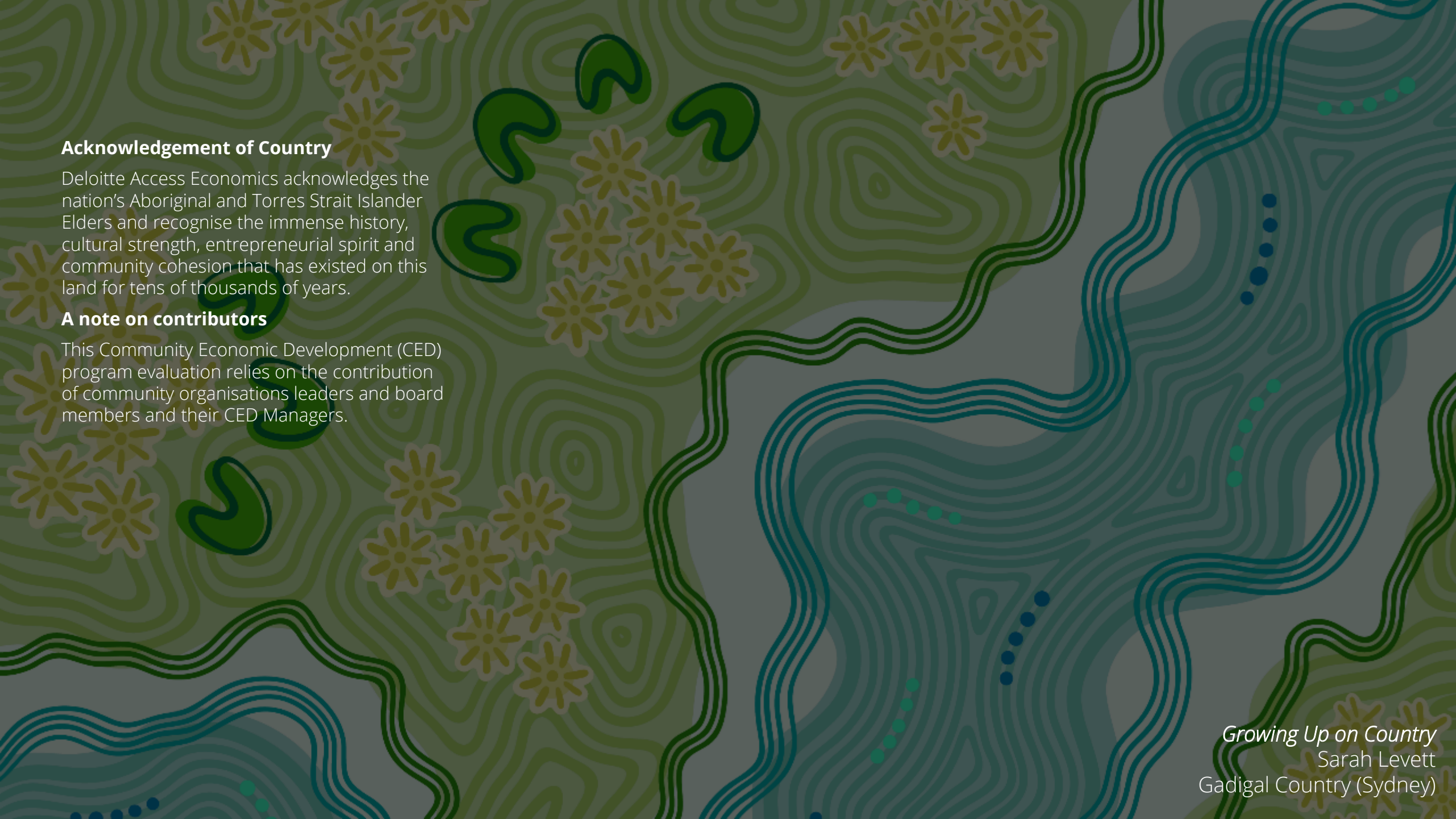




6th Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report: Community Economic Development (CED) Program

Produced for Many Rivers, August 2026



Acknowledgement of Country

Deloitte Access Economics acknowledges the nation's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and recognise the immense history, cultural strength, entrepreneurial spirit and community cohesion that has existed on this land for tens of thousands of years.

A note on contributors

This Community Economic Development (CED) program evaluation relies on the contribution of community organisations leaders and board members and their CED Managers.

Growing Up on Country
Sarah Levett
Gadigal Country (Sydney)

Contents of this report

Glossary	4	5 Community engagement in economic initiatives	33
Executive Summary	5	• Tracking employment over time: <i>organisation and initiative-level</i> • Profile of employment within organisations • Profile of employment within economic initiatives • Expenditure on employment • Comparing employment outcomes by COs' journey start attributes • Economic initiatives, by sector • Employment in economic initiatives, by sector • <i>Community case studies</i>	
Key Statistics	8	6 Understanding different journeys through the CED Program	47
1 Introduction to the CED Program	10	• Strengthening our understanding of the conditions for CED success • Assessing <i>Community Agendas</i> • What we can and cannot understand from the <i>Community Agendas</i> • How the <i>Community Agendas</i> are currently being used by CEDMs • Emerging research focus areas from this 6th evaluation	
• Deloitte Access Economics' role in supporting the evaluation of CED • Overview of the CED Program • CED Program Logic and Assumptions • Inputs to the FY25 CED evaluation		Appendices	53
2 CED community Context	16	• Appendix A: Detailed approach to classifying communities' starting attributes	
• An overview of participating communities in FY25 • Growth in community participation over time • Duration of community participation • Economic initiatives supported over time			
3 Strong Foundations	21		
• Understanding the CED journey: reflections from prior years' evaluations • Identifying the starting points of community organisations • Classifying communities' journey start attributes			
4 Economic activity within organisations	26		
• Tracking economic work over time: <i>businesses, projects and activities</i> • Comparing economic work by COs' journey start attributes • Tracking revenue over time: <i>overall, commercial and grant revenue</i> • Comparing revenue pathway by COs' journey start attributes • Tracking financial position over time: <i>assets</i>			

Glossary

Acronym	Definition
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CDP	Community Development Program
CEDM	Community Economic Development Manager
CO	Community Organisation
CRM	Client Relationship Management (system)
IAS	Indigenous Advancement Strategy
ILSC	Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation
IPA	Indigenous Protected Area
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
MED	Microenterprise Development (program)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency

Term	Definition
Baseline	Financial and economic metrics collected prior to program commencement to provide a basis against which to measure and compare progress.
Businesses	The production of goods and/or services with a commercial intention (purpose to generate profit), has planned regular and ongoing activity, and does not require grant funding for ongoing viability.
Community stories	An internal Many Rivers' tool that is used to guide CEDMs in their understanding of a Community and how CED may support their work.
Economic activities	Similar to economic projects, including a focus on community employment, and a reliance on grant funding. However, economic activities are established as one-off activities, rather than ongoing ventures.
Economic projects	Focused on the benefit of the community and members through employment and/or community services. Projects make available a community asset that earns revenue but may not generate a commercial product or service, and relies on grant funding to operate.
Economic Outcomes focus	Community organisations move from a Strong Foundations focus to building economic initiatives in years 3, 4 and 5 of the program.
Economic work or initiatives	Refers to any business, economic projects or activities developed by COs.
Journey	This report uses 'journey' to reference the amount of time that COs have spent working with Many Rivers as part of the CED Program. It is acknowledged that this is often a small portion of the duration which the CO has been operational.
Journey start recommendations	CEDMs collect and document information against each community organisation at the start of the program journey, providing rich information about the starting attributes, characteristics and context of the communities.
Strong Foundations focus	In the first two years of the program, community organisations focus on building Strong Foundations with their community economic development manager.

Executive Summary (1)

Since 2015, Many Rivers has supported more than 100 Community Organisations through the CED Program.

This FY25 report highlights the continued scaling of Many Rivers' Community Economic Development (CED) Program, with a third consecutive year of significant growth.

This year's evaluation draws on data from 101 Community Organisations (COs) that have been supported by Many Rivers since the program's 2015 inception.

Across the 2025 financial year, the CED Program supported 80 active COs. This includes 27 new COs that began journeys with Many Rivers through the CED Program – the most significant annual intake in program history. This follows the large intake of 18 new COs in FY24 and coincides with the addition of 11 CED Managers (CEDMs) across the last three years.

As a result of this growth, the profile of COs supported by the CED Program is more heavily weighted to those in the 'Strong Foundations' phase of the journey than in previous evaluations. Almost half of the growth in COs supported by Many Rivers has occurred in the last two financial years, with 45 COs signing a memoranda of understanding (MOU) with Many Rivers in FY24 and 25.

Accordingly, the focus of this year's evaluation, particularly the discussions with CEDMs, has been the fidelity of program implementation in different contexts. This includes considering how COs operating in different contexts engage with the CED Program and what this means for their outcomes over time.

Economic activity conducted by these Community Organisations is also growing, with almost 1,400 people now employed in CED COs (86% of which are Indigenous).

Alongside the 27 COs starting their journeys with Many Rivers in FY25, 53 COs continued in their CED journeys. On average, these organisations have been in journey with Many Rivers for just over 4 years. Continuing COs commenced 35 new economic initiatives in FY25, and sustained 144 other businesses, projects and activities.

The 80 COs that were active during the financial year were supported to deliver 273 economic initiatives (businesses, projects and activities, funded through commercial revenue and grant streams), and employed almost 1,400 people, with 86% of those jobs held by Indigenous people.

These businesses and programs operate across different sectors of the economy, with economic work in land management and community services remaining the main sources of employment activity.

Continued scaling of CED also improves the reliability and breadth of data available on COs' economic development journeys, to enable deeper analysis of contributing factors.

In six years of the CED Program Evaluation, reporting using CO data has evolved from presenting a simple range of results to presenting a reliable average for all organisations, with increasing visibility of the underpinning CO journeys (now, to year 6).

As in the FY23 and FY24 reports, the analysis this year presents the [average difference in each COs' results](#) (across metrics including revenue, assets, employment, and economic work), relative to their 'baseline' year (before they started in the CED Program). These averages point to the potential impact of the CED Program in outcomes for participating COs, across concepts like greater levels of growth, faster growth and/or more enduring growth.

Consultations with community leaders and CEDMs reinforce that communities are diverse – in their context, goals, and the point in time at which they commence the CED Program journey with Many Rivers. The role of evaluation is therefore to also explore the tailored approach to supporting community economic development that Many Rivers takes. Over a longer period, cumulative information and learnings enable the evaluation to understand the common ways in which success can occur, and therefore better inform how Many Rivers' support through the CED Program can be optimised.

Executive Summary (2)

The CED Program supports growth in economic initiatives, revenue and employment, regardless of the CO's characteristics at journey start (such as cohesion, capital and capability) .

For the first time, this work evaluates the trajectories of COs based on their observed and described* characteristics at the point of commencing CED.

This report presents – for the first time – average results over time for groups of COs' that exhibit similar characteristics when they join the CED Program. These characteristics– across *community, cohesion, capital and capability* – have been informed by Many Rivers' internal frameworks and have been tested through consultations and learnings over half a decade of evaluation. For brevity, these characteristics are referred to as 'starting attributes' throughout this report.

This analytical process ultimately places COs across a [distribution with three groupings](#), based on the number of starting characteristics that were present (observed and described) at journey start, relative to other COs.

- **Lower-range** COs have 4 or less starting attributes which typically align with *community* and *cohesion* characteristics.
- **Mid-range** COs have 5 or 6 starting attributes; with additional attributes indicating evidence of existing revenue and community engagement.
- **Upper-range** COs have 7 or more starting attributes, and typically present evidence of more *capital* and *capacity*.

The intent of this analysis is to understand whether the trajectory of key outcomes is similar (or different) for organisations with different starting attributes. The analysis extends directly from qualitative evidence in the FY24 evaluation, that CEDMs provide support that is meaningfully tailored to organisational goals, and to organisations' operating conditions.

Components of this analysis were assisted using a (static, in-house to Deloitte) AI-powered large language model to process information from existing CEDM reports. Many Rivers provided close review of the approach and iterative output. This approach has allowed for ten years of qualitative evidence collected through the program's administration to be comprehensively integrated into the evaluation design and implementation.

The first year of this analysis (by starting attributes) has focused on proving the concept that results can be analysed at this level, and providing initial insights for further testing.

The analysis of program outcomes by COs' journey start attributes shows that on average, regardless of starting characteristics, CO's are experiencing growth in economic initiatives, revenue and employment during the CED Program journey.

The analysis also reveals some interesting differences in the trajectory of growth across groups (as expected) and potential direct relationships for further testing:

- For instance and quite intuitively, organisations that exhibit a greater number of starting attributes (the 'upper-range' group) are more likely to [experience faster growth in their revenue](#) and [employment](#) during their journey, relative to COs with fewer observed and described characteristics at journey start (the 'lower-' and 'mid-range').
- Another example is that community organisations' journey starting attributes appear inversely related to their [asset values at baseline](#) – that is, COs in the lower-range have a higher reported asset value at baseline relative to COs in the mid- or upper-range..

Communities experience headwinds and tailwinds in development journeys and hold different goals for economic development, and CEDMs cannot always consistently observe whether the conditions for economic development are present. The success of the CED Program relies on CEDMs meeting community where they are at and providing the tailored support that is required at each point-in-time.

Cumulative learning through the evaluation stands to reveal the combinations of starting attributes and CED Program activities that result in faster, stronger and more prolonged community and economic development. This will help guide the actions of CEDMs, COs and Many Rivers as an organisation, from journey start to completion.

*Observed and described characteristics at the beginning of a CO's CED Program journey refers to the organisational characteristics, community and contextual background that was able to be identified and documented by the CEDM prior to program commencement.

Executive Summary (3)

The evaluation continues to validate CED program design and starting assumptions – including through the consistency of program outcomes – with future work to progressively zoom-in on *why* CED works across contexts.

Interpreting data relies on the voices of community leaders and CEDMs, particularly to understand progress in context and against CO goals. This year's evaluation included two focus groups with CEDMs (capturing the voice of 10 CEDMs) and three consultations with leaders of COs that have been involved in evaluation case studies.

The conversations, based on ongoing relationships, provide an opportunity for truthful discussion about the prevailing winds affecting each community, and the extent to which the CEDM supports navigating these. These conversations reaffirm that:

- CEDMs and the CED Program provide tailored support to each CO, based on what they need most at a point-in-time. This is evident in the comments COs make about their journeys with Many Rivers, in CEDM's reflections on their role, and in the annual 'Agendas' which document an agreed workplan for the CEDM and CO.
- It remains appropriate, per the Program Logic, to categorise these activities by *Strong Foundations* or by *Economic Initiatives*. In this way, the FY25 evaluation provides further assurance that the design of the program is sound. Also, the *Strong Foundations* activities rarely finish after three years in the CED Program; though the nature of support does often appear to change with the CEDM increasingly playing the role of 'trusted advisor' as the capacity of the organisation itself increases.
- The headwinds and tailwinds facing each community are often as influential (if not more influential) than the actions of the CEDM and COs' leadership, to the pace and nature of economic development. This year's evaluation includes case studies of COs that have seen rapid growth - where the [CEDM's support has come at a period of community cohesion, capacity and access to capital](#) – and those where local context such as changes in staff and leadership, necessitate a focus on stability over scale.
- 'Success' in the CED program should always be defined with the CO. The analysis and case studies in this report highlight that trajectories of progress are rightly different; and that 'success' for Many Rivers should be defined in how the program empowers communities to set and achieve their own objectives. For example, the CEDM may be supporting the documentation of employee roles and responsibilities, but the value delivered is in the [ownership and accountability](#) created in community.

Growth in the CED Program means that Many Rivers should be able to observe, with greater certainty over time, impact in the later journey years inc. around cessation.

This year's report continues to demonstrate the pleasing trend that COs' economic activity, employment and revenue grows across their time in the CED Program, providing further assurance of sound design and implementation fidelity.

