



The Impact100 concept has already made its mark around the world after its genesis in the US around a decade ago. Locally, the concept has gained a foothold through the 2012 formation of the Impact100 WA group, and continues to grow through the establishment of Impact100 groups in Melbourne and Fremantle.

Grants Management Quarterly spoke with Impact100 WA's James Boyd, and Impact100 Melbourne committee member Vanessa Meachen about the Impact100 movement in Australia, and collective giving as a whole.

100 times the impact

Impact100 turning heads



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WHAT IS IT?

The Impact100 concept traces its origins to the US around a decade ago, with the first such group formed in Cincinnati in late 2001-early 2002. There are now a large number of these types of groups – based on the concept of “giving circles” – in the US.

Impact100 groups work to recruit 100 donors who are willing to contribute a small amount – generally \$1000 – to a wider funding pool. From there, the group asks for grant applications from groups and progresses through a grants assessment process.

Often Impact100 groups develop themes or funding priorities around which they base their giving. Many Impact100 groups will focus on grantmaking to slightly smaller groups, contending that a larger grant to a smaller organisation makes a greater impact – both for the successful grantseeker and to the wider community.

Most Impact100 groups will commit major funding to a single community organisation, with some also distributing a small number of minor grants to other groups originally shortlisted for the major grant.

Ultimately the concept is designed to make structured grantmaking more accessible to a wider audience who might not normally have the ability or financial resources to participate in philanthropy.

It is also designed to actively engage participants in each step of the grantmaking process, with Impact100 groups ensuring donors can listen to presentations from grantseekers and voting on who receives funding.

They have been described by some as a “cross between a book club and

an investment group”. They offer an engaged and collaborative approach to philanthropy where donors as a group see the benefits of funding a group beyond what they could achieve as individuals.

WHO IS DOING IT?

The first Impact100 group to be formed in Australia was in Western Australia in late 2011. Among the drivers of Impact100 WA’s formation was James Boyd, who at the time was the Western Australian manager of ArtsSupport Australia.

His interest in this style of giving stemmed from a visit to the US in 2011: “I became interested the growing trend of collective giving groups forming in the USA,” he said.

“In 2011, thanks to a Perpetual/FIA Scholarship I was able to go on a research trip from San Francisco to Seattle, interviewing founders of such groups.

“When I returned I started talking to people (in the philanthropic sector) about the different models and about how I believed the Impact100 model could work in Australia.”

Mr Boyd’s experience helped lead Sophie Chamberlain and Simon Bedbrook to form Impact100 WA, with Mr Boyd joining the group’s committee. The group’s seven-member committee features a variety of skills including accountancy, fundraising, wealth management and marketing. Each also has networks in the sector they can draw on.

Taking inspiration from a presentation by Mr Boyd in Melbourne late last year, a group of “philanthropy minded people” came together to form Impact100 Melbourne in early 2012.

“James’ talk really resonated with a few people in the audience and things went from there,” said Impact100 Melbourne committee member Vanessa Meachen.

“What we have in place is a sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation (ACF). We’re working with the ACF party because they are managing the sub-fund for the WA Impact100 group and are familiar with the concept.

A third Impact100 group, based in the Fremantle area, launched in May with support from a number of prominent Fremantle locals, as well as the Fremantle Foundation.

A different kind of donor

The Impact100 model – like many of those in the “collective giving” category – sets out to attract a different type of donor.

“Impact100 is a way people can be hands on and can experience philanthropy and really feel they are making a big difference from a very small donation,” Ms Meachen said.

“You can be a part of the committee, you can help out by spreading the word amongst friends ... we have occasional events people can join in.

“We are we're planning to have a couple of informal lunches or events where people can come along and meet their fellow donors.

“This type of hands-on approach is really appealing to donors, as is the fact that it can ‘focus down’ your giving to: ‘What can I achieve with this relatively small amount?’

“Also, with the Impact100 model, part of it is that you are giving to your local community so you have a sense of place in there. And I think that is quite ▶



important to people.

“It appeals to people are ready to dip their toe in the water of philanthropy if you like. People who are maybe youthful-ish ... who are maybe established in their careers, have an idea about philanthropy and want to dip their toe in the water a little bit.

Mr Boyd agreed: “It is a model that is appealing to mid-career professionals who have some disposable income, are seeking to be more engaged and supportive of their community but feel they don’t know enough about what’s happening or what the need it around them,” he said.

“There is also a growing interest to be more ‘involved’ in your giving. More than knowing how the money is spent, but also witnessing the impact, volunteering and building a richer and more rewarding relationship with the charity. This also extends to wanting to identify a cause area that is really significant to you, knowing about it in greater depth and understanding its need. This forms advocates.

“This might result in donors to Impact100 WA using the model as a way to educate themselves and identify the causes of most interest to them. They may only be a donor for a few years before forming a strong relationship to a charity they have been introduced to through the Impact100 process.”

WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?

At its most basic level the Impact100 concept is very simple – 1000 donors x \$100 = \$100,000 to distribute in grants funding. Sometimes a little more money is raised – Impact100 WA granted more than \$100,000 in 2012, for example.

