

final report

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Young Producer & Rural Women's Initiative

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Abstract

The BestWool BestLamb (BWBL) program has identified the importance of young producers in the growth and development of the rural industries and is seeking ways to engage and retain good young people in the industry. As a result BWBL hosted two facilitated workshops to explore the training needs of young and female producers.

Five key areas of professional development were prioritised by the participants.

- Business Expansion (Getting started in farming and Growing a Business)
- Human Resource Management (Managing yourself and others)
- Using Modern Technology (Office and Paddock)
- Benchmarking (Business and People)
- Gippsland Agribusiness Development

It was recommended that the BWBL program management seek to secure funding to offer these development programs:

Background to the Project.

With declining numbers of young people entering agriculture (farming) in Victoria there is a need and demand to foster and develop the new entrants so that they are well skilled to gain the rewards that are potentially available. The 40 BestWool BestLamb Groups across Victoria are characterised in the main by older farmers (40 plus years of age) with fewer young farmer members. It is believed that there is great potential to increase the involvement and subsequent development of many young farmers through a targeted professional development program. Many of the young producers who would have entered the industry in the last ten years have redirected their careers and have been lost to farming, temporarily we hope. This was manifested by many years of drought reducing the profits and subsequent rewards for young farmers.

BestWool BestLamb has identified the importance of young producers in the growth and development of the rural industries and is seeking ways to engage and retain good young people in the industry.

The BestWool BestLamb organisation therefore engaged the services of Agribusiness Consultant Ken Solly, Naracoorte South Australia, to conduct background research into the needs and wants of young producers and potential members of such a development program. Ken has extensive experience with a wide range of young producer development programs in South Australia and Western Victoria. Ken is also a BestWool BestLamb group facilitator in the Western District of Victoria.

Enabling the Research – The funders

This project was jointly funded by

- Australian Wool Innovation (AWI)
- Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA)
- Victorian Department of Primary Industries (Vic DPI)

Research Methodology

A major Young Producer and Rural Women's forum was conducted on June 28th 2011 at Bendigo with names and addresses of potential attendees being provided by many of the BWBL Coordinators across the state. Thirty five (35) attended the forum comprising 30 young producers and 5 older (40 years plus) rural women. It should be noted that many young women attended the forum and chose to see themselves as young producers rather than rural women. The Bendigo Forum program is provided in Appendix 1.

The forum was facilitated by Jason Trompf, Chairman of BWBL, and Ken Solly, the Project Manager, with smaller group work facilitated by BWBL Coordinators.

Another mini forum was conducted at Sale on September 5th 2011 with 10 young producers in attendance. Again, this group had gender balance and saw themselves as young agribusiness professionals seeking a development program that would involve everyone in the region in one broader development program.

A questionnaire (Appendix 2) was circulated with the forum invitation to ensure that participants had really thought about the concept and associated issues prior to the forum. Many of these questionnaires were returned prior to the forum so the facilitators could collate the results and present them at the forum. The results are summarised in Appendix 3.

The forum process was built around each person doing a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) on both their business and themselves. Provision was also made for the attendees to identify strategies to address the issues identified. Having completed the SWOT analysis, the participants were then required to circle the one or two key issues that they believed they needed to pursue as a priority for the future.

These ideas were recorded for all to see and take on board. They were then grouped and the following themes were developed.

- Business Expansion (Getting started in farming and Growing a Business)
- Human Resource Management (Managing yourself and others)
- Using Technology (Office and Paddock)
- Benchmarking (Business and People)
- Farm Finance (Business Management)
- Marketing (Commodities)

The Gippsland forum identified a range of issues that encompassed parts of most of the above list and thus ended with what may be termed Agribusiness Development. A summary of the Gippsland forum outcomes are contained in Appendix 5.

At the Bendigo forum, after the identification of the key themes (needs), focus groups were developed to flesh out what each theme would contain (the content), should a program be developed.

Following each break out session everyone participated in a combined group feedback session where they shared the key elements that they had identified to meet their needs should they become a member of a development program. This is summarised in Appendix 4.

The initial groups were then reformed to decide how such a program might be delivered. The concepts of training workshops, coaching and mentoring, agribusiness study tours, teleconferences and networking featured heavily. At the conclusion of the forum the three representatives for each of the funding bodies gave a brief summation of what had been developed during the day.

Research Emphasis;

As the research took place the major interest and involvement was from young producers and, given the tight budget, it was decided to focus on young producer development. The state wide forum concept was most likely not to be an appropriate structure to gain strong participation from rural women due to the daily demands that they must fulfil. Best Wool Best Lamb has not dismissed the needs of Rural Women but may be required to address this priority in another way.