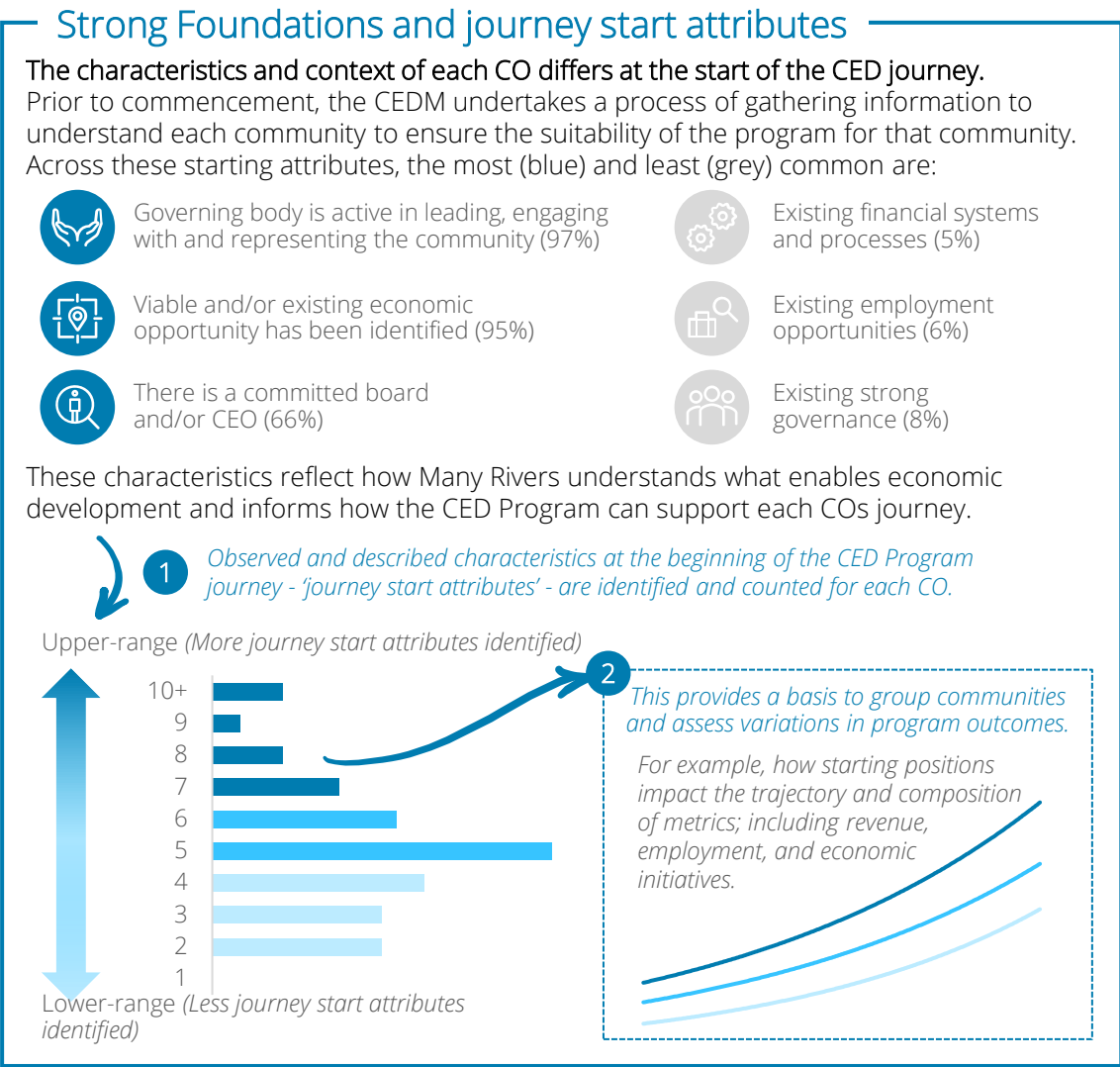
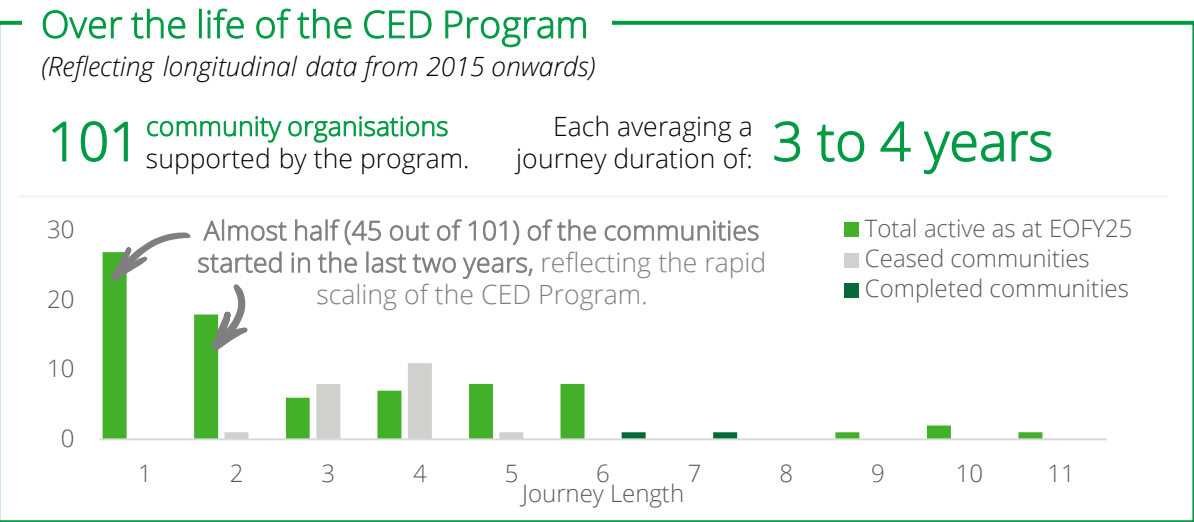
As organisations new to the CED Program progress in their journeys, the ability for evaluators to reliably observe outcomes over time will improve. In future years,

- A larger dataset on outcomes in years 3, 4 and 5 can strengthen the reliability of findings. A bigger sample can provide assurance that the trends in this report are not unduly influenced by selection bias, and could be used to draw inference about the reasons some communities cease their CED journey (usually in years 3 or 4).
- Cessation rates (exits from the CED program) should be a point of focus for evaluators. Many Rivers has refined, over time, the approach in assessing community readiness at journey start to ensure program suitability for COs. Future analysis can test the hypothesis that this translates to a lower rate of cessations; and could shed light on drivers of cessation.
- More information from the administration of the program could be integrated as evaluative evidence. Drawing on the integration of data on organisations' starting context, this evaluation has also scoped future research to track changes in organisations' context during the journey using the Agenda documents.

Together, this work will incrementally develop our collective understanding of how community economic development occurs, and what types of supports are best positioned to accelerate and sustain those trajectories.

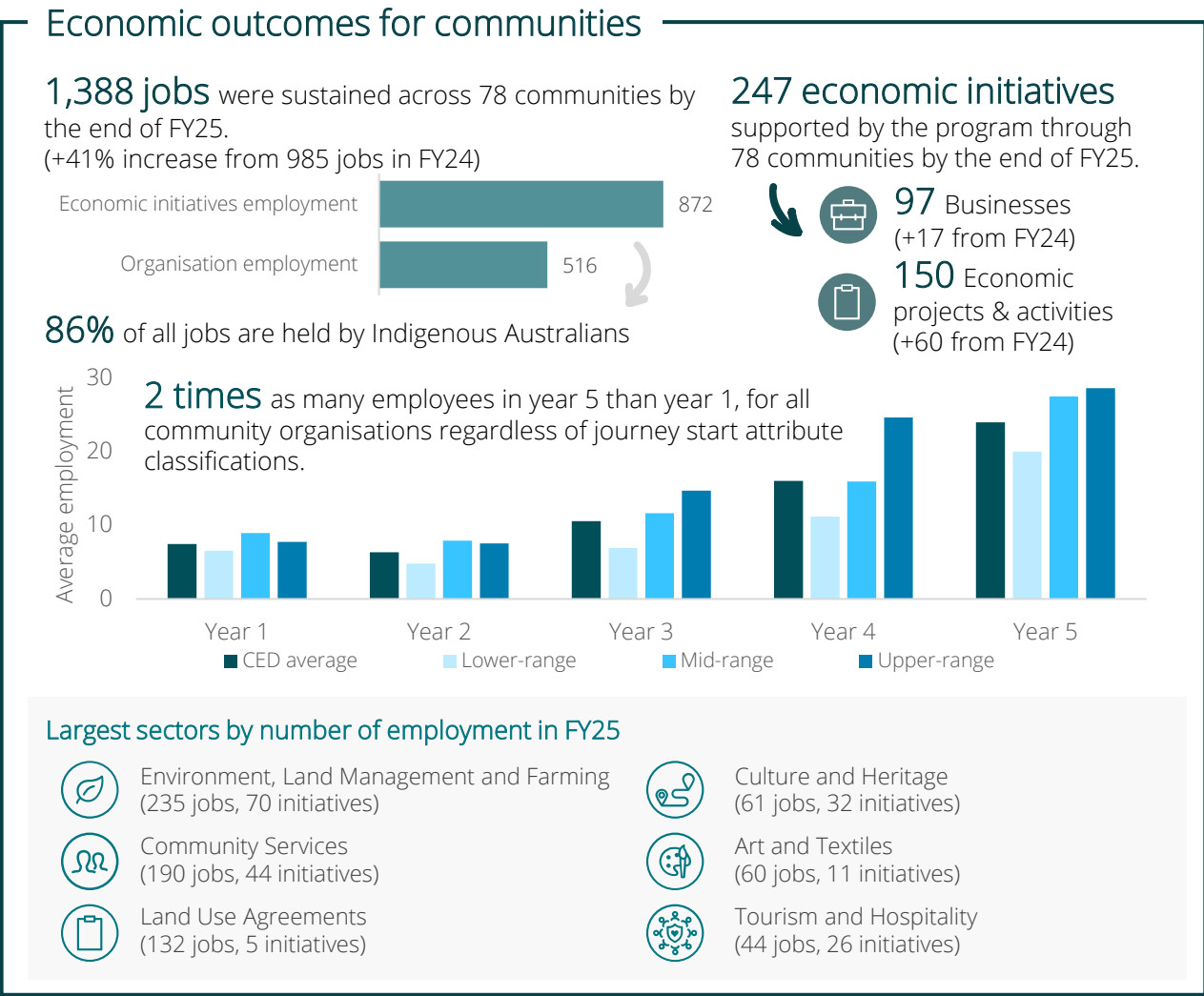
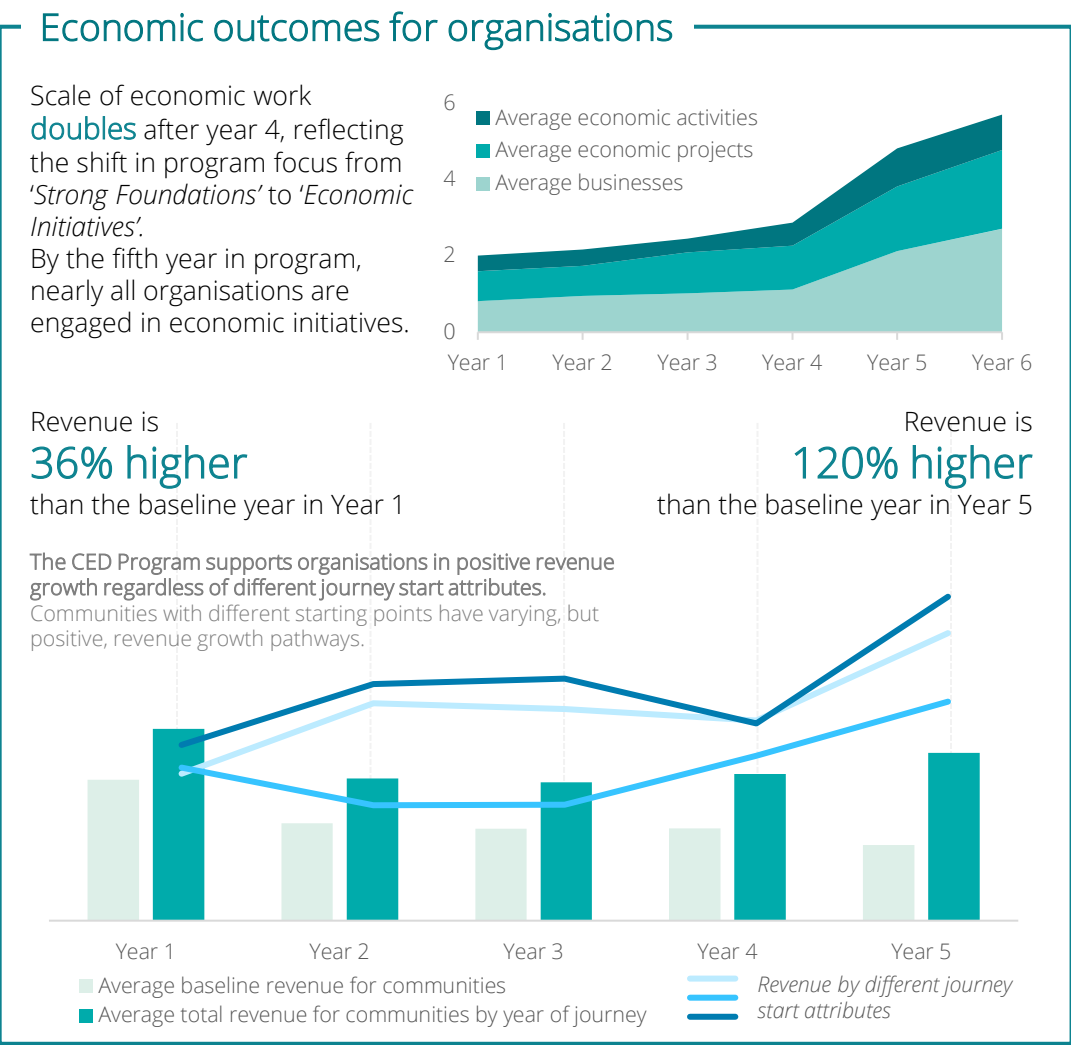
Community Enterprise Development (CED): Key Statistics in FY25

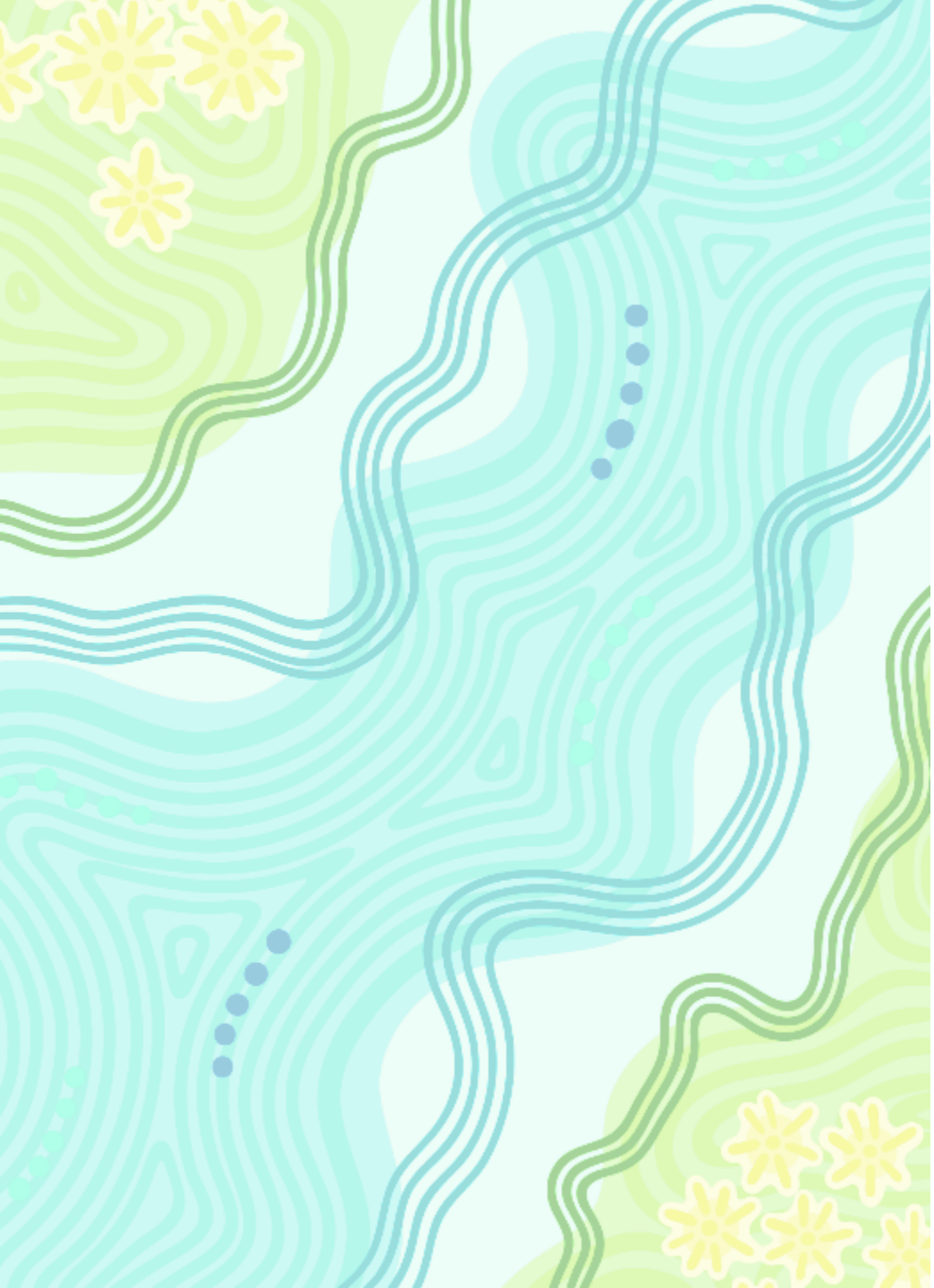
A milestone has been reached, with more than 100 Community Organisations (COs) now supported by Many Rivers over the life of the CED Program, with 45 COs having joined the program in the last two years.



