



final report

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Southern Business EDGE Train the Trainer Phase 2

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Executive summary

A southern version of the Business EDGE workshop was developed for MLA in project E.EDG.1412 by Phil Holmes & Ian McLean. As part of that project delivery organisations and individual deliverers were identified, trained and assessed as being competent deliverers.

Since then delivery organisations in South Australia and New South Wales have been successfully delivering the Business EDGE workshop. The delivery organisation that was to deliver in Victoria and Tasmania was not able to successfully deliver workshops and withdrew as a deliverer.

Following this, Bush AgriBusiness identified Meridian Agriculture as a suitable delivery organisation of the Southern Business EDGE material in Victoria and Tasmania and held discussions with them. These discussions led to this project, to work with Meridian Agriculture to train and assess them as a delivery organisation.

This has been completed and Meridian Agriculture should now be accredited by MLA as a delivery organisation for Business EDGE in Victoria and Tasmania.

Table of contents

1	Background.....	4
2	Project objectives.....	4
3	Methodology	4
4	Results and Discussion	6
5	Conclusions/recommendations	9

1 Background

The Business EDGE workshop was developed in 2019 for MLA by Phil Holmes in response to producer demand for a training course covering business skills and financial literacy. It was originally a northern beef specific workshop, but following a favourable response from industry was updated, initially to cover multiple enterprises in the north and later a second version was developed to cover southern production systems.

As part of the development of the southern material (E.EDG.1412) delivery organisations and individual deliverers were identified, trained and assessed as being competent deliverers. Since then delivery organisations in South Australia and New South Wales have been successfully delivering the Business EDGE workshop. The delivery organisation that was to deliver in Victoria and Tasmania was not able to successfully deliver workshops and withdrew as a deliverer.

Following this, Bush AgriBusiness identified Meridian Agriculture as a suitable delivery organisation for the Southern Business EDGE material in Victoria and Tasmania and held discussions with them. These discussions led to this project, to work with Meridian Agriculture to train and assess them as a delivery organisation.

2 Project objectives

The objectives of the project were to provide the following:

- Financial/business technical support specific to southern mixed enterprises
- Co presentation of Southern Business EDGE workshop
- Support and mentoring
- Recommendation to MLA to approve two new Southern Business EDGE deliverers

The project will achieve the following:

Two consultants will be trained in Victoria/Tasmania and if approved by Ian McLean will be recommended as an MLA approved Southern Business EDGE deliverer, and operate under an MLA Delivery Deed.

3 Methodology

When the southern Business EDGE material was developed and the initial deliverers trained, the following criteria were set for potential Business EDGE deliverers, in consultation with MLA.

- Tertiary qualifications in any discipline related to the business of agricultural production, with special reference to broad-acre grazing.
- A detailed understanding of the business principles that drive profitable agriculture.
- At least ten years of post-graduate experience in agricultural production extension, preferably in the private sector.
- Ability to present complex business material to a producer audience face-to-face, in an audience- friendly manner.
- Knowledge, experience and ability to develop relevant regional case studies and add practical context to abstract course material.
- Knowledge, experience and ability to retain respect if audience discussion takes the course material off track.
- Ability and willingness to be part of a national team of experts with the knowledge, experience and ability to support continuous improvements to the course over time.

- 'Demonstrated experience in one-on-one advice and support to broad acre producers in understanding business performance and implementing strategies to improve profitability.
- Ability and commitment to take on the responsibility of running a course where the full financial risk is borne by the presenter, and to run follow-up courses.

Meridian Agriculture identified two professionals, Paul Blackshaw and James Whale, as potential deliverers of the Southern EDGE workshops who met these criteria. We communicated with them on the course background, principles and content. Paul & James then attended a Northern Business EDGE delivered by Bush AgriBusiness (Warwick, September 2019) as participants to see the material delivered in full. Time was taken with them before, during and after the workshops to explain the delivery of the material.

Meridian Agriculture, in consultation with MLA, scheduled and promoted two workshops in Victoria. These were held in Melbourne (Sep 30-Oct 1) and Hamilton (Oct 3-4). Ian McLean and Phil Holmes attended and sat in on both of these workshops. They were delivered by Paul and James, with Ian and Phil providing guidance and mentoring before, during and after the workshops to both presenters, individually and together.