Recommendation:

That the BWBL organisation proceeds to secure funding to offer the following development programs:

- Business Expansion (Getting started in farming and Growing a Business)
- Human Resource Management (Managing yourself and others)
- Using Modern Technology (Office and Paddock)
- Benchmarking (Business and People)
- Gippsland Agribusiness Development

Summary:

The five Young Producer Development Programs identified through this research process are anticipated to have a great impact on the individuals and the industry that they are involved in.

No potential funders of these types of program have been identified in this report, however Federal and State Government bodies along with peak industry groups will be pursued.

If funding submissions are successful it is anticipated that these programs would commence around the start of the second quarter of 2012.

Acknowledgement:

The BESTWOOLBESTLAMB organisation wishes to acknowledge and thank Australian Wool Innovation, Meat & Livestock Australia and the Victorian Department of Primary Industries for funding this research work.

Appendix 1.

Forum Program

**Young Producer & Rural Women's Initiative
Bendigo, June 28th 2011.**

10.30 am	Welcome, Morning Tea & Meeting Circles – Ken Solly
11 am	Background to Proposed Young Producer and Rural Women's Initiatives. - Jason Trompf
11.10 am	Using the Crank handle - Gaining the Ideas – Jason Trompf & Ken Solly <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Questionnaire Outcomes• Whole Group Brain Storm• Streaming the ideas• Developing the break out groups
11.50 am	What Development opportunities have Young Producers and Rural Women had. - KS
12.00 pm	Break out Session No 1 – Developing the Specific Ideas/Concepts (The What) <p>Participants will be assigned to their idea of choice with the view of doing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confirming the title of the Initiative• Identify the specific goals of the program• How would you envisage the program be structured• What special features would you like the program to have?• How would it benefit the individual and the industry
1.00 pm	Lunch
1.30 pm	Group Feedback Session to whole group - Sharing the program content ideas
2.10 pm	Break Out Session No 2 – Refining and Improving each Initiative (How and Who) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can the original concept be improved• Confirm key considerations in designing the program.• What would limit the participant uptake of this initiative• Group parameters• Strategies for gaining participants• Location of specific groups
3.00 pm	Tea Coffee Break
3.15 pm	Feedback Session – Sharing the key elements of Break out Session 2
3.45 pm	Summary of the Forum – Jason Trompf
3.55 pm	Initial thoughts of Potential Funder's/Stakeholders
4.10 pm	Where to from here - Ken Solly <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program Development• Market Research• Communication Strategy• Involvement in the development phase• Identification of key link people.• Possible timelines
4.25 pm	Close

Appendix 2:

BWBL Young Producers and Rural Women's Initiative

Pre Forum Questionnaire

Name (Optional)

- 1. List the development programs that you are currently involved in or have recently been involved.**
- 2. Have there been any gaps or deficiencies in these programs, what are they?**
- 3. What are the biggest challenges you are facing in your business/career?**
- 4. In which area will you need/would like greatest assistance to achieve your goals?**
- 5. What type of initiative would you like to see implemented for you to become involved?**
- 6. What features would you like to see incorporated in the program/initiative listed in question 5 to gain your involvement?**
- 7. What things must be avoided to gain your involvement?**
- 8. Any other comments or suggestions?**

NB: The above ideas and comments are by no means any form of commitment.

Please forward this questionnaire prior to the Forum to:

Ken Solly
Program Manager, BWBL Young Producer & Rural Women's Initiatives
172 Smith Street, Naracoorte. SA 5271

Tel: 08 8762 0895	Fax: 08 8762 0896	Email: kensolly@rbm.com.au
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Appendix 3



BESTWOOLBESTLAMB

Young Producer & Rural Women's Initiative

Research Forum Bendigo - June 28th 2011

Pre Forum Questionnaire Responses

Development Programs, Current and Past

- Loddon Shire Youth Leadership
- Icehouse Business Development (Aust - NZ)
- 1st Year Science Melb Uni
- MOFAC Rural Leadership
- Pathways to Rural Leadership –Canberra
- Field Days
- NE Best Wool Best Lamb Group
- Inspiring Rural Women – Yarrawonga
- Campaspe & Glenelg BWBL Group
- Farm Monitor Project
- Dookie BWBL Group
- Lifetime Ewe Management
- Next Generation Herefords Australia