Community Enterprise Development (CED): Key Statistics in FY25

COs that journey with CED for 5+ years typically double: (1) the number economic initiatives delivered; (2) their grant and commercial revenue; and (3) their employees across activities like land care, community maintenance and other service needs.





01 Introduction to the CED Program

This section provides an overview of the Community Economic Development (CED) program and the report, including describing the information sources, scope and methodology underpinning the report.

The Community Economic Development (CED) program

Many Rivers' CED Program operates with CED Managers (CEDMs), seeking to work with community leaders over five or more years to support with governance, planning and achievement of economic goals. The journey with COs and the relationship with Many Rivers is tailored based on community context, capability and support needs. Building trust in the relationship between the community organisation and the CEDM is critical and a unique experience from community to community.

This introductory chapter presents:

- The CED monitoring and evaluation journey to date, and the role of Deloitte Access Economics in supporting the ongoing improvement and design of the program. [11](#)
- Overview of the program (including its design and structure), based around the program logic and its underlying assumptions. [12-14](#)
- Inputs to the FY25 evaluation, including more explicit use of *Journey Start Recommendations*, *Community Stories* and *Community Agendas* this year; for the purposes of informing how a community's starting attributes impact their progress over time. [15](#)

Deloitte Access Economics' role supporting the evaluation of the CED Program

Monitoring and evaluation is central to Many Rivers' organisational decision-making and continuous improvement.

Deloitte Access Economics has worked with Many Rivers on annual Monitoring and Evaluation reports since 2012, commencing with the creation of an Evaluation Framework and followed by a series of annual Monitoring and Evaluation reports, drawing on information of increasing quality and breadth in each year.

The purpose of monitoring and evaluation is to assist Many Rivers with **understanding the nature of the aggregate and year-on-year implementation and impact of its programs** – the Microenterprise Development Program (MED) and the Community Economic Development Program (CED).

In this context, Deloitte Access Economics does **not fulfil the role of an auditor**. Formal assessment of the quality and completeness of the data that Many Rivers collects is beyond the scope of this work. Rather, the role of Deloitte Access Economics to date has been to design program logics that are validated by Many Rivers, and to conduct in-depth analysis on the clients, journey and outcomes of Many Rivers' programs based on data provided by Many Rivers and independent consultations.

Figure 1.1: Monitoring and evaluation timeline and milestones



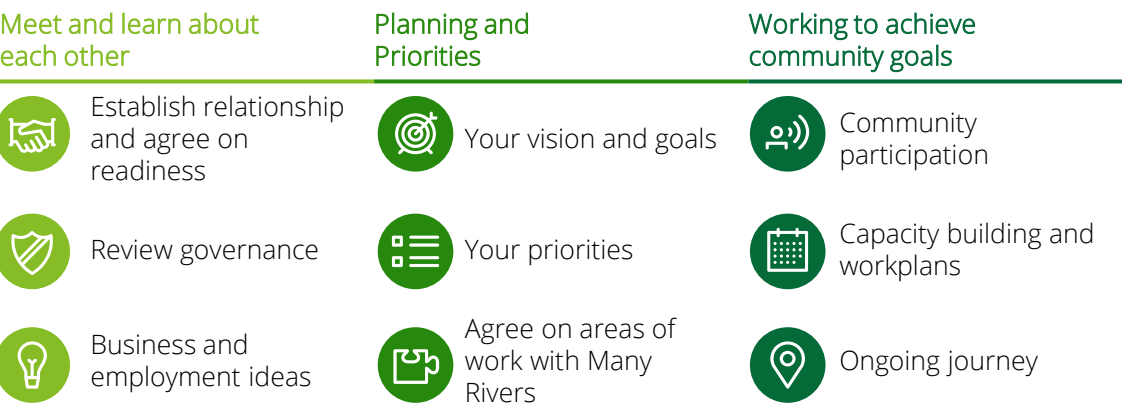
Overview of the CED Program

The evaluation of the CED Program is organised by and based on frameworks such as the support framework, the Program Logic and key program assumptions.

Many Rivers Community Economic Development (CED) provides support to regional and remote Indigenous communities that want to establish or grow economic activity on their land. The journey of the community organisations with Many Rivers focuses on activities and support to strengthen the understanding, planning and leadership, which enable organisations to actively participate in the Australian economy and be local leaders in the community's future direction and prosperity.

The CED Program provides support through a CED Manager (CEDM) who typically works with the community for a planned five years, with a core objective of helping each community to achieve their economic goals. The CED Support Framework (Figure 1.2) outlines the broad stages of engagement with communities.

Figure 1.2: Many Rivers' CED Support Framework



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2020) with input from Many Rivers

The focus of the CED Program, and therefore the role of the CEDM, changes over these five years; moving from a focus on *Strong Foundations* to *Economic Outcomes* (Figure 1.3). Where an organisation sits on this continuum affects the kinds of outcomes the organisation and its community might be expected to realise, in line with the Program Logic.

Figure 1.3: Many Rivers' CED Program focus and stages

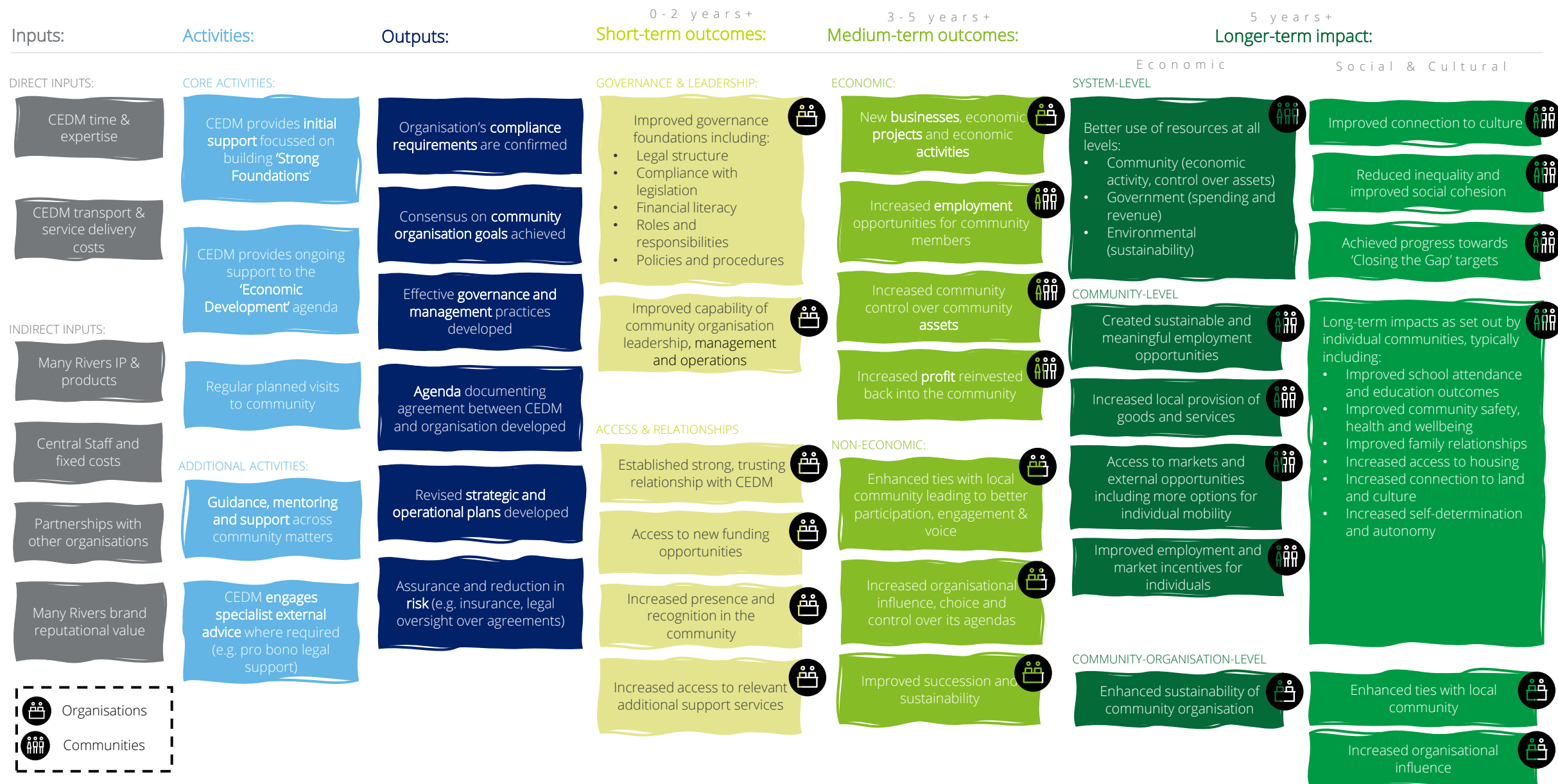


Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2020) based on Many Rivers

The [CED Program Logic Model](#) (see next page) presents the series of anticipated outcomes from the program. It is underpinned by a set of [program assumptions](#), which outline the components or elements that must be true to realise the impacts and outcomes in the program logic.

This year's evaluation starts to observe emerging insights on *how* the program's focus, the CEDM's role and outcomes and activities of the organisations vary across time and organisational maturity. While the Program Logic has not been modified in this evaluation; the closing remarks to this report include reference to future work to assess the appropriateness of the Program Logic at different points of the community journey, and the opportunities to measure the 'outcomes.'

CED Program Logic and Assumptions (1 of 2)



CED Program Logic and Assumptions (2 of 2)

The Program Logic assumptions acknowledge what needs to be true such that value creation can be realised.

Program Logic assumptions:

- 1 Improved community participation and engagement in economic initiatives leads to a more effective use of government resources.
- 2 CED support builds on community organisation/ community existing strengths, knowledge and assets.
- 3 CEDMs are able to allocate sufficient time to work with each community, and the CEDMs possess the required skills to effectively support communities.
- 4 Community leaders acquire new skills and capabilities as a result of working closely with CEDMs to improve their governance, compliance, strategy and operating plans.
- 5 The provision of formal and informal supports leads community members to build trusting relationships with CEDMs.
- 6 Communities re-invest their additional profits into assets, community services and/or other economic Initiatives.
- 7 Increased community organisation effort with CED support improves connection to external markets and opportunities.
- 8 On balance, the new initiatives implemented by the community become profitable in a reasonable period of time.
- 9 The economic initiatives generated by the community organisation are sufficiently large to provide sustainable employment and income opportunities to community members.
- 10 CED support is community leadership driven and therefore a reflection of community priorities and values.

The [Program Logic](#) was first developed in 2020, prior to the publication of the first CED Monitoring and Evaluation Report, and has been iterated over time. The program logic draws attention to factors potentially outside of communities' and Many Rivers' control that impact the future of the COs and the role of CEDMs.

The program logic assumptions were developed to recognise the complex and varying contexts within which the CED Program operates. The assumptions have been developed to acknowledge components that must be true to enable connection between the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact outlined in the Program Logic.

The concept of necessary and sufficient conditions for success emerged in the [4th CED evaluation](#) and is defined more explicitly in the [5th Monitoring and Evaluation Report](#).

The additional analysis, by [CO's journey start attributes](#), focuses on testing that these assumptions are met at the start of the CED journey, and how varying levels of starting attributes impact progress over time.

Inputs to the FY25 CED Program evaluation

This report triangulates evidence from community consultations, financial and economic data, Journey Start Recommendations, Community Stories & Agendas, and consultations with CED Managers.

Financial and Economic data

Many Rivers collects financial and economic data on COs in the CED Program and the initiatives that are undertaken, either through public information or with the permission of COs. Only deidentified information is published in this evaluation report, unless otherwise agreed.

Inform analysis of financial and economic outcomes (i.e., revenue, assets and employment).



Journey Start Recommendations and Community Stories

Prior to commencing the CED journey with COs, the CEDM undertakes a process to understand each communities' characteristics and context. This process helps to ensure the suitability of the program for communities, and supports the CEDM in identifying the key support needs for prioritisation.

This process also observes and describes each community's characteristics at the beginning of the program journey.

See [Section 3](#) for further details on the use of this data input.

Community Agendas

6-monthly workplans are developed between Many Rivers and the CO, outlining the tasks, outcomes and long-term goals of each CO. This year, agendas have been used to understand the planned sequential tasks and outcomes over time, and how it leads to the communities' progress at a point-in-time.

These timelines then formed a basis by which the community consultations were conducted, to provide the contextual nuance necessary to understand progress.

See [Section 6](#) for further details on the use of community agendas.



Community consultations

The CED Program evaluation has always included the voice of communities through consultations, with insights gained from these discussions reflected throughout the report as well as in individual case studies.

The consultations this year are focused on understanding how planned community activities and objectives align or differ from actual journeys, and why. These visits contribute to more nuanced and contextually

grounded discussions throughout the evaluation.

We have continued to work with some of the same communities year on year to gain deeper insights into how organisational context can influence rates of progress.

A two-page case study is produced for each consultation and included in the report.



These contributions are signaled through the report:

Community consultation inputs

All three community organisations consulted this year have been consulted as part of prior evaluations.