Conversations have continued beyond the workshop, with Meridian making some constructive suggestions on improvements to the course content.

4 Results and Discussion

As experienced agricultural advisors, Paul and James both had good understanding of the business principles and concepts covered in the Business EDGE material and were able to relate the concepts to producers. They initially were not familiar with the Business EDGE content, case studies and some of the examples used. However, after the three workshops they were, and were able to include their own local experiences to help explain the material. Ian and Phil were comfortable that they had the understanding of the concepts, depth of experience and facilitation skills to be able to effectively and competently deliver the material.

The two Victorian workshops were well organised, with venue, workbooks, catering and teaching resources all adequate. A summary of the producer feedback is below, and Meridian Agriculture has forwarded to MLA the attendee details and evaluations from the workshop.

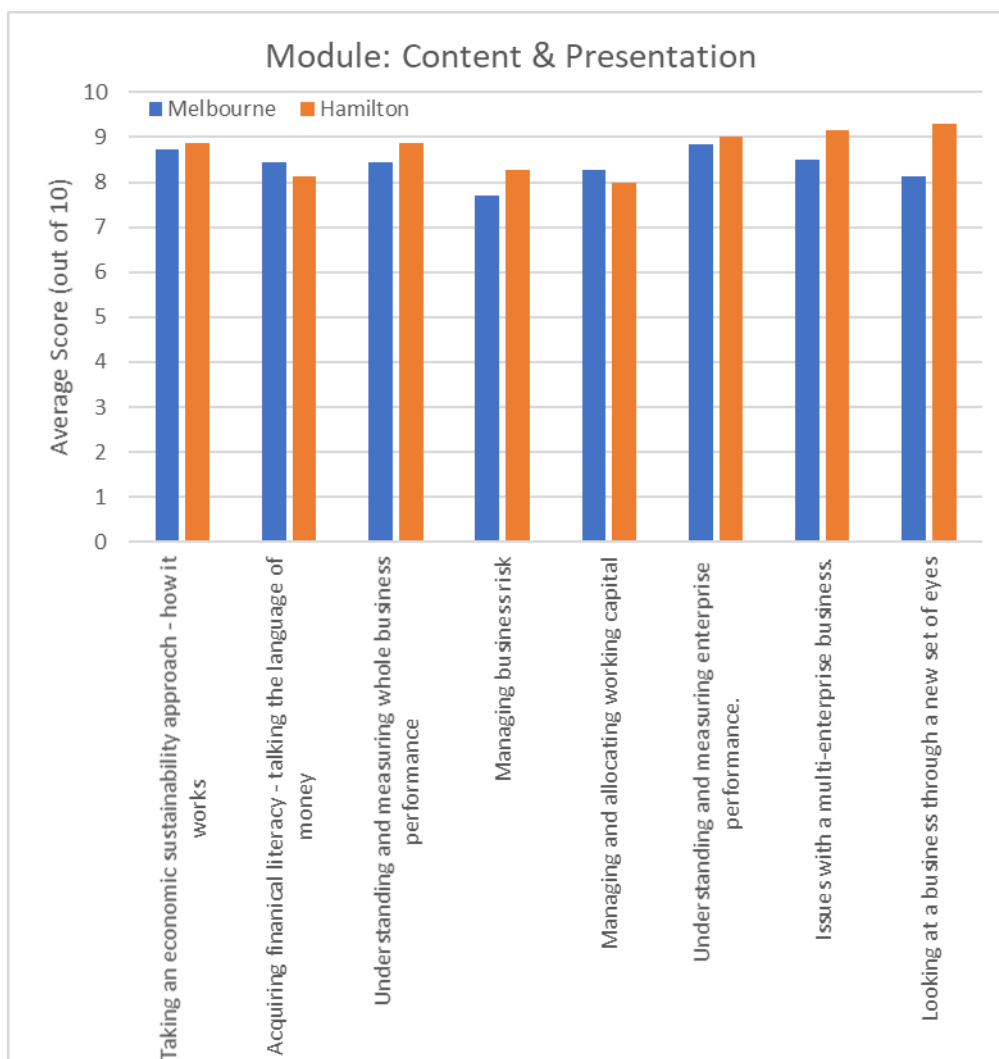


Figure 1 Participant responses when asked to rate the content and presentation of each module

