

GRDC Regional Cropping Solutions Network Final Report

INTRODUCTION

Organisation and Facilitation of Partners in Grain WA's INSPIRE SUMMIT 2016 PIG 00010

The INSPIRE Summit was an advanced farm business skills summit for 130 women from WA farm businesses.

It was a 2 day event held on the 6 & 7 April at the Pagoda Resort & Spa, Como.

Focusing on grain growers, INSPIRE was for women who are highly involved in their farm business and are interested in increasing their own skills, capacity and confidence for the benefit of their business, their community and the wider industry.

OBJECTIVES

- Establishing a network of 100 engaged women from farm businesses across all port zones.
- Increased confidence and capacity of women involved in farm businesses.
- Increased engagement of women in local and industry organisations.
- Increased sharing of farm business management responsibilities across various partners.
- Increased awareness and understanding of farm business succession, governance, farm advisory boards, technology, the impact of social media, office management systems, farm employment obligations & options, structures & strategies for overcoming the unexpected.
- Improved communication and team management skills
- A better understanding of how significant agriculture is globally and the opportunities that brings Australian farm businesses.
- Improved relationships & understanding between farmers and their consultants, accountants and bankers.

LOCATION

A Professional Development Event held in Perth for grain growers from across WA's 5 RCSN zones.

METHODOLOGY

JUSTIFICATION

It has been identified that there is a need for further professional development and capacity building opportunities for women in farm businesses.

This has been identified through feedback and evaluations from the 65+ (GRDC developed) workshops that Partners in Grain has delivered in WA since July 2013, consultation with the WA Reference Group, WA grower groups, and farming conversations at a local level.

As the management of farm businesses becomes more complex and time consuming there are great advantages to be gained in sharing responsibilities between various partners.

Most of the existing professional development opportunities in WA are either localised or targeted mainly at the male partners in the farm business. As women are becoming more involved in the management of their businesses, this summit is an opportunity for women to learn from others, from across all of WA's grain growing regions.

This event strongly aligns with key issues noted at the 2015 RCSN open meetings: farm business management, finance & IT, business management, staffing & succession, communications (tech), labour & machinery costs, and managing seasonal variability.

The INSPIRE Summit was developed, as requested by growers, as a follow-on from these workshops. It is an advanced learning opportunity for farming women to come together across all port zones. Currently there is no other opportunity available like this.

DESCRIPTION

Hosted as a two day program plus a networking sundowner, INSPIRE was held in Perth to enable centralised access for women from all port zones. It was promoted as the next step on from PinG workshops, for women who have the business basics under control and are keen to learn more. There are numerous women's networks throughout WA that are bringing growers together locally, but there is limited opportunity to learn across the regions.

Growers really enjoy and benefit from hearing from other growers' experiences, hence this format was integral to INSPIRE. Concurrent sessions were a key part of the day and each of these were led by presentations from growers. For each key topic, two growers presented their experiences. The session concluded with a panel style question time that included the 2 growers and an industry professional offered their insight.

Ultimately, we wanted participants to go home and contribute to the wider community by inspiring others locally to realise their potential in managing their farming business. Implementation of INSPIRE learnings is likely to be more successful if participants have a local contact who they can bounce ideas off when applying on farm. To encourage this, a discounted twin share accommodation rate at the Summit venue was promoted as part of the registration process.

PinG collaborated with WA grower groups and women's networks to ensure the content and format of INSPIRE met the needs of today's growers. Within a mix of keynote, panel and concurrent sessions, presented by industry professionals and growers, areas of business covered throughout the 2 days included:

- A global perspective – the future of agriculture: Rabobank
- The next generation in Agriculture: Laura Grubb
- Farm boards & governance opportunities: grower concurrent session
- Simplifying on farm employment: grower concurrent session
- Social media & technology: grower concurrent session
- Advanced office management: grower concurrent session
- Overcoming adversity: grower concurrent session
- Succession: grower concurrent session
- Team Dynamics: Andrew Huffer
- Valuing outside expertise panel: consultant, accountant, banker
- Influential Communication: Margo Halbert
- Simplify, Structure & Succeed – you, your goals and your business: Shannah Kennedy

RESULTS

The INSPIRE Summit was an overwhelming success.

Registrations quickly sold out and were then extended.

The atmosphere at the 2-day event was inspiring in itself. Growers were enthusiastic, ready to learn and relished the opportunity to network with like-minded women and industry representatives.

Feedback from participants, speakers and sponsors was all extremely positive.

The event received good publicity locally, state-wide and nationally.

Participants left the event feeling confident and ready to implement changes in their businesses.