Melaythenner Teeackana
Warrana Aboriginal Corporation



Bima Wear Association
Incorporated



Scotdesco Aboriginal
Corporation



CEDM focus groups

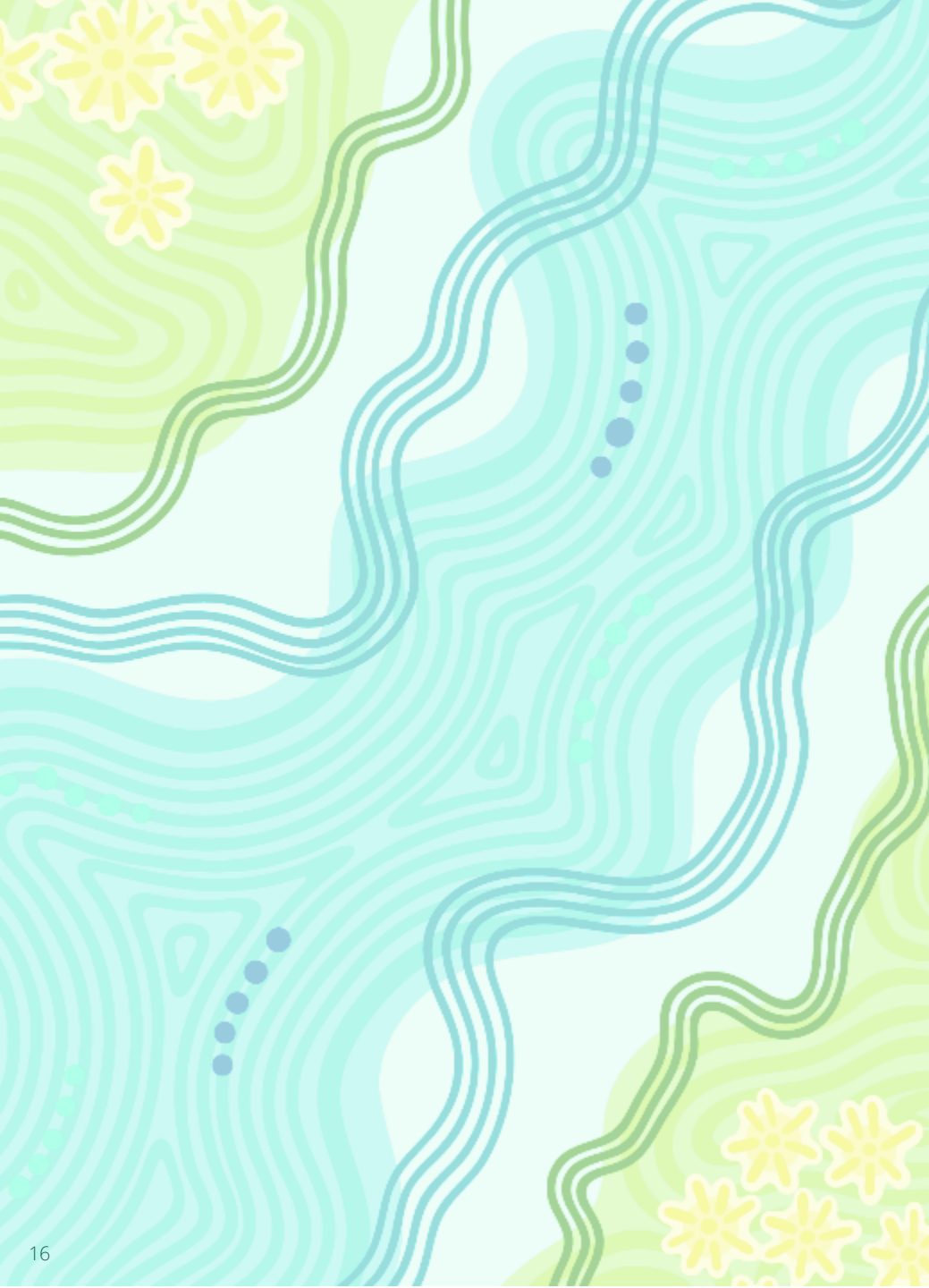
This year, CEDM focus groups were conducted to understand the use of Community Agendas and the interpretation of tasks and outcomes against actual community experiences.

The consultations were used to explore hypotheses regarding program impact, and to test and refine the evaluation's approach to analysis.

CEDM focus group findings are identified in the report:

CEDM consultation inputs





02 CED community context

This section presents a high-level overview of the community organisations that are active with Many Rivers over FY25, including analysis around the journey (i.e. whether community organisations have ceased or completed) and economic initiatives undertaken by the community organisations.

Since the inception of the CED Program, Many Rivers has worked with 101 communities across Queensland, New South Wales, the Northern Territory, South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania.

Summary of the CED Program in FY25

The 80 communities supported in FY25 continue to be concentrated across regional and remote areas of Australia. The 27 new community organisations joining over FY25 are located in Northern Territory (7), New South Wales (7), Queensland (6) and Western Australia (5).

[17](#)

The CED Program continues to grow at pace, with 27 new community organisations joining over FY25, and only 2 community organisations ceasing their journey with Many Rivers during the year (6 less than last year).

[18](#)

More than half (58% or 45 out of 78) of the active COs currently in program are in their first or second journey year, reflecting the high intake across the past 2 years.

[19](#)

The 53 continuing community organisations continued to sustain 144 economic initiatives, and introduced 35 new businesses, economic projects and activities. 18 (of the 27) new community organisations contributed 69 new economic initiatives in FY25.

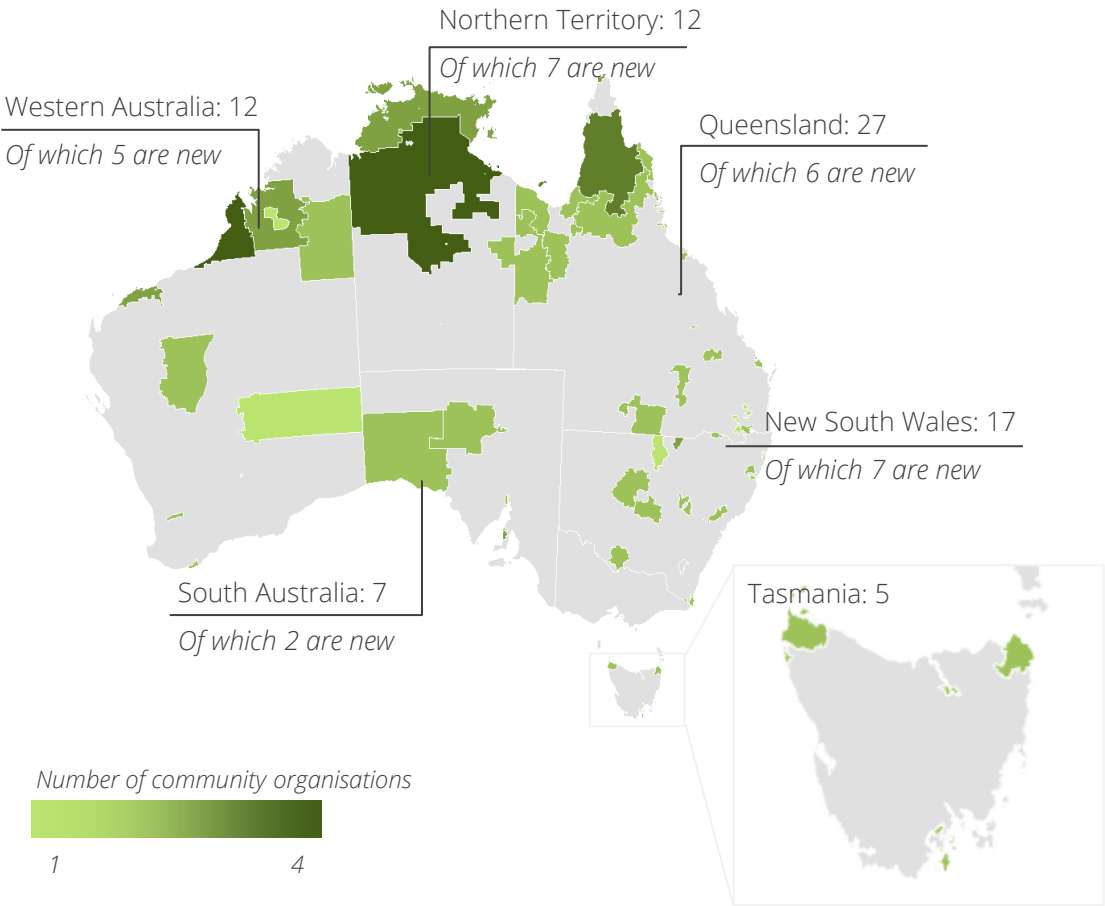
[20](#)

An overview of participating communities in FY25

CED community organisations are predominately spread across Australia’s regional and remote areas.

Over FY25, the CED Program supported 80 community organisations operating in regional and remote Australia, of which 27 are new (Figure 2.1).

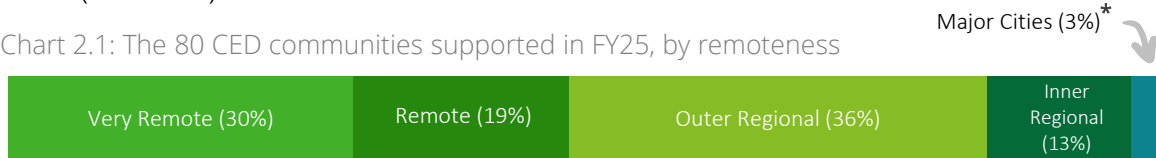
Figure 2.1: The 80 CED communities supported in FY25, by location



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026) using ABS maps.

All organisations focus on serving remote and regional community members, as in prior years. The two community organisations operating in major cities also serve regional areas (Chart 2.1).

Chart 2.1: The 80 CED communities supported in FY25, by remoteness



On average, active organisations have 169 members, employ 7 operational staff and support another 11 community members’ employment. Average membership remains largely consistent with prior years.

Chart 2.2: Distribution of 79^ community organisations by number of members

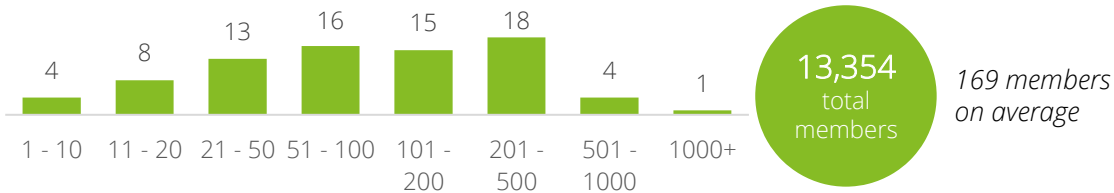


Chart 2.3: Distribution of 79^^ community organisations by number of organisation employees

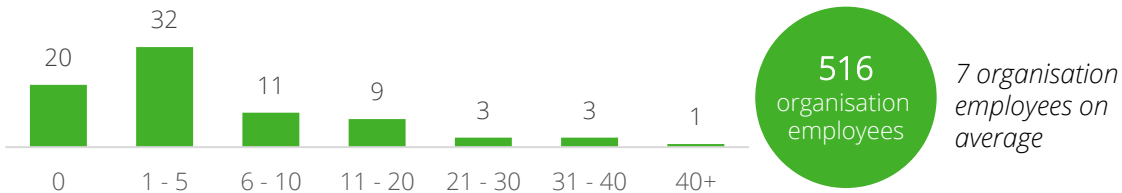
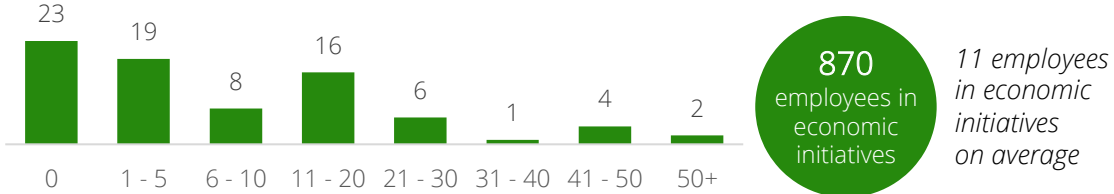


Chart 2.4: Distribution of 79^^ community organisations by number of employees in economic initiatives



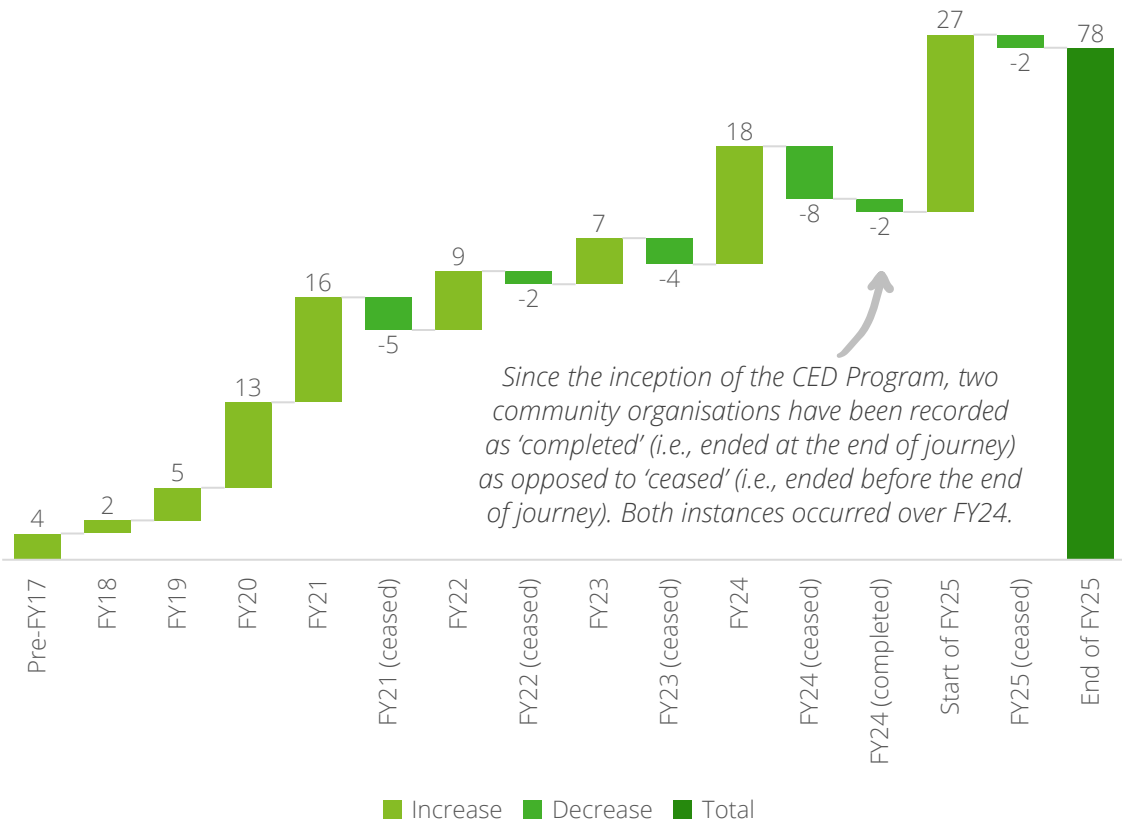
Note: *The two community organisations with headquarters in major cities service community members in regional and remote areas.
^Community organisations with no members have been excluded. ^^One organisation has been removed from the remaining charts due to limited information about their economic work & employment. Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026).

Growth in community participation over time

Over FY25, there were 27 new community organisations joining the CED Program, reflecting the increased program capacity created through new CEDM hires since FY23.

27 organisations joined the program in FY25, more than in any prior year. This growth coincides with a period of the CED Program’s scaling, where 13 CEDMs have joined the program between FY22 and FY25 (Chart 2.5 and 2.6).

Chart 2.5: Number of CED communities supported, by journey start date



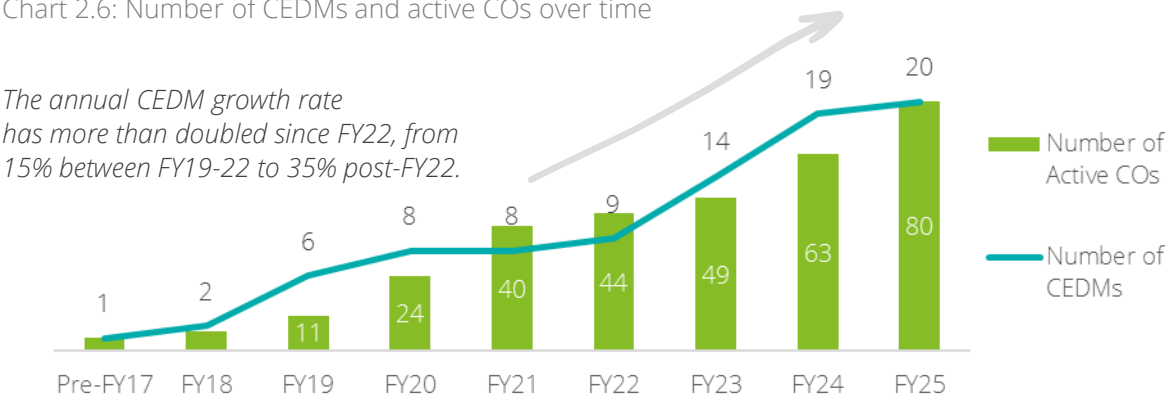
Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026).

In the last three years, the size of the CED Manager workforce has grown by 11, creating capacity for growth in the number of participating organisations.

The average ratio of CEDM to community organisations has increased from 1:3 in FY24 to 1:4 in FY25, reflecting Memoranda of Understandings (MoUs) signed with new community organisations. However, this is still lower than the FY22 ratio of 1:5, largely driven by the need to train new CEDMs and allow for the building of community relationships over time.

Chart 2.6: Number of CEDMs and active COs over time

The annual CEDM growth rate has more than doubled since FY22, from 15% between FY19-22 to 35% post-FY22.



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026).

Prior evaluations highlighted the importance of **building trust** in the establishment process for community organisations joining the CED Program, sometimes taking up to 12 months.