Gaps & Deficiencies – Current & Past Programs

- Program out of line with Production season
- Difficulty in getting like minded people together
- Lack of opportunity for young producers to form own groups
- Lack of opportunity for women to network
- Not improving the business management side
- Minimal follow and post course review
- Relocating to farm has meant I miss my friends and social scene
- Lack of information on good career pathway

Biggest Challenge – Business and Career

- Seasons/ewe population
- Selecting subjects to suit career
- Knowing where to get help and Gov't Init
- Work Life Balance, Finding skilled labour rising input costs
- Confidence, purchasing a farm, finance and employment
- Pasture Prod'n and Stock Rate
- Lack of business administration support
- Balancing demands of off farm and on farm work
- Keeping up with farm management input and learning
- Having enough time – balancing family demands

Area in need of assistance

- Marketing products
- Accessing best information
- Measuring business performance, benchmarking, legal requirements employing staff and business structures
- Pasture production and Stocking rate
- Employing staff
- R&D into productivity eg pasture & stock rate
- Soils – greater knowledge and understanding
- Social life in the country
- Opportunity to experience a wide range of options
- Ongoing support on new and innovative management
- Access to knowledge and support
- Networking with top producers & other young prod

Type of Initiative you would like implemented

- Ensure program have a social side
- On farm base level research
- Formal structured short courses, field days and tech updates
- Female mentoring, assertiveness training
- Skills for female farm management workers - OHS
- Use of composite rams in self replacing system
- Pasture management
- Group of like minded people to come together to organise training and learn from each other
- Program to develop personal & business goals and pathway to achieve them
- Marketing seminar

What feature would you like to see in the initiative?

- Anything to do with marketing
- Goal setting exercises by trained facilitators
- Needs to be business oriented
- Bring the research to the farm
- Needs a social element
- Lifetime ewe model with small groups
- Include the financial management element
- Include current R & D
- Time with Industry bodies and key drivers

What must be avoided?

- High cost
- Not clash with sunny days
- Repetition and Replication
- Only interested if relevant and improve what I do
- Travel over long distances
- Training that does not include a trained professional
- Night time meetings
- A top down approach YP & RW must drive it
- Late notice of events
- Having meetings for meeting sake

Other Comments

- Looking forward to meeting others on 28th
- Great thing this forum is happening
- Seems a great initiative
- Hope it is a great success
- I seem to be able to find resources to meet my needs so doubt I would get involved
- Financial pressures and the elements are making it difficult
- Make it fun, interesting, think outside the box, challenge our minds.

Appendix 4:

Best Wool Best Lamb

Young Producer and Rural Women's Forum All Seasons Resort, Bendigo – June 28th 2011

Summary Overview

This document represents the outcomes of the work sessions conducted at the forum.

Each participant was provided with a Strategic Audit sheet where they were required to list their strengths weaknesses, opportunities and threats for both the business and themselves. By taking themselves through this process it enabled each person to identify the key issues that they wished to pursue for both improving themselves and the business.

These issues were recorded on the whiteboard then grouped into themes or topics. A summary is listed below.

Human Resources.

Staff Communications	Labour Efficiency
Attracting staff	Job Satisfaction
Finding labour	Work Life Balance
Time Management	Social isolation
Relationship with contractors	Communications
Engaging and Leading staff	Self Belief
Understanding the building blocks	Benchmarking Human Resources
Embracing OHS.	Staff Structuring

Finance

- Accounting and Tax
- Reducing Margins
- Grants and Funding

Marketing

- Advertising and Promotion
- Increase demand
- Marketing

Technology

- Computer based technology
- Efficient use of inputs
- Staff labour technology saving
- Use of genetic and stock handling technology

Business Expansion

- How to grow a business
- Land Acquisition
- Developing a plan
- Expansion issues
- Differing business models

Benchmarking

- Undertake a Benchmarking program
- Comparative analysis
- Targets and goals
- Analysis
- Achieve and resetting goals
- Human Benchmarking

Following the identification of the themes break out groups were formed to further develop the concepts.

Break Out Session One Task: To develop the theme, the program content and the key issues that must be addressed.

Break Out Session Two Task: To develop the how component, what methods are deemed best to achieve what was identified in session one.

A summary of both sessions has been taken from butcher's paper summary which follows. The summaries have been recorded as they were on the butcher's paper and may lack some explanation and cohesion. This does not undermine the overall outcomes of the process.

Break out Groups findings

Business Expansion

Group Members

Tim Leeming – Facilitator, Carol Hollier, Maureen Lawrence, Stuart Warner, Will Hooke, Simon Bogie, Edward Blackwell

Key Issues Identified. – The What.

