approach from many others'.

You need to have that openness and availability to be there for whatever the group really needs. It's just an essential part of your relationship and our role. And I think as I said if we say "that's not what we do" we won't have the type of relationship we have with communities.

- Emma Mulvaney, CFD Community Development Officer

As Emma reflected, CDOs create genuine and two-way relationships with communities and are always available to communities to support them where they can.

It's something that I think all CDOs with CFD do, so you develop a relationship with these groups and it's natural that things are going to come up in duration of us working together that may not necessarily be related directly to the objective, but it is important for them to work through, and they reach out to us for support around that.

Of course there are times when we won't have expertise and experience but always we will try and find someone who does.

- Emma Mulvaney, CFD Community Development Officer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Emma Mulvaney, CFD Community Development Officer, for her contribution to this case study and for her role in working with MYMAI to achieve their aims. We would also like to recognise and acknowledge the valuable support provided by CFD volunteer Ailsa Paterson to MYMAI. Lastly, we would like to thank MYMAI for inviting CFD to join them on their journey, for sharing their stories with us, and for enabling us to strengthen our community development practice through our first action research project.



Sandart at the 2017 First Nations Festival.

COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT

OUR VISION

First Nations peoples and communities are thriving

WHO WE ARE

Community First Development is a First Nations community development and research organisation that creates positive change in and with First Nations communities.

WHAT WE DO

We undertake social and economic development, and research projects in partnership with First Nations communities, businesses and people. Communities have control; they name the priorities and choose the design, assets, capabilities and approaches to achieve their vision. We provide tailored support through community partners, skilled staff, trained volunteers, key supporters and service providers



*We do things with,
not to or for, our people.*

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