In addition, the CEDMs undertake an intensive **triangulation process of evidence to assess the suitability of the CED for communities at a point in time**. This process draws from publicly available records and reports on the community organisation and ongoing conversations with community leaders and key contacts; it informs the context, strengths, and support needs of each community at journey start.

Duration of program participation

The largest group of community organisations (58%) are in their first two years of the program, suggesting that there is a focus on Strong Foundations for many CEDMs.

Recent growth in the program means that 58% of participating organisations have been in journey with Many Rivers for two years or less.

Alongside the 27 community organisations commencing the program in FY25, there are 18 in their second year of program tenure. Of the remaining community organisations, 27% are between the three to five year mark of their journey and 15% are in the 5+ year mark, representing a slight increase from 8% in FY24 (Chart 2.7).

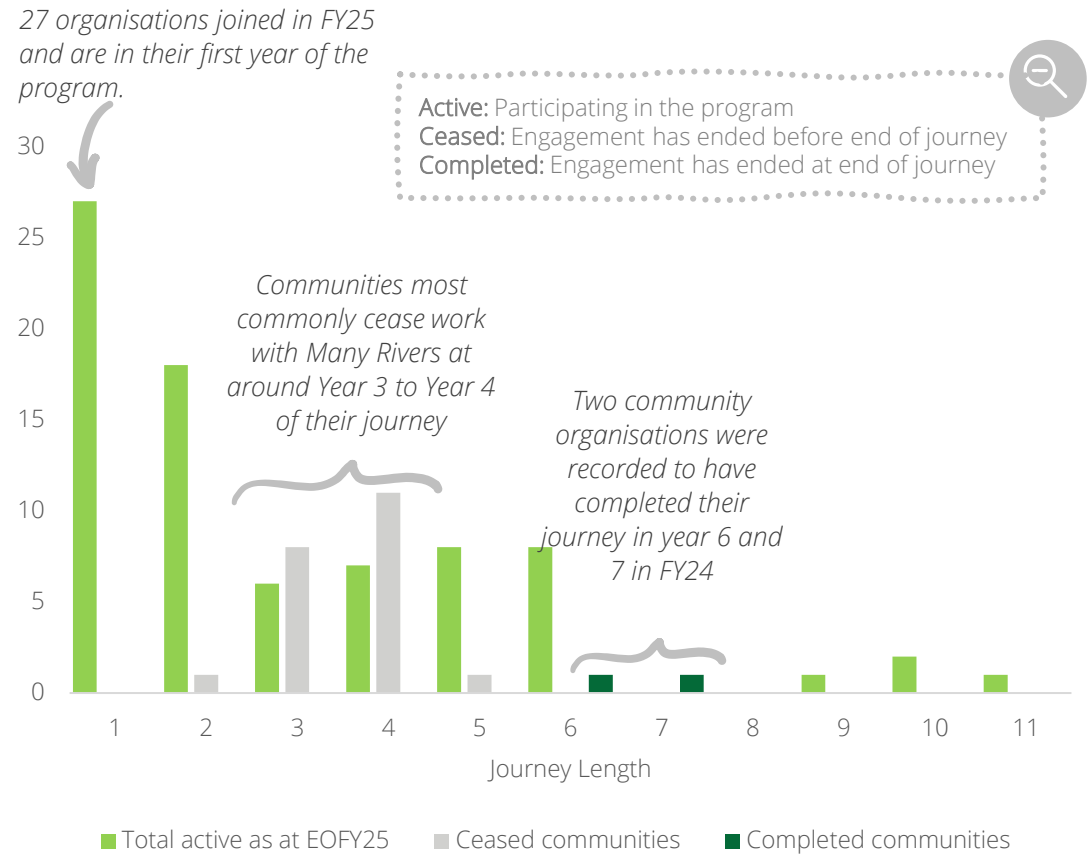
Broadly, the organisations could be classified into three types of tenure:

- The ‘Strong Foundations’ stage (intended in the [program logic](#) to cover years 1 and 2 of the program), currently comprising 45 active organisations.
- The ‘Economic Development’ stage (those that have been working with Many Rivers for years 3 to 5), currently comprising 21 active organisations.
- Those that have remained working with Many Rivers beyond the 5-year period of the MOU (12 organisations, who have been working with Many Rivers for 6 to 11 years).

Although these is an indicative Journey Length of five years set out in the program logic, FY24 remains the only year that saw two organisations recorded as having formally ‘completed’ their journey with the CED Program, in their 6th and 7th journey years.

From the inception of the CED Program to date, a total of 23 communities have ceased their involvement in the program. Of these organisations, most (83%) have ceased working with Many Rivers in their 3rd or 4th year in relationship. In FY25, two community organisations ceased their journeys, both at the 3-year tenure mark.

Chart 2.7: Tenure of communities in the CED Program (years with Many Rivers)



Note: Figures reported in this chart incorporate journeys of community organisations across all years, since the inception of the CED Program, including those that have ceased prior to this evaluation year. Ceased communities are depicted based upon the year of the journey in which they ceased.
Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026).

Economic initiatives supported over time

The total number of economic work initiatives run by community organisations continue to increase, with an additional 35 initiatives commencing in FY25 for existing organisations.

Many Rivers defines economic work (or initiatives) developed by COs as comprised of businesses, economic projects, and economic activities. All three types of economic work [create employment opportunities](#).

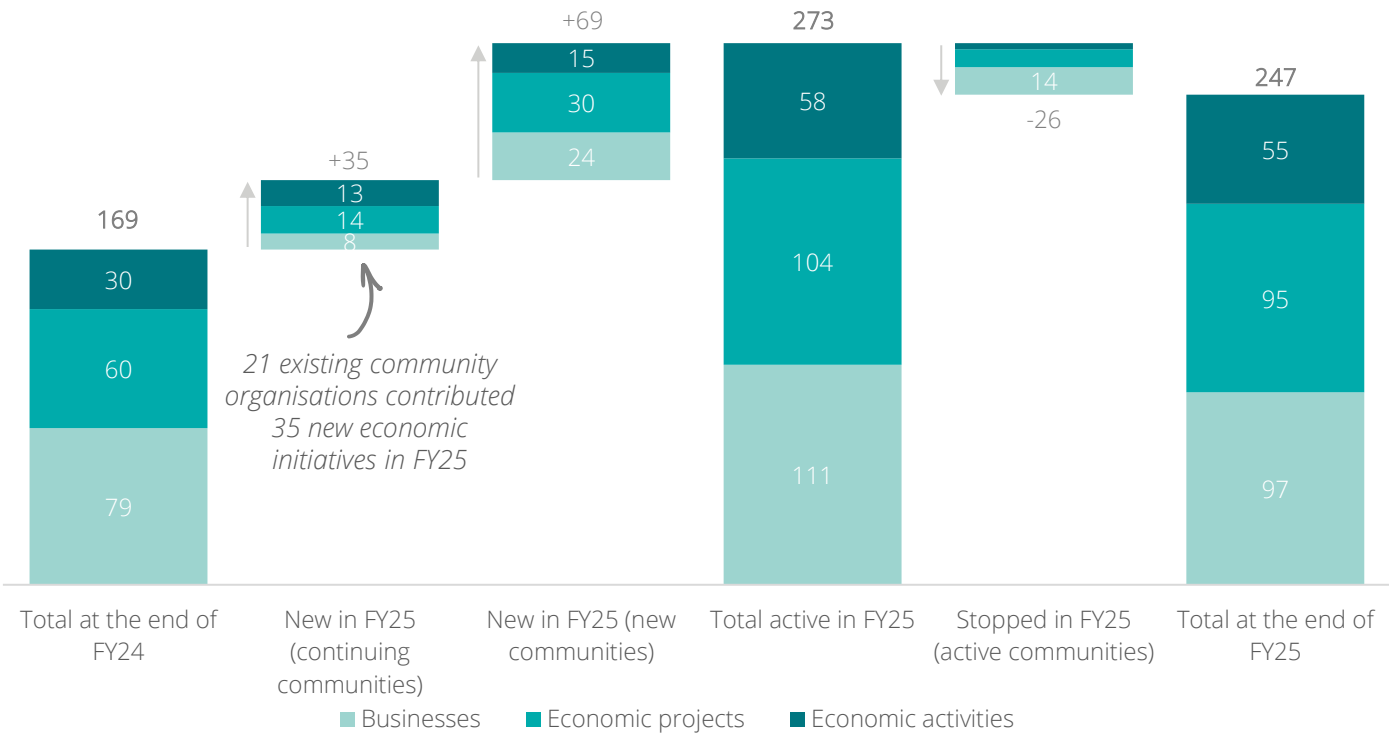
- **Businesses:** the production of goods and/or services with a commercial intention (purpose to generate profit), has planned regular and ongoing activity, and does not require grant funding for ongoing viability.
- **Economic Projects:** focused on the benefit of the community and members through employment and/or community services. Projects make available a community asset that earns revenue but may not generate a commercial product or service, and relies on grant funding to operate.
- **Economic Activities:** similar to economic projects, including a focus is on community employment, and a reliance on grant funding. However, economic activities are established as one-off activities, rather than ongoing ventures.

Growth in the number of economic initiatives was largely contributed by new organisations in the last financial year.

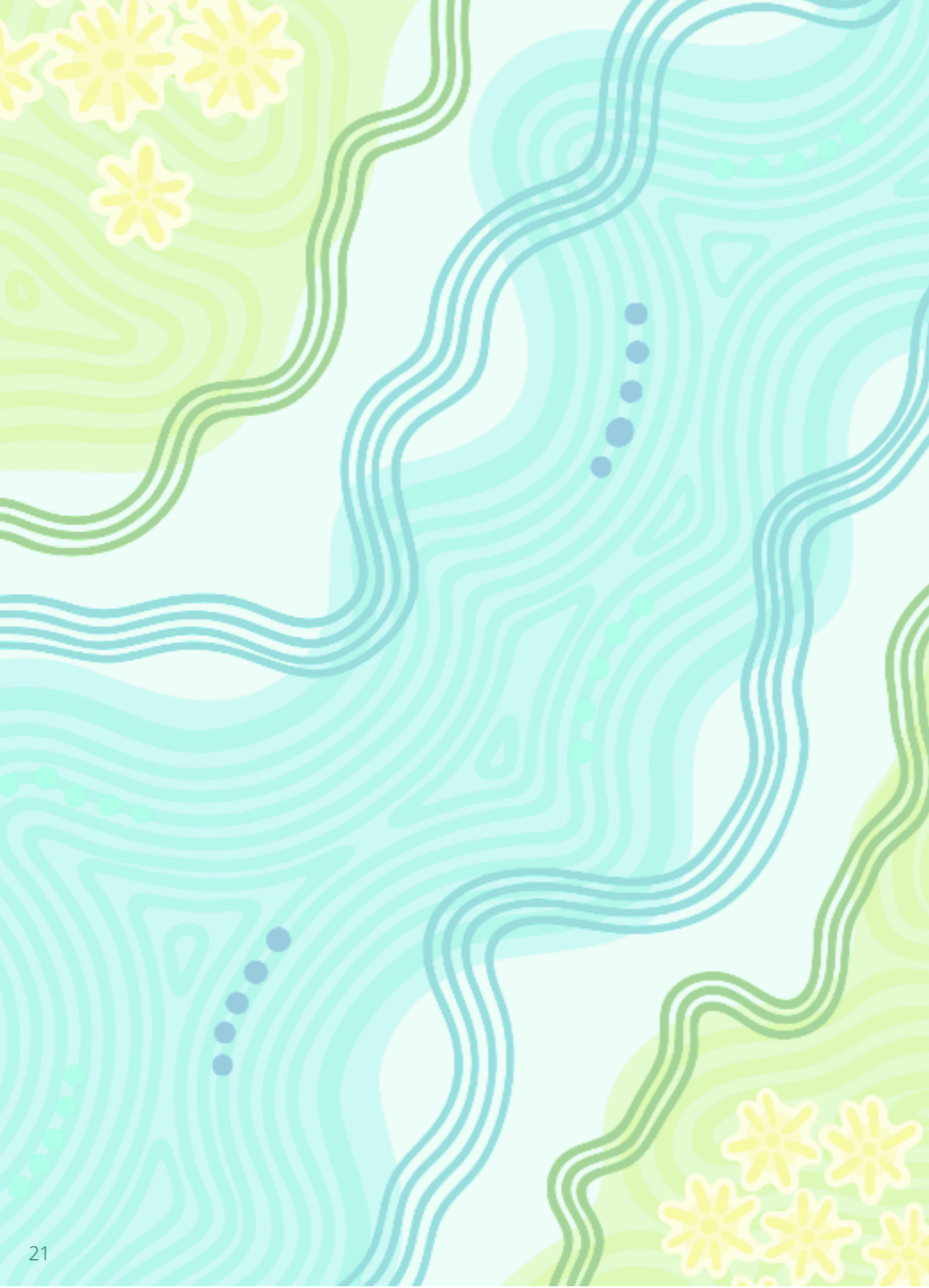
Of the 27 new community organisations, 18 contributed 69 new economic initiatives in FY25, averaging 3.8 new economic initiatives each.

The employment associated with these activities is detailed in [Section 5](#).

Chart 2.8: Number of businesses, economic projects and economic activities in FY24



Note: Minor discrepancies in total at the end of FY24 in Chart 2.8 and the FY24 report are due to reclassifications of economic work types or adjustments to annual reporting that have been confirmed with Many Rivers. Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026)



03 Strong Foundations

This section examines the beginning years, or *Strong Foundations* stage, of community organisations' journey with Many Rivers through the CED Program.

Before the communities start their journey with Many Rivers, CEDMs undertake research and consultation to form an initial understanding of the community's context, strengths and support needs at journey start. This process ensures the suitability of the CED Program for the community and provides the CEDM a comprehensive starting point to begin their work with the organisation upon signing the MOU.

Summary of the build-up and approach to analysing program outcomes by journey start attributes

This evaluation builds on previous analysis about differences in community context that informs how a CEDM may tailor support based on the communities' support needs at a point in time. The analysis in this report builds on those frameworks.

[22](#)

The characteristics of a community organisation at the start of the CED journey differs. In prior evaluations, common attributes at journey start have been identified, along with the conditions that are *necessary and sufficient* to program success. This year's report aligned results to Many Rivers' existing framework, which reflects how Many Rivers understands what enables economic development within the CED Program.

[23](#)

This year, an approach has been developed to place COs across a distribution based on the observed and described characteristics at journey start. This provides an approach to grouping COs (into lower, mid and upper-ranges) to conduct analysis by *journey start attributes* in addition to journey tenure. This provides a basis by which to assess variations in outcomes and pathways to program success.

[24](#)

The three classifications – *lower, mid and upper-range of journey start attributes* – split the community organisations evenly (by-design). Characteristics associated to capability (i.e., governance and financial management experience) and capital (i.e., existing revenue streams and businesses) are most commonly observed in COs placed in the upper-range and creates the greatest distinction between community starting points.

[25](#)

Understanding the CED journey: reflections from prior years' evaluations

COs have different starting characteristics and pathways to success; with CEDMs tailoring to those needs. Evaluation continues to seek ways to reflect contextual variations on program effectiveness.

Through community voice each year, the evaluation gathers and highlights experiences of how the CEDM role supports community in a tailored way.

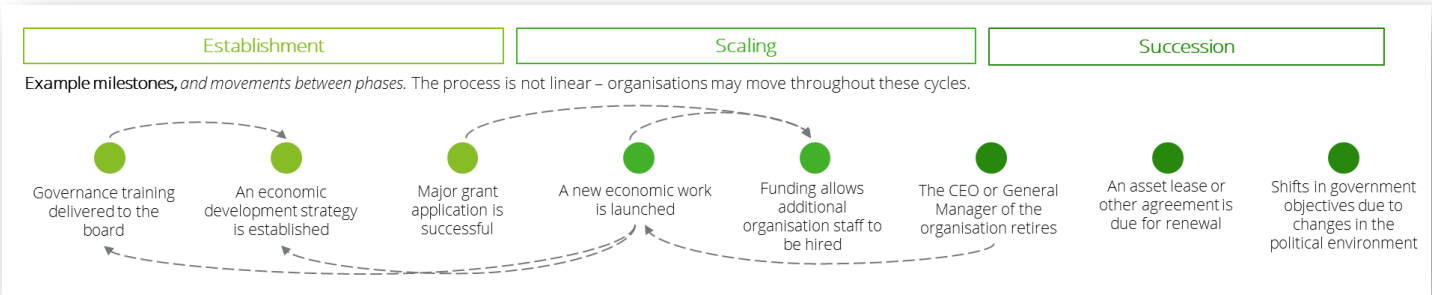
The [FY24 CED Monitoring and Evaluation Report](#) developed a framework to understand how the CEDM role evolves across the different stages of an organisation's lifecycle. The framework describes the CEDMs support across three distinct journey stages (Figure 3.1):

- **Establishment (or re-establishment)** where the CEDM is **embedded** in the community organisation, and key activities are focused on building *Strong Foundations*.
- **Scaling** where the CEDM's role mirrors that of a **coach**, and the organisation is focused on economic development priorities while ensuring governance foundations remain strong.
- **Succession** where the CEDM is a **trusted partner and advisor** to the community's leaders, and the organisation is focused on longer-term strategic planning.