Thus recruiting donors is a major task – and challenge – for Impact100 groups. Both the WA and Melbourne groups have used a variety of methods to do so.

“At the moment we have been using our personal networks to bring people in. But I think we are at the stage now where we are trying to move out and attract a wider audience,” Ms Meachen said.

“This sort of thing is something people would not normally be able to

be involved in, and I think that is a big incentive for them.

“We’ve tried to be as accessible to people as possible – we had a launch event, and we’ve got a website, a FaceBook page and a LinkedIn group.

“At the launch we were quite happy to talk to people and answer questions. The questions came particularly since a lot of the people we were talking to came from the philanthropic sector but were more used to a different style – a more formalised style – of giving.”

Personal contacts and networks have also been an important part of Impact100 WA’s approach – as well as organising social gatherings some media coverage and attracting guest speakers like mining tycoon Andrew Forrest and US collective giving guru

Colleen Willoughby.

Attracting applicants for grants hasn’t been an issue so far; Impact100 Melbourne has enjoyed a healthy response to its first funding round (see box on next page) as did Impact100 WA.

Mr Boyd said the process of choosing successful applicants was one of the real attractions of Impact100’s structure.

“We work through a three-page expression of interest (for applicants) and then we have an assessment meeting to shortlist eight (grantseekers),” he said.

From there, those eight groups are invited to submit full applications, which are followed by site visits and an assessment meeting to reduce the shortlist to just four groups.

Each of the final four groups presents ▶

THE WORK OF IMPACT100 WA

Impact100 WA has completed one year – 2012 – and is half way through its 2013 round.

Its model works on a calendar year basis. Donor recruitment occurs between January and June, while application assessment, donor education and grantmaking occurs between July and December.

In 2012 the group attracted 85 donors and raised more than \$130,000. Its major \$100,000 grant went to Manna Inc, with three \$5000 grants also made.

The group will consider projects from all over Western Australia, with its grants aiming to “contribute to the community of WA.” This also means a wide variety of organisations can apply for funding.

In 2012 its specific interest area concentrated on “At Risk Youth and Disadvantaged Youth”. In 2013 that focus shifted to “Disadvantaged Children and Youth” following a survey of donors.



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their project at the Impact100 WA annual dinner, where those who have donated \$1000 have the right to vote on which group receives the major grant.

“More than 100 people attended the 2012 dinner. That exposed these charities (with shortlisted applications) to potential new individual donors and volunteers as well,” Mr Boyd said.

And as Ms Meachen explained, there is more to the support than just money.

“We can give the group – or the four or five groups that get down to our final round shortlist – some training in seeking funds from other philanthropic entities,” she said.

“We are hoping (also) to give them some training in their presentation skills and so forth.

“We want to value-add to the funding we provide so even if they don't get the big \$100,000, we've actually given them something they can take outside and use it to further the work they are already doing and make a big difference.”

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW?

While neither group said they had encountered problems attracting grants applicants, Ms Meachen acknowledged attracting prospective donors was sometimes a challenge.

“Impact100 is a concept that is easy to grasp. When you say to people: ‘100 people times \$1000 equals one big grant \$100,000,’ people understand that quite quickly,” she said.

“The challenge is always that you are out there competing with other organisations that directly fund things.

“In a way we are competing with the direct service organisations. It is a lot easier for someone who is, say, part of

IMPACT100 MELBOURNE'S FIRST GRANT ROUND ATTRACTS 15 APPLICANTS

Impact100 Melbourne's first ever grants round has attracted 15 applicants from a broad range of organisations, each application fitting in with the theme “Made it to Melbourne”.

According to Impact100 Melbourne, the applicants represent “a broad spectrum of incredible work to support Melbourne's immigrants to settle into our community and to promote social cohesion, understanding and acceptance among Melbourne's diverse communities”.

The organisation's grants committee will now assess applications to ensure they meet the group's selection requirements. A small number of shortlisted applicants will be announced in September.

Work continues to attract donors to the Impact100 Melbourne concept as well.

the Red Cross or something like that to get their message that says: ‘Give to us, and we will directly provide towards that service or that project.’

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That “personal” feeling is an important selling point for Impact100 groups: “Donors are increasingly seeking a richer more engaging relationship with causes,” Mr Boyd said.

“They want to see the impact of a gift, they want to seek a relationship with the recipient and they want a richer donor relationship.

“Appeals to people wanting to know more about their community, have a higher impact than they could alone, give as part of a group and enjoy some

social benefits. And it really appeals to women – a large proportion of (collective giving) groups in the USA are made up of women.

“The collaborative giving model is very flexible. Just a matter of finding what's right for you and creating your own group.” ✕

[VISIT THE IMPACT100 WA WEBSITE.](#)

[VISIT THE IMPACT100 MELBOURNE WEBSITE.](#)

[VISIT THE IMPACT100 FREMANTLE SITE.](#)

[VISIT THE IMPACT100 CINCINNATI SITE.](#)

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