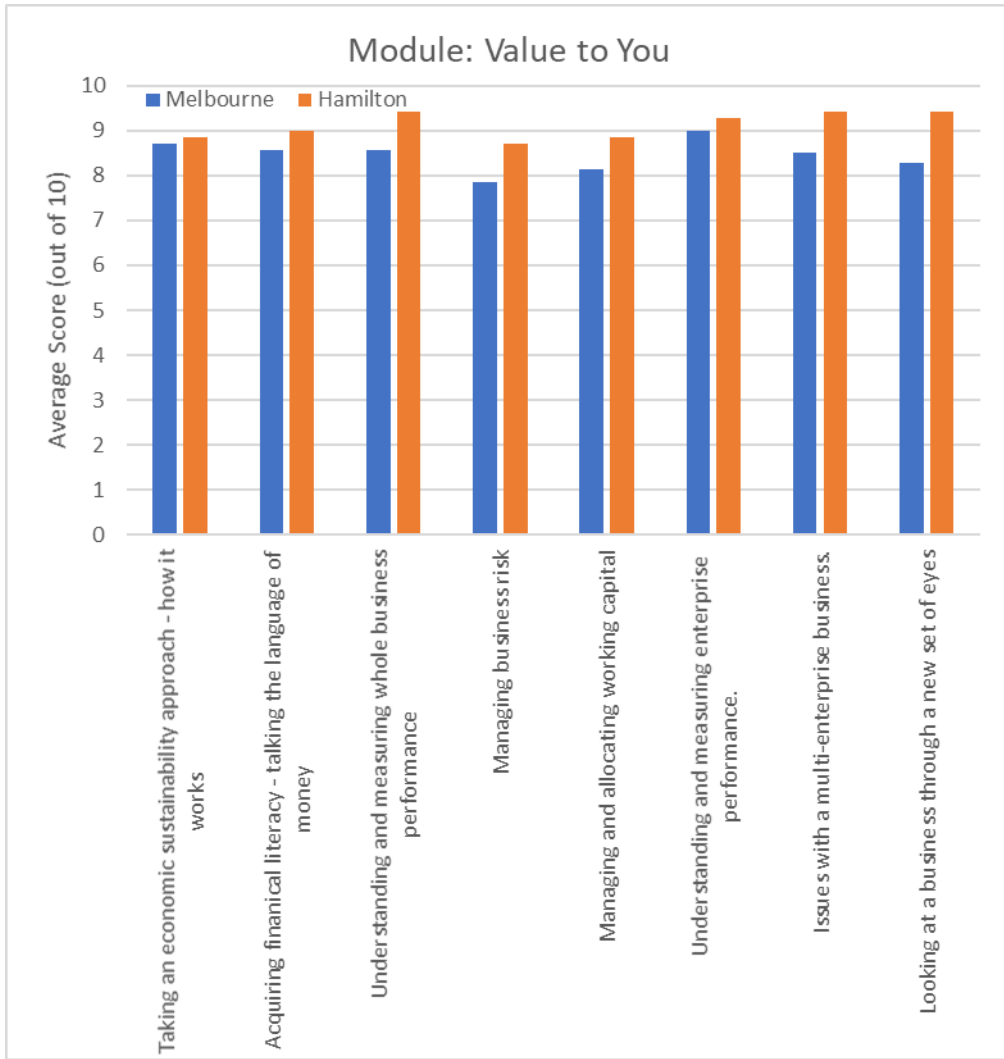


Figure 2 Participant responses when asked to rate the value of each module to them