This year, the conceptual foundations from prior years were supported by additional analysis using *Many Rivers' journey start recommendations*, the evaluation has developed an approach – *journey start attributes* – to understand the observed and described characteristics of communities before starting the CED journey with Many Rivers. This process allows the evaluation to place each CO within a range to reflect the extent to which these characteristics were present at the beginning of program journey. The evaluation seeks to assess whether the CED Program is working effectively for communities with different starting points and characteristics at journey start.

Future evaluations, will extend our understanding of how certain community characteristics may change over the course of the program journey, and how this may impact different journey trajectories (see [Section 6](#)).

Figure 3.1: The role of the CEDM across community organisations' journey stages



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2025) with input from Many Rivers.

Links to [Program Logic](#)

Assumptions:

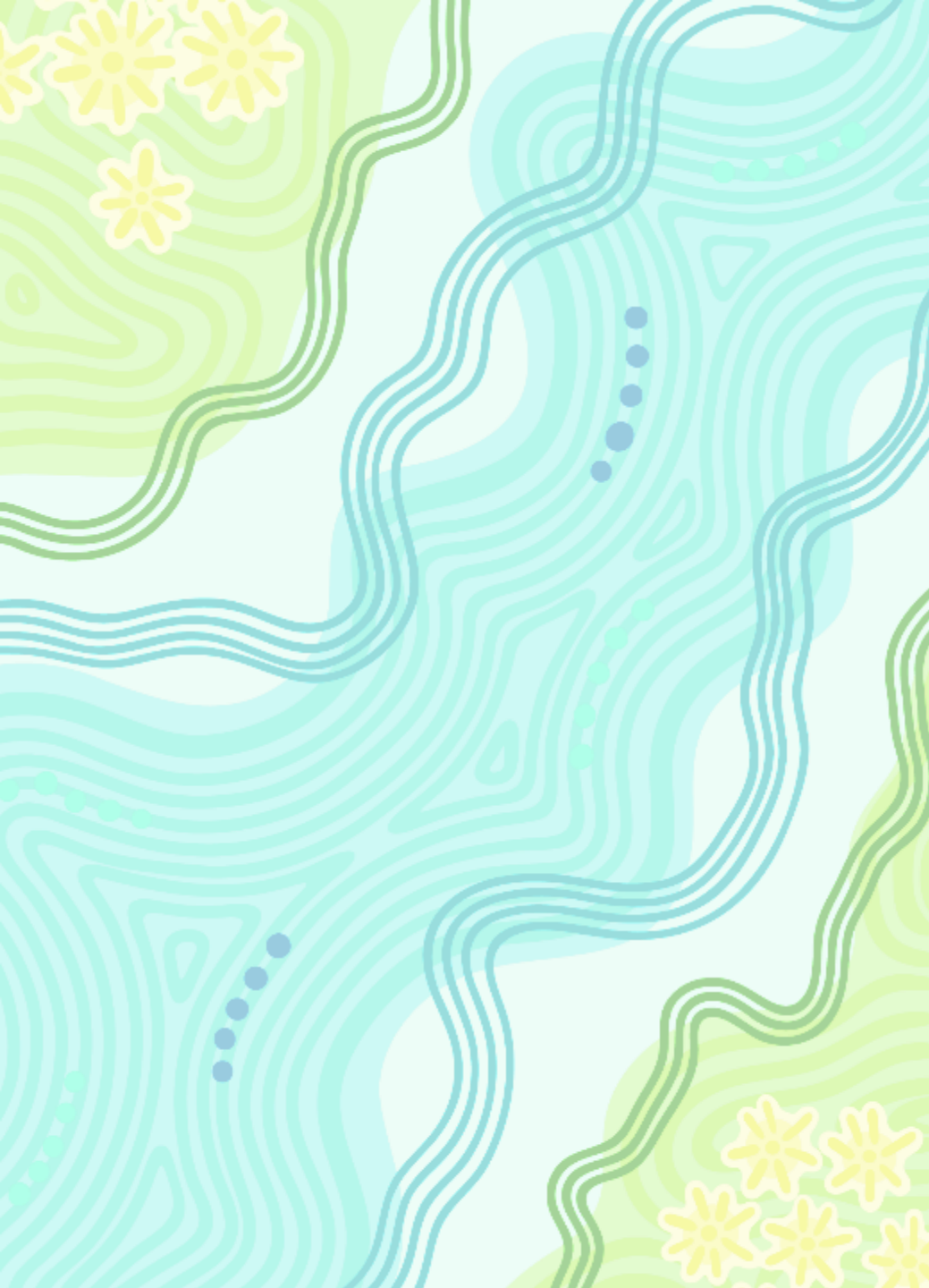
- 2 CED support builds on community organisation/ community existing strengths, knowledge and assets.
- 5 The provision of formal and informal Supports leads community members to build trusting relationships with CEDMs.
- 10 CED support is community leadership driven and therefore a reflection of community priorities and values.

Activities:

- CEDM provides initial support focussed on building 'Strong Foundations'
- CEDM provides ongoing support to the 'Economic Development' agenda

Outputs:

- Consensus on **community organisation goals** achieved
- Effective **governance and management** practices developed
- Agenda** documenting agreement between CEDM and organisation developed



04 Economic activity within organisations

This section analyses the economic and financial position of community organisations throughout their journey with Many Rivers.

Economic development outcomes are quantitatively measured metrics such as revenue and assets (relative to baseline), and the interpretation of these outcomes is best considered alongside community context. The evaluation draws on five prior years of experience consulting with communities – alongside this year's conversation with communities and CEDMs – to test findings and the specific context underpinning the economic activities observed.

Summary of the economic work sustained by community organisations during the CED Program

The average number of economic initiatives sustained and created by community organisations increases with program duration, with the most significant increase of 2.9 to 4.8 businesses, economic projects and activities between year 4 and 5. [27](#)

The CED Program supports scale of economic work regardless of starting attributes. In FY25, community organisations that started with a high level of attributes have a greater share of business and economic projects (92%) relative to low (78%) or moderate (73%). [28](#)

Revenue growth, relative to baseline (prior to journeying with Many Rivers), is positive and stable over the first 4 years, before doubling in year 5 and continuing to grow into the sixth year. The composition of revenue source suggests that grants provide financial stability and investment in commercial enterprises brings exponential growth. [29-30](#)

While there is variation across community organisations with different starting attributes, growth is positive across every journey year (relative to baseline). Notably, a significant uplift in revenue is observed across all organisation classifications between year 4 to 5. [31](#)

Community organisations' asset values grow rapidly in the early stages of the program (by 137% in year 2) before maintaining a steadier growth for the remainder of the observed journey. [32](#)

Tracking economic work over time: businesses, projects and activities

The CED Program has supported community organisations in doubling the average number of businesses, economic projects and activities per organisation.

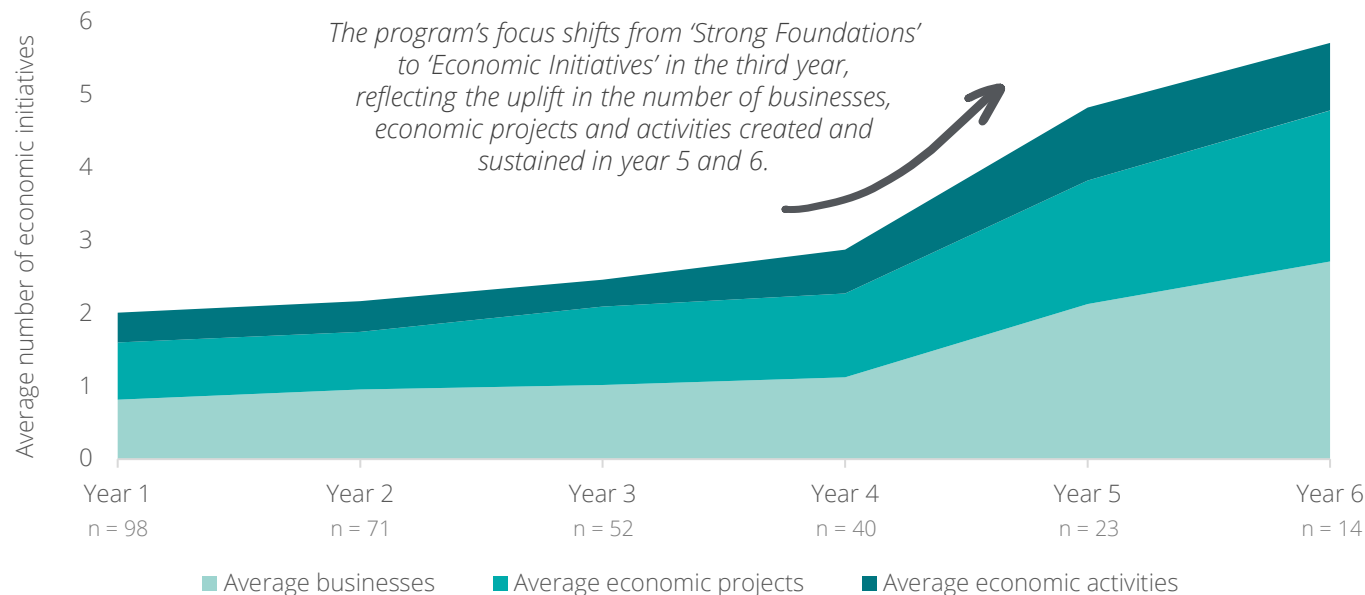
On average, [economic work](#) increases the longer an organisation remains in the CED Program.

The most significant increase of 2.9 to 4.8 economic initiatives per CO is observed between years 4 and 5. This reflects the intent of the program logic at year four to shift focus from strong foundations to economic initiatives, and potentially also the role of those formed foundations in enabling growth (Chart 4.1).

By the fifth year in the program, nearly all organisations are engaged in economic initiatives, a reflection of the program’s focus on economic development (as per the program logic). These trends also reaffirm the program design to commit to a minimum journey length of five years.

Interestingly, there is a distinct increase in the proportion of economic work that are classified as businesses from 4 years onwards, compared to a decrease in the proportion of economic activities in this period. This signifies that economic work increases in maturity during this period of tenure, potentially driving increased revenue.

Chart 4.1: Average number of business, economic projects and activities by journey year



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026)

Links to [Program Logic](#)

Assumptions:

- 6 Communities re-invest their additional profits into assets, community services and/or other Economic Initiatives.
- 8 On balance, the new initiatives implemented by the community become profitable in a reasonable period of time.

Medium-term outcomes:

New **businesses**, economic **projects** and economic **activities**

Increased **profit** reinvested back into the community

Many Rivers supports COs in **community-led strategic planning**.

“In the new strategic plan, we will focus on shifting gears, to commercialise these programs in partnership with corporate enterprises, so we can be self-funded. We want to access commercial opportunities that facilitate growth on both sides... not focused on Grant Guidelines, but on goals set by us, centered around are and sharing value.”

- Mark Harriss, Co-Chair of MTWAC

Comparing economic work by community organisations' journey start attributes

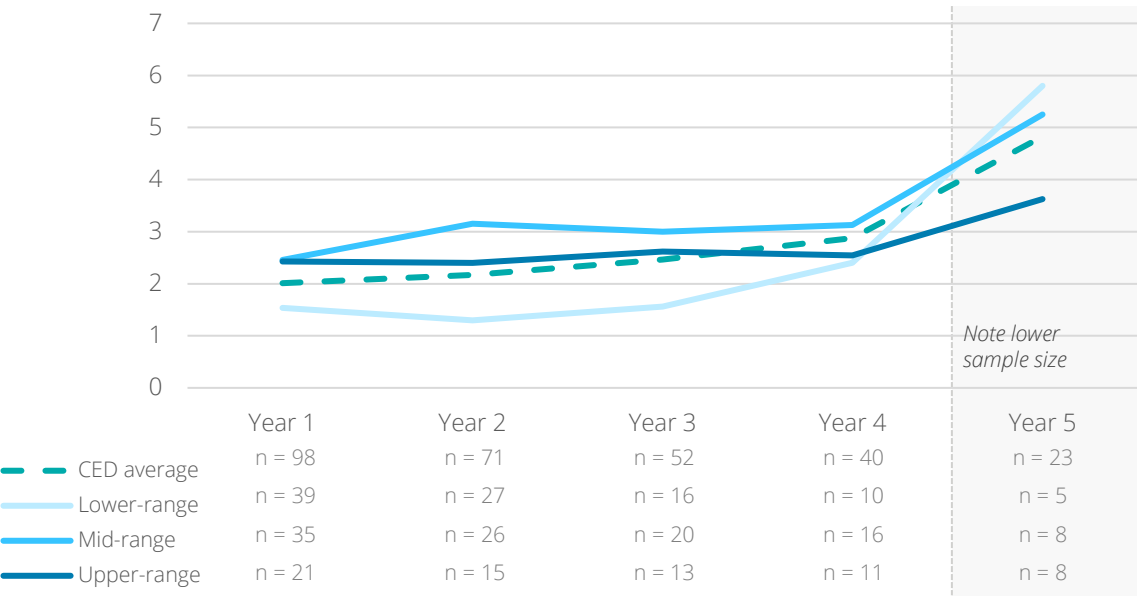
While varying journey start attributes may impact the growth and composition of economic work over time, organisations in each group still appear to experience growth on average over their time in the CED Program.

Regardless of the journey start attributes of the participating organisations, the average number of economic initiatives increases with journey year.

The trends in average number of economic initiatives are broadly similar across communities with different journey start attributes (Chart 4.2).

Over the first four journey years (with adequate sample size), mid-range COs have the highest growth in economic work, while COs in the upper-range have consistently higher growth in revenue (Chart 4.9).

Chart 4.2: Average number of economic initiatives by journey year and journey start attributes



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026). There are 3 community organisations (no longer active) that are included in the CED average but omitted from the disaggregation by starting attributes (i.e., low, moderate and high).

Throughout this report the **analysis by journey start attributes** follows the corresponding whole-of-program analysis.

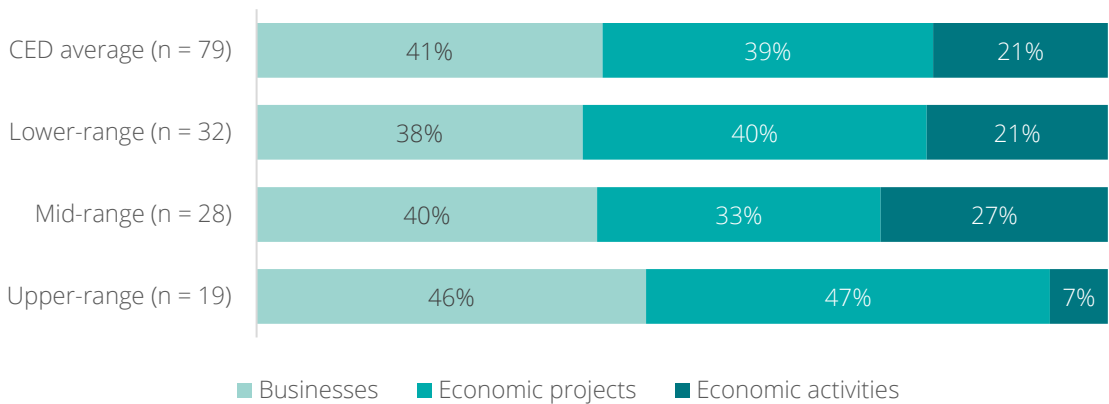
The first chart (in this case, Chart 4.2) on each of these analysis slides first compares:

- the **CED average** for all community organisations regardless of the starting attribute classification. *This is the same as the total presented on Chart 4.1.*
- the additional three series – **lower, mid and upper-range** – calculates the average number of economic initiatives by **journey start attributes**.