For full details see the attached INSPIRE EVALUTIONS Report, TESTIMONIALS and Discussion below.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

(Compared with the objectives)

Establishing a network...

- Due to high demand for the event, places available increased and registrations were sold up to the maximum that the venue allowed. This resulted in 130 growers attending the event including 2 from South Australia who has seen the event promoted on the PinG website.
- The WA registrations were very much scattered from throughout all grain growing areas and port zones. PinG's promotion of 'register with a friend' was also taken up very well, hence many growers now have someone in their home area who they can discuss their learnings and actions with.

- As you will see from the attached EVALUATIONS REPORT the opportunity to establish this network of farm business women was extremely highly valued. Contacts were shared amongst participants, and PinG has had an increase in its social media followers as a result of the event.
- A few days prior to the event PinG emailed some BENCHMARKING questions (see attached) for participants to complete prior to attending. This was done to give us an insight into where WA farm businesses are at, but more-so to enable participants to compare their business management with others. Of the 110 emails sent out we received 90 completed benchmark surveys. To us this shows that learning from a network of comparable businesses is extremely highly valued!!

Increased confidence and capacity...

- As shown in the attached EVALUATIONS REPORT, the majority of participants did strongly feel that their confidence and capacity had increased as a result of the event. And also, that they have been inspired to do things differently.
- Verbal feedback to our Reference Group Members confirmed this, and it is also interesting to note two other learnings that many women commented on: realising the value of their role in the business and giving themselves credit for managing certain areas of their business in the ways being encouraged at the Summit.
- Shannah Kennedy was a keynote presenter on Day 1. After an afternoon of global agriculture, the next generation and business management, Shannah emphasised the importance of looking after yourself to enable you to contribute effectively to everything else. People are our biggest asset and as the EVALUATION REPORT shows, this was an absolute standout session, particularly as people increasingly struggle to balance business, community and family with mental, emotional and physical health.

Increased engagement of women in local and industry organisations...

- As part of the registration process participants answered a few REGISTRATION Questions (see attached) to allow PinG to get an overview of those attending and ensure the content for INSPIRE would hit the mark. Interestingly 48% of participants are employed off-farm and 80% already have volunteer community commitments.
- It is difficult to measure this objective, however, prior to the event 60% of participants said that they would possibly be interested in being on the PinG Reference Group within the next 2 years. Given the confidence and capacity increased, you would expect that their involvement would also increase.

Increased sharing of farm business management responsibilities across various partners...

- The REGISTRATION Questions (attached) shows that many of the management responsibilities are already shared.
- What the Summit has done is given participants tools, skills and ideas to better share and manage these responsibilities, particularly in the areas of communication, business and succession planning, governance. See the "What will you do differently questions" from the EVALUATIONS REPORT.

Increased awareness and understanding of farm business succession, governance, farm advisory boards, technology, the impact of social media, office management systems, farm employment obligations & options, structures & strategies for overcoming the unexpected...

- Possibly the greatest feedback in the EVALUATIONS REPORT is within the questions "what did you find more interesting" and "what will you do differently". Each of the areas listed in this objective above are mentioned in both of these questions. Participants valued and learnt from all sessions at INSPIRE.
- The inclusion and format of the grower lead concurrent sessions was highly valued to participants. Each topic was well attended, the speakers delivered to their brief and the opportunity to learn from other growers was extremely beneficial to the majority of participants.
- One aspect to be noted was the participants' exposure to and understanding of the different types of risks within farm businesses. Seasonal, financial, loss of key members, lack of systems and processes, lack of communication and planning. As it happened, these

appeared as a common theme within many sessions and as can be seen in the EVALUTIONS REPORT as key things that participants “will do differently as a result”.

Improved communication and team management skills...

- Communication was another topic that appeared as a common theme between sessions and also between speakers within sessions.
- You will see from the EVALUTIONS REPORT that commonly noted from both days within “most interesting” and “things to do differently” include Communication, Plan, Board, Family, Staff, Encourage, HR, Meetings.
- Many participants noted that they planned to start regular business and family meetings, and would better discuss their business and personal plans. Looking into an advisory board or setting up a meeting with all consultants was also mentioned highly.

A better understanding of how significant agriculture is globally and the opportunities that brings Australian farm businesses...

- This topic was covered by the first two speakers of INSPIRE. Although the global outlook speaker’s delivery was not highly rated, many participants commented that his content was interesting. It was noted by the Reference Group that the participants’ questions to this speaker showed a strong understanding and interest in global agriculture.
- Laura Grubb presented from the view point of the ‘next generation’ of agriculture. Laura’s passion, international experience and positive view were a highlight and inspiration to many participants.