- What are the pathways?
- Value adding/Improving the current business
- Why do we want to expand the business?
- Goal Setting - Where are we now?
- Realistic Goal Setting –What is achievable?
- Off Farm Investments –Allocating Resources elsewhere

How to Develop and Deliver the Business Expansion package.

Study Tour on their patch

Guest Speaker – motivated, energised and inspiration

Agribusiness – what is achievable?

Developing a specific method to suit your business –Skills audit awareness

Find the right skills – legal and financial.

Case Study – session developed in BWBL & activity.

Working in Farmer Groups

Develop a series of templates for producer to access on the web

List and or develop a series/network of business professionals

Pathways to Business Expansion – Tools

Using current equity – Banks, Financiers, Leasing, Share farming

Equity: land, machinery, stock

Tool Instant cash flow and benchmarking figures; cash flow/budgets

Plan: In head, On paper

How do you manage risk?

Self Confidence

Business Partnership.

Human Resource Management

Group Members

Cheryl Graham – Facilitator, Tania Twigg, Mary Anne Holt, Kellyanne Semple, Luke Twigg, Dan Korff, Tim Paulet.

Key Issues Identified. – The What.

- Health and Well-being
 - Manage Stress
 - Physical/Mental Health
- Communication -
 - Structuring formal communication
 - More business like
 - Goals/vision/expectation
 - Regular
- Staff
 - Defining a career structure
 - Engaging staff
 - Attracting young staff
 - Relationship building
 - Retaining –win/win – young staff
 - Addressing social isolation
 - Time Management/Efficiency
 - Human Benchmarking
 - Swot of People in the Business
 - Understanding people in your business better
 - Education and Training
- Farm Manual – Processes
 - systems
 - communication tool
- Self Confidence
- Positive Networks

Highest priority issues

- Health and Wellbeing
- Communication
- Staff Management
- Human Benchmarking
- Education and Training

How to Develop and Deliver the Human Resource package.

- Ideas – ways to learn
 - On the job – with mentoring from experienced staff
 - On the job – learn from younger staff
- Small group learning (eg Lifetime Ewe) – structured, theory, practical, reinforcement, repetition, good facilitator, follow for season.
- Formal Course – Short or longer
- Study Tours – Learning from people who are doing it, seeing it in action, with a group – good.
- Staff Management
- Better Business Communication
- Best ways to learn about HR Issues
 - Study tour of model businesses
 - Small group learning
 - communication
 - staff management - process and structures
 - 6 sessions over 12 months – LTE

Mentoring Coaching
Sustainable Farm Families

Farm Finance

Sam Clayfield – Facilitator, Tim Hollier, David McClure – Contact, Raquel Waller

Key Issues Identified. – The What.

Accounting and Tax

- Understanding of these and how they relate to the business
- New technology and application to business
- Understanding the carbon tax

Cash Flow

- Understanding and applying to business decisions
- For use in understanding risk management
- New technology and applications

Grants/ Funds – Use of Equity

- pathways for young primary producers coming into agriculture
- Where to go for funding

Reducing margins (assume interest rate margins)

- understanding cash flow

Matches in with other topics on the board

- business expansion and benchmarking
- minimising financial cost
- how to grow the business

Succession

- changing/passing on assets

How to Develop and Deliver the Farm Finance package.

Accounting and Tax/Cash flow decision/ succession

- Understanding
- Application
- New tech – on line collaborative space like TAFE's
- Breaking into workshop – maybe one a quarter
- Small working groups like LTEM
- Have mentors involved
- Industry personnel eg banker, accountant/consultant talk through individual farms with group + new tech

Benefits

- understanding of own business & how different business models work

Getting ppl in workshops

- 1 workshop per quarter – reduce time off farm
- Workshops held on farm
- Smaller groups for honesty and transparency
- Component of workshop individual based eg homework

Parameters – limiting factors

- Trust
- Not a riveting subject
- Time
- Distance and travel
- Technology momentum

Cash Flow

- application
- risk management
- tech application

Technology

Erica Shelfhorst – Facilitator, Pat Simon, Karl George

Key Issues Identified. – The What.

Need the right tech for your business

Maximise the use of technology – auto feeder and feed test

Make time to learn tech to then save time

Use Tech to network ideas

- every producer to send in a one sentence job achieved for the next week, fortnight and month.
- Incentive to be provided to get the information to be sent in

What tech equipment?