Upper-range COs have a substantially higher share of economic initiatives that are businesses or economic projects (92%) relative to low (78%) or moderate (73%).

There is also a slightly higher proportion of businesses (46%) across COs in the upper-range, compared to lower-range (38%) and mid-range (40%) (Chart 4.3).

Chart 4.3: Composition of economic initiatives for COs active in FY25 by journey start attributes



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026).

Tracking revenue over time: overall, commercial and grant revenue (1 of 2)

Organisations experience growth in revenue, relative to baseline, at every stage of the CED journey.

During their time in journey, organisations' total revenue increases relative to their financial position prior to journeying with Many Rivers (Chart 4.4).

Revenue growth, relative to baseline, is comparatively stable (between 36-59%) up to year 4 (Chart 4.5).

This difference grows to more than double for organisations in journey for five years, then to more than triple in the sixth year. The composition of organisations' revenue is detailed overleaf.

Interpreting these charts

- The contribution of CED to the CO's financial position can be partly inferred from tracking revenue for each year the organisation is in journey against their original financial position.
- Many Rivers collects data for organisations prior to their journey. The baseline (or Year 0) represents the point at which the community organisation commences working with the program.
- In the charts right (and on following pages) average revenue is estimated for organisations with data for each journey year, relative to their baseline.
- Baseline values vary over time as they reflect the available data for organisations in that journey year. That is, the baseline result for a given organisation is the same, but the change in average baseline reflects the specific group of COs with available observations at both baseline and journey year.
- Note that any data points relying on fewer than 10 observations are shaded, and should be interpreted with caution. Also, survival bias could be influencing results.

Chart 4.4: Revenue (relative to baseline) by journey year (\$M)

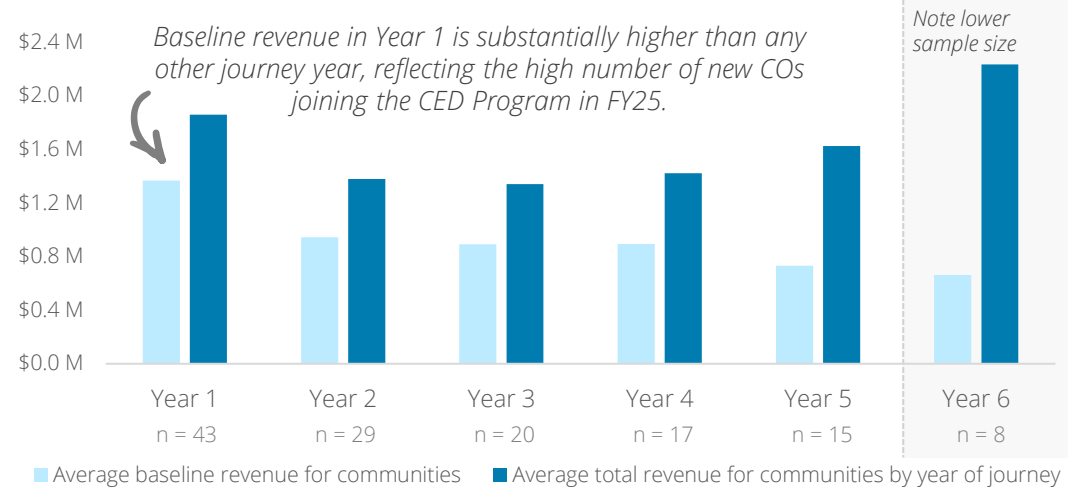
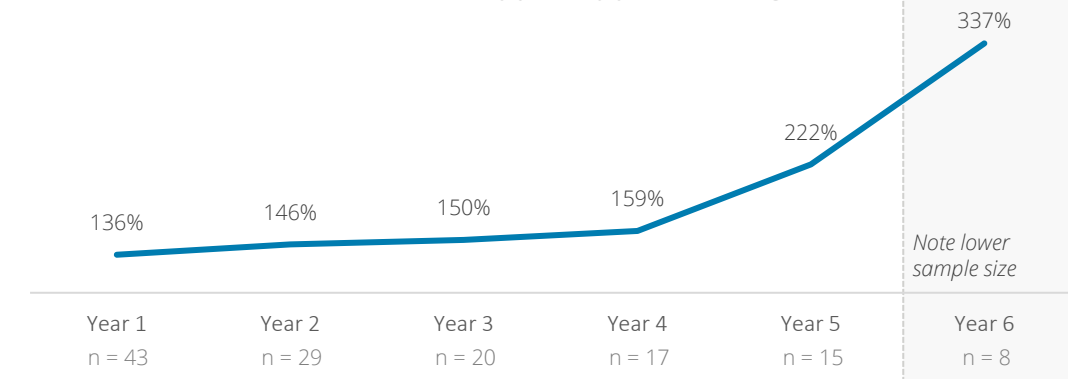


Chart 4.5: Revenue (relative to baseline) by journey year (% change)



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026). Average baseline revenue is calculated for communities that have revenue data in the journey year. communities are excluded from a year if baseline data does not exist. Communities may be counted more than once over the journey. Inflation is not accounted for in calculations. Years with small sample sizes and less available financial data should be interpreted with caution.

Links to [Program Logic](#)

Assumptions:

- 8 On balance, the new initiatives implemented by the community become profitable in a reasonable period of time.

Medium-term outcomes:

- New businesses, economic projects and economic activities
- Increased profit reinvested back into the community

Tracking revenue over time: overall, commercial and grant revenue (2 of 2)

The CED Program has supported community organisations in reducing reliance on grants over time, and increasing revenue sourced from commercial economic initiatives.

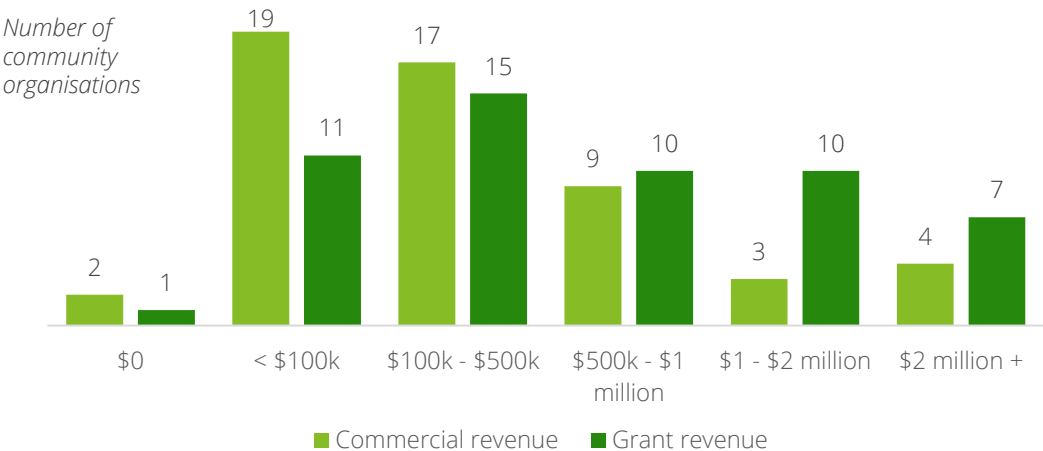
Community organisations in journey with Many Rivers generate revenue from economic initiatives and businesses.

Total revenue growth is comprised of:

- **Commercial revenue**, including from organisations’ businesses which generate revenue from sales of goods and services or lease of community assets.
- **Grant revenue**, from government and other sources, often directed toward economic activities and projects that generate employment.
- **Royalty revenue**, associated with land use agreements (and relevant only to some communities).
- **Other revenue**, including interest income, and returns from the sale of assets.

Organisations’ financial positions vary considerably, reflecting variation in their size, maturity, commercial goals and time operational (Chart 4.6).

Chart 4.6: Spread of organisations by FY25 revenue (commercial and grant revenue)



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026). Data are for FY25. All organisations with total revenue greater than zero are included, noting some of these organisations do not receive commercial or grant revenue specifically

Grant and commercial revenue exceeds organisations baseline at every journey year.

Over the journey with Many Rivers, community organisations’ grant revenue tends to decrease, then stabilise (Chart 4.7). Comparatively, commercial revenue is more consistent in earlier journey years, and then increases. Some organisations also receive substantial royalty and other revenue sources (Chart 4.8), though grants remain a key share of revenue at journey year 5.

Chart 4.7: Revenue (compared to baseline) by revenue type and journey year

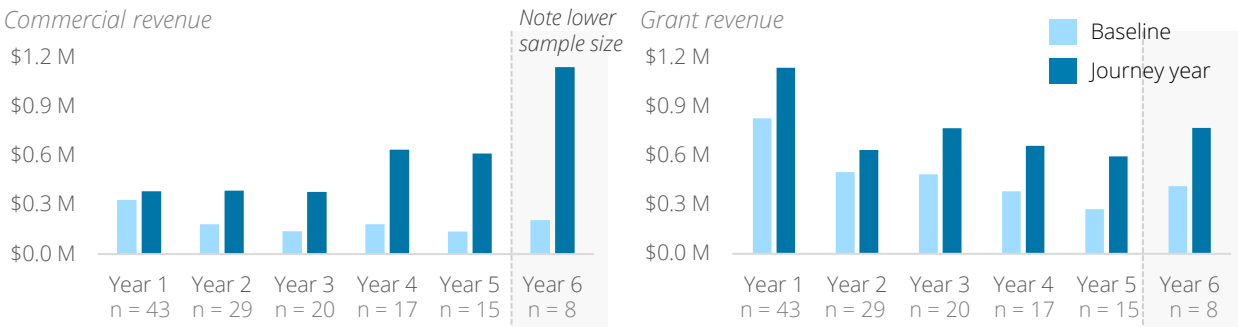
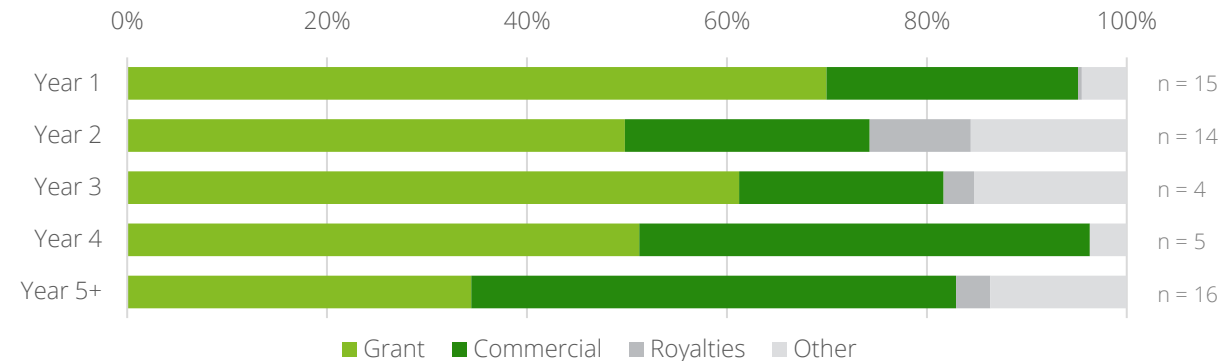


Chart 4.8: Composition of revenue for COs active in FY25 by journey year



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026). Data are for FY25. All organisations with total revenue greater than zero are included, noting some of these organisations do not receive commercial or grant revenue specifically

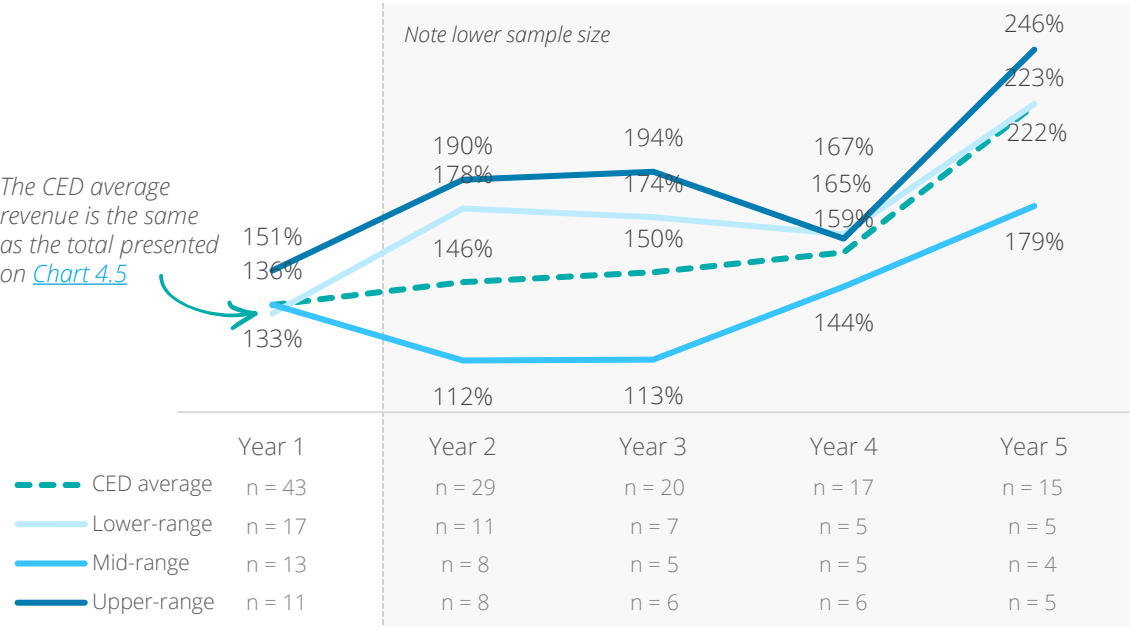
Comparing revenue pathway by community organisations' journey start attributes

Regardless of journey start attributes, the CED Program supports organisations in strengthening economic sustainability (through reducing reliance on grants).

While community organisations demonstrate varying levels of journey start attributes, the CED Program has had a positive impact on revenue growth relative to baseline revenue at every journey year.

Revenue growth is most variable in the first three years of the CED journey. This, in part, may be a reflection of the smaller sample sizes when disaggregating across both journey year and journey start attributes (Chart 4.9).

Chart 4.9: Total revenue compared to baseline revenue by journey year and journey start attributes



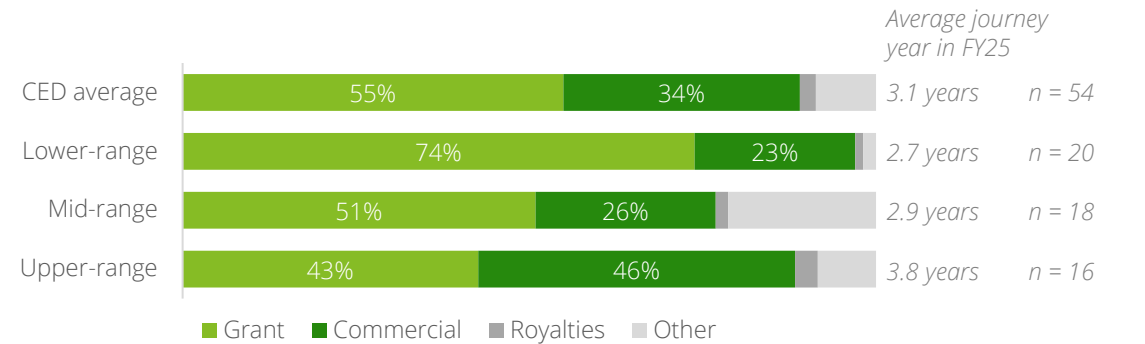
Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026).

Reliance on grant revenue decreases with higher levels of journey start attributes.

On average, only 43% of total revenue across COs in the upper-range is reliant on grants, relative to 74% for those in the lower-range. It is noted that this would also reflect the slightly longer tenure across upper-range organisations (3.8 years) relative to lower-range (2.7 years) (Chart 4.10).

This aligns with the program design and findings from community consultation over time – that organisations typically focus on economic development and therefore increase their share of commercial revenue over time in program.

Chart 4.10: Composition of revenue for COs active in FY25 by journey start attributes



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026).

Knowledge sharing and networking among communities allow COs to build one another's capacity.