Improved relationships & understanding between farmers and their consultants, accountants and bankers...

- As the EVALUATION REPORT shows, the Outside Expertise Panel Session was an absolute stand out across the 2 days of INSPIRE.
- The three speakers in this session had the topic “key pieces of advice I wish my clients would take on board”. Each gave a different perspective of common re-occurring themes such as know your numbers, know your structure, plan and communicate.
- Participants valued the honesty, knowledge and delivery of this session. They also valued the interaction, feedback and networking with service providers at the sundowner and throughout the event.
- Having spoken to some of the sponsors since the event, they also benefited from INSPIRE. They gained a better appreciation of where growers are at, and learnt new skills and ideas from speakers. Some have implemented initiatives as a result of the event, others have had increased enquiries from farm businesses.

IMPLICATIONS

INSPIRE was a \$62,000 event.

GRDC’s investment of \$7500 in INSPIRE equates to less than \$60 per participant.

It delivered what it promised: advanced farm business skills for women of WA farm businesses, with an emphasis on sharing of ideas and networking. It gave participants confidence and inspired them to make changes to strengthen their farm businesses.

Attendees paid between \$230 (earlybird) and \$280 to attend.

94% of participants strongly agreed that it was value for money for their business.

6% answered neutrally.

100% of participants said they would recommend it to others.

100% of participants would like to see this event ran either annually or bi-annually.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Partners in Grain recommends that GRDC:

- Continue to invest in smaller cost, short term projects and events that offer immediate benefits and are highly valued by WA grain growing businesses.
- Utilise this report and attachments as evidence of WA grain growers farm business professional development needs.
- Realise the value in working with Partners in Grain (as a Not-For-Profit organisation that is driven to deliver opportunities to growers, rather than being a commercial organisation driven by profit) and the network it has in WA.

- Consider Partners in Grain as a valued provider of professional development opportunities to farm businesses.

APPENDICES

See the attached:

- INSPIRE EVALUATIONS REPORT
- Post event TESTIMONIALS
- Inspire growers BENCHMARK results
- Inspire REGISTRATIONS Questions
- PR & Media Summary Report.

See photos on the following page



Plain English Summary

Project Title:	Organisation and Facilitation of Partners in Grain WA's INSPIRE SUMMIT 2016
GRDC Project No.:	PIG 00010
Contact:	Erin Green, WA Coordinator
Organisation:	Partners in Grain PO Box 27 Nabawa WA 6532
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Objectives	To host the INSPIRE Summit, an advanced farm business skills summit for up to 130 women from WA farm businesses. The event will be held in Perth over 2 days, and include a networking sundowner.
Background	It has been identified that there is a need for further professional development and capacity building opportunities for women in farm businesses. This has been identified through feedback and evaluations from the 65+ (GRDC developed) workshops that Partners in Grain has delivered in WA since July 2013, consultation with the WA Reference Group, WA grower groups, and farming conversations at a local level. As the management of farm businesses becomes more complex and time consuming there are great advantages to be gained in sharing responsibilities between various partners.
Research	This event strongly aligns with key issues noted at the 2015 WA RCSN open meetings: farm business management, finance & IT, business management, staffing & succession, communications (tech), labour & machinery costs, and managing seasonal variability. Most of the existing professional development opportunities in WA are either localised or targeted mainly at the male partners in the farm business. As women are becoming more involved in the management of their businesses, this summit is an opportunity for women to learn from others, from across all of WA's grain growing regions. Currently there is no other opportunity available like this.
Outcomes	The INSPIRE Summit was an overwhelming success. • Registrations quickly sold out and were then extended to the limit of the venue. • The event was only open to growers, speakers and sponsors. It was only promoted through PinG networks – paid advertising was not needed to fill places. • Hosting a quality event that allowed interaction between participants, was the priority. • 130 growers from across the 5 RCSNs attended. 160 people in total. • The atmosphere at the event was inspiring in itself. Growers were enthusiastic, ready to learn and relished networking with like-minded women and industry representatives. • The program's emphasis on grower-to-grower learning was integral to the value derived by growers and the confidence it gave them to make business changes. • Feedback from participants, speakers and sponsors was all extremely positive. • Participants left feeling confident and ready to implement changes in their businesses. • All participants requested the Summit be held either annually or biannually. For full details see the attached INSPIRE EVALUTIONS Report and TESTIMONIALS
Implications	The quick uptake of registrations, positive feedback and requests for future similar opportunities highlights the need for this type of professional development opportunity. Having a program built from "the ground up", from growers needs was crucial and delivering what was promoted was key to the success of the event. Growers see great benefit in networking and sharing ideas amongst peers in a professional and supportive environment.