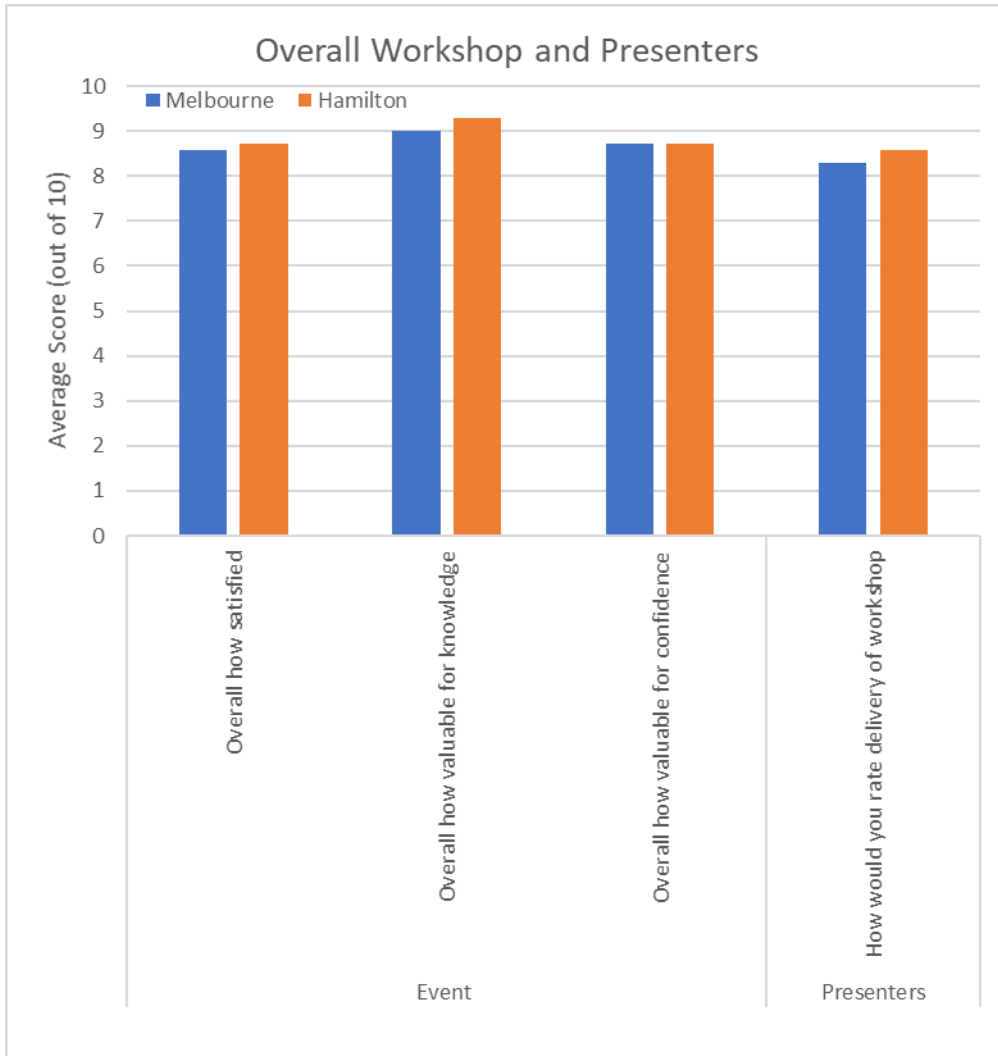


Figure 3 Participant responses when asked to rate aspects of the overall workshop and the presenters

5 Conclusions/recommendations

It is recommended that Meridian Agriculture be accredited as deliverers of the Southern Business EDGE material in Victoria and Tasmania.

It is also recommended that Paul Blackshaw and James Whale both be added to the list of accredited deliverers for Southern Business EDGE as lead deliverers.

Once a delivery deed is in place with Meridian Agriculture, there will be accredited deliverers covering all major regions of Australia, with the exception of southern WA. This creates the opportunity for increased national promotion of the product by MLA, now that there are deliverers in most regions. If there is interest in a southern WA workshop, then existing deliverers could deliver it with local input, until a suitable delivery organisation can be identified. It is recommended that MLA work with deliverers to coordinate a national approach to promoting the Business EDGE workshop.

In the delivery of the two southern Business EDGE workshops, a number of small areas were identified where the southern material could be updated, which were;

- Update background of slides to new MLA format (new logo)
- Include reference to 'The ABC of a corporate collapse' on last slide of session 2. This is a youtube series prepared by CPA which gives a good summary of the three pillars covered in that section.
- Include drawings in the cashflow statement of the case study businesses. The imputed owner wages is included but not the actual amount drawn, including this amount, as has been done in the Northern Business EDGE, will improve the Case Studies.
- Move the 'Set 4 Life' example in the slides to prior to the discounted \$100 example