"the TRACA Alliance has been a way for us [ACCOs and TC groups across Tasmania] to come together and build each other's capacity. It's a space to say 'teach me how you got your funding so we can get ours'. Other mob get to benefit from what we're doing.. We share legal support, collective planning. That was really helpful to access funding for the language revitalisation projects."

- Emma Lee, Co-Chair of MTWAC

Tracking financial position over time: assets

Community asset values grow quickly in the early stages of the program, before maintaining a steadier growth (relative to baseline) for the remainder of the journey.

The value of community organisations’ assets grows, on average relative to the baseline, at every observed journey year.

Unlike the clear [growth uplift observed in revenue from year 5 onwards](#), community asset values experience an early uplift in year 2 (137%), before stabilising over a longer time horizon (Chart 4.11, Chart 4.12).

Common assets documented by community organisations include *land, livestock, infrastructure and equipment*.

Chart 4.11: Asset value (relative to baseline) by journey year

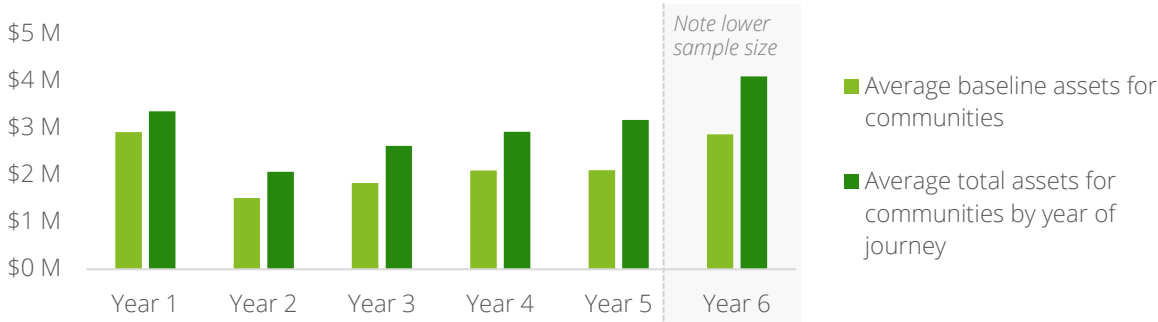
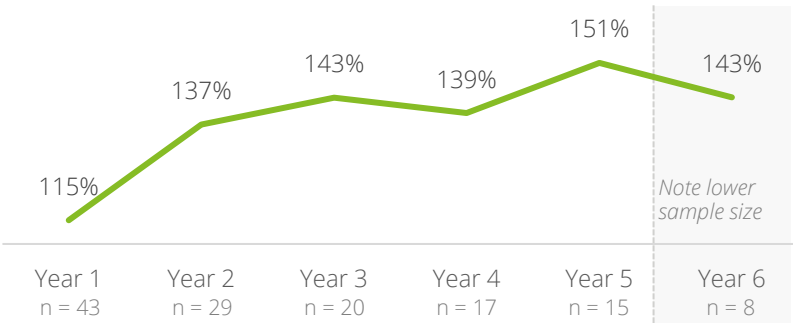


Chart 4.12: Additional increase to community assets value over time compared to baseline assets



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026). Average baseline assets is calculated for communities that have assets data in the journey year and in baseline (year 0). Communities may be counted more than once over the journey. Inflation is not accounted for in calculations.

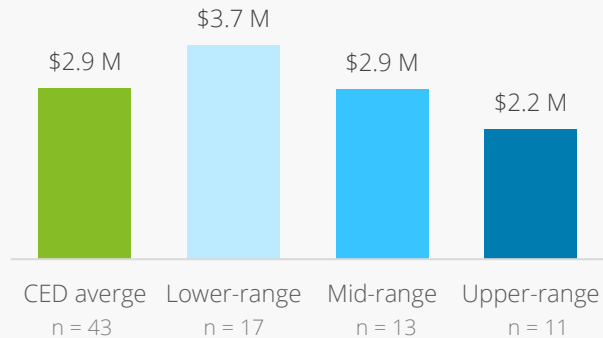
The value of starting assets (at baseline) has an inverted relationship with journey start attributes.

Lower-range COs reporting having higher value of assets at baseline (\$3.7M) relative to mid-range (\$2.9M) or upper-range (\$2.2M) (Chart 4.13).

This may reflect assets which are not intended to be monetised (i.e., cultural and shared community assets), which means asset growth may not follow the same pathways observed in revenue growth.

It is noted that analysis of asset trends by journey year and journey start attributes have been omitted due to the low data sample size available to inform robust analysis.

Chart 4.13: Baseline asset value by starting capabilities



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026). There are 2 community organisations (no longer active) that are included in the CED average but omitted from the disaggregation by journey start attributes.

Links to [Program Logic](#)

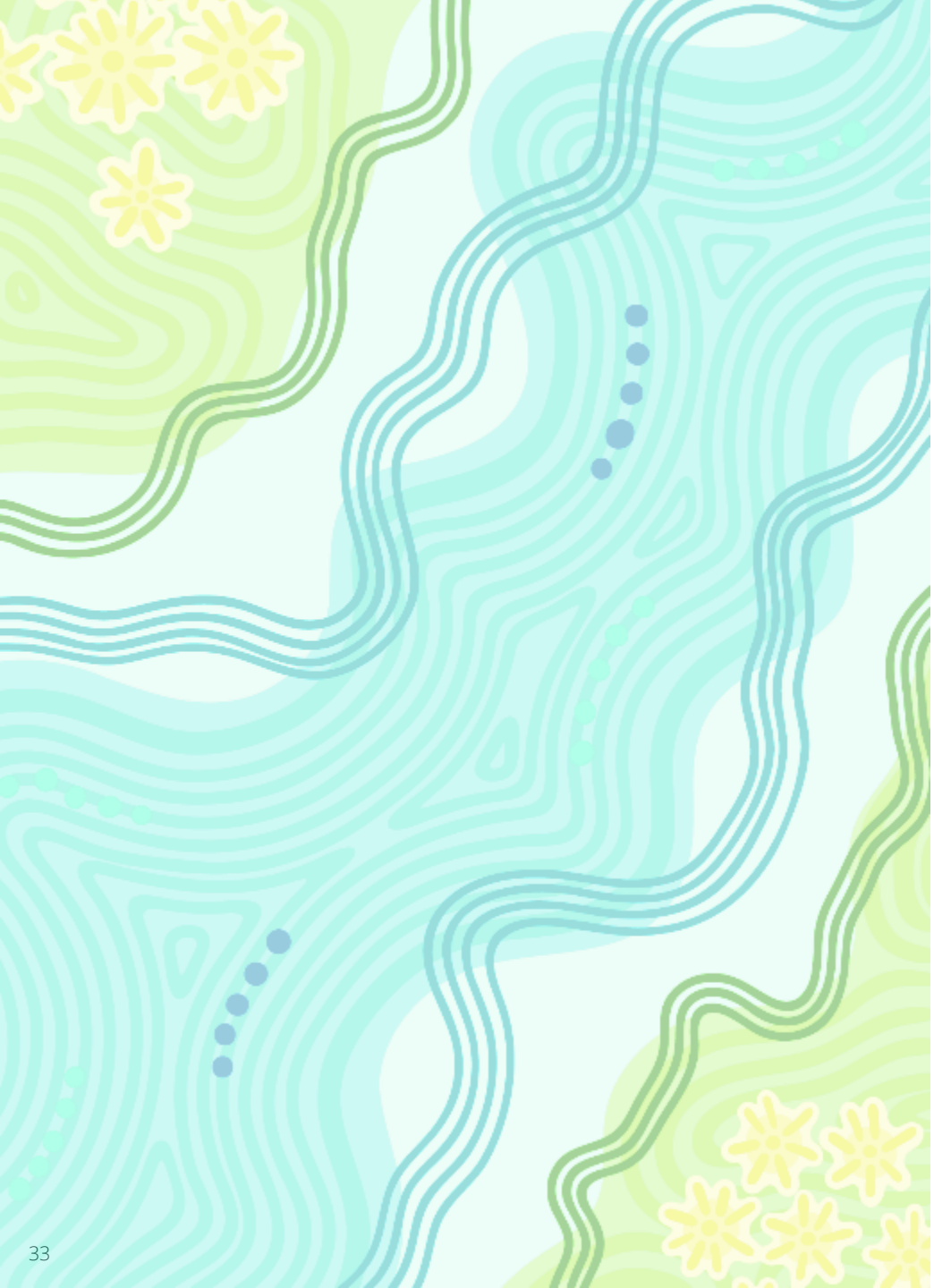
Assumptions:

- 6 Communities re-invest their additional profits into assets, community services and/or other Economic Initiatives.

Medium-term outcomes:

Increased community control over community assets

Increased **profit** reinvested back into the community



05 Community engagement in economic initiatives

This section explores the economic outcomes of the communities that the organisations are seeking to support, including how businesses, economic projects and activities of the organisations create opportunities for employment and economic participation.

Summary of employment over time and *by journey start attributes*

Total employment grew by 41% from 985 jobs in FY24 to 1,391 jobs in FY25. Additional employment was primarily led by new community organisations joining in FY25, with 266 (of 406 new jobs) relative to 140 additive roles through continuing organisations.

[34](#)

Employment within organisations grows most significantly between years 3 to 5, before appearing to stabilise in year 5 and 6. This may indicate early signals of succession in the training and upskilling of existing staff (noting that the sample of organisations with data in year 5 and 6 of the journey remains smaller).

[35](#)

Growth in employment in economic initiatives grows in line with growth in number of economic initiatives sustained and created – this is most rapid after year 3, aligning with the focus of the CED Program on *Economic Initiatives*.

[36](#)

COs re-invest in community through employment, with expenditure on employment (relative to baseline) increasing every year.

[37](#)

Employment growth across community organisations *by journey start attributes* are similar to the whole-of-program trends.

[38](#)

The sectoral disaggregation of economic work reflect both the priorities and employment preferences of communities – with a concentration of initiatives and jobs in *Environment, Land Management and Farming and Community Services*.

[39-40](#)

Community case studies have been included to highlight ways in which Many Rivers have supported community and economic development over years in program.

[41-46](#)

Tracking employment over time: organisation and initiative-level

Consulted organisation leaders consistently define impact through the lens of community employment. In FY25, community organisations supported 516 jobs through organisational roles and 872 jobs through economic initiatives.

Total employment grew by 41% from 985 jobs in FY24 to 1,388 jobs in FY25 (Chart 5.1).

This is lower than the 69% growth observed between FY23 and FY24 – which was largely driven by a few organisations with new or rapidly scaling economic initiatives (which has since stabilised in employment numbers).

Two-thirds of the increased employment is through new community organisations joining the CED in FY25.

66% (266 of 403 new jobs) were added through new COs joining the program for the first year. The remaining 34% (137 of 403 new jobs) were creating by continuing COs (Chart 5.2).

Further detailed analysis on [organisational employment](#) and [employment through economic initiatives](#) are provided in the following pages.

Employment growth could be driven by existing organisation growth, new organisations or concurrent employment programs (i.e., 1000 Jobs Package)

Communities actively create opportunities for their members, to increase the pathways to employment.

“We do all the mandatory trainings on first aid, on child protection [services] and TAFE courses with the chef. Everyone gets the same opportunity.”

- Robert Larking, CEO of Scotdesco Aboriginal Corporation

Chart 5.1: Organisation and economic employment in FY23 to FY25

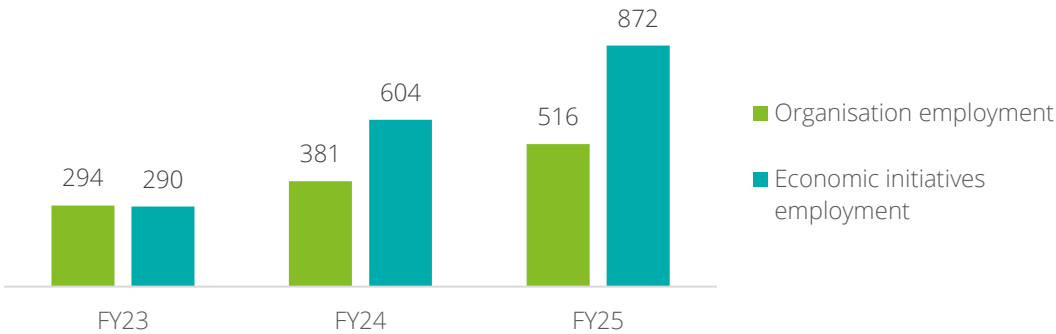
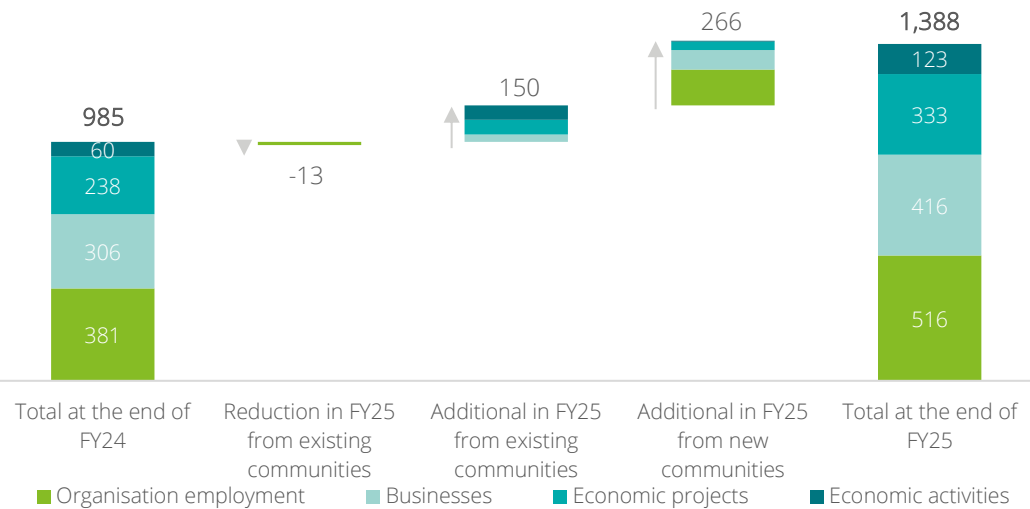


Chart 5.2: Employment in organisation, business, economic projects and activities in FY25



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026). n = 79 community organisations.

Links to [Program Logic](#)

Assumptions:

6 Communities re-invest their additional profits into assets, community services and/or other Economic Initiatives.

9 The economic initiatives generated by the community organisation are sufficiently large to provide sustainable employment and income opportunities community members.

Medium-term outcomes:

Increased employment opportunities for community members

Long-term outcomes:

Created sustainable and meaningful employment opportunities

Improved employment and market incentives for individuals

Profile of employment within organisations

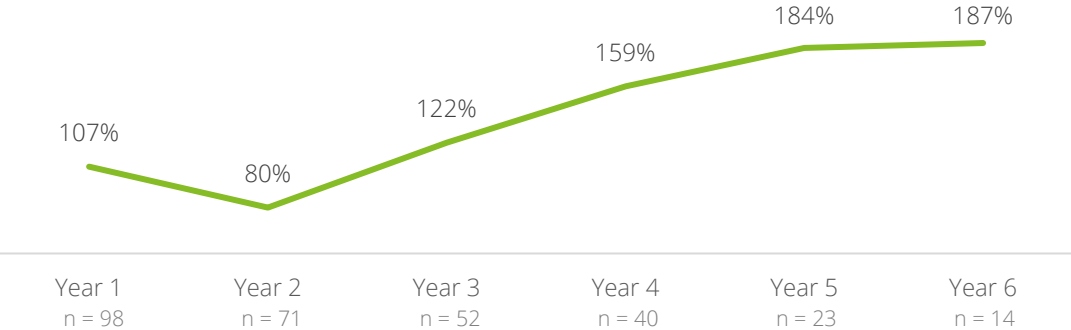
Organisations supported by Many Rivers directly create employment opportunities in the running of the organisations. Growth in employment is most significant between year 3 and 5, before stabilising in year 6.

Growth in employment within organisations is most significant between years 3 to 5, before stabilising in year 6 (Chart 5.3, Chart 5.4). The employment growth between years 3 and 5 may reflect the scaling required of the organisation at the point-in-time. Stabilisation from year 5 onwards may reflect the focus of community organisations on training of existing staff for succession.

Chart 5.3: Community employment by journey year compared to baseline employment