- who to talk to/trial and error

Mentoring to use tech to get started

How do you motivate yourself to use the tech when not confident or not working?

Put website links on Newsflash

- short term employees
- programs – worm boss etc.

Use of iPhone and Facebook.

How to Develop and Deliver the Technology package

Focus farms that use the technology to best advantage

All sorts of technology to look at – facilitator needs help to set focus

Trial period for technology – set up contracts etc. with sales reps with try to buy.

Practical technology for out on the farm vs. pc inside

What saves you time

Financial Benchmarking

John Marriot – facilitator, Tara Hawkins, Celia Scott, Sophie Leonard, Plus others

Key Issues Identified. – The What

Acting on results and applying to budget

Understanding background

Quality of data – use of technology
Start with a goal
Discipline your goals
Depth of information – transparent
Challenge the financial information

Production – animals/crop production with feed nutritional requirements
Health – time/labour/social/issues

Challenges

- Making Benchmarking more attractive
- Fear of Failure
- Time to develop group confidence
- Common denominators
- Benefit of geographic spread
- More valuable in a group
- Develop SMART goals

Need a common program that is consistent across all groups
Consistent records
Need checks and balances
Need for a prototype
How to act on the data
Important to keep data up to date/current as well as technology and ipads.

How to Develop and Deliver the Benchmarking package

Pilot programs with groups on farm
Get together at pre-determined times to compare
Monitor improvement
A common denominator/facilitator

- face to face, not remote

Spread sheet with guidelines how to allocate costs accurately
Blue Sky technology
Also applies to health and social issues.

Marketing

James Whale – Facilitator, Anna Toland – Wool, Finlay- Lamb, , Tom Penrose, plus Others

Key Issues Identified. – The What

- 1 step is to understand wants and needs of the consumer/clients
- Information exchange along the supply chain
 - Access to supply chain to improve knowledge and understanding
 - Different roles eg agents/ reps
- Develop product with target audience in mind
- Sale Method
- exploring alternative options
 - Potential to change
 - Maximising competition
- Cost Effective Promotion/Advertising
- Getting the message out – technology options, media, getting the best out of reps/agents

How to Develop and Deliver the Marketing package

1 day marketing seminar

- either wool or lamb focused
- expression of interest flyer
- expert outside of agriculture
- Fundamentals of marketing
- Industry perspective
 - "Erindale Farm, Q Lamb
 - What end product is required?
 - What is needed to produce the product (Management, genetics?)
 - Economics of making the change
 - A producer example

Engaging agents/buyers etc.

Advertising and promotion expert.

Appendix 5

Best Wool Best Lamb

Gippsland Young Producer Forum Hacienda Motel Sale– September 5th 2011

Facilitator: Ken Solly

Overview

Craig Bush BEST WOOLBESTLAMB Coordinator in Gippsland organised the venue and participants to attend a focus meeting at the Hacienda Motel in Sale to ascertain the interest and the possible content of a Young Agribusiness Professional Development program under the BWBL banner. Ten young producers attended along with BWBL coordinator Craig bush and Project Leader Ken Solly.

Each participant was provided with a Strategic Audit sheet where they were required to list their strengths weaknesses, opportunities and threats for both the business and themselves. By taking them-selves through this process it enabled each person to identify the key issues that they wished to pursue to enhance their development and that of their business.

These issues were summaries as:

- Business Expansion
- Risk Management
- Business Management and Analysis
- Genetic Improvement
- Succession Planning
- Labour Management
- Marketing
- Advertising/Promotion
- Financial Management

Preferred methodology to achieve the learning

- Study tours to top operators
- Training workshops
- Add ons to existing short activities

What must the program have or be.

The group identified the following issues:

- High level of relevance
- Professionally run
- Open Access
- Measurable Outcomes
- Group interaction and networking
- Where possible use the small group technique (Lifetime Ewe Management model)
- Be inclusive of partners/couples
- Contain a social aspect
- Must be challenging

What the program must not have:

The group identified the following issues:

- Replicate what is already happening
- Avoid negativity
- Compete with existing activities.

Other issues that must be recognised

- There are limited numbers of young producers in the region
- The program must not demand too much time given involvement in other groups such as Southern Farming Systems

General Agreements made by the group

- There was a general enthusiasm for the concept of this type of development program
- Many of the topics identified complemented each other and where applicable to all the businesses involved
- That additional people would need to be recruited over and beyond the 10 attendees on the night.

Possible use of mentors

- This was discussed and whilst desirable some concern was expressed over securing people to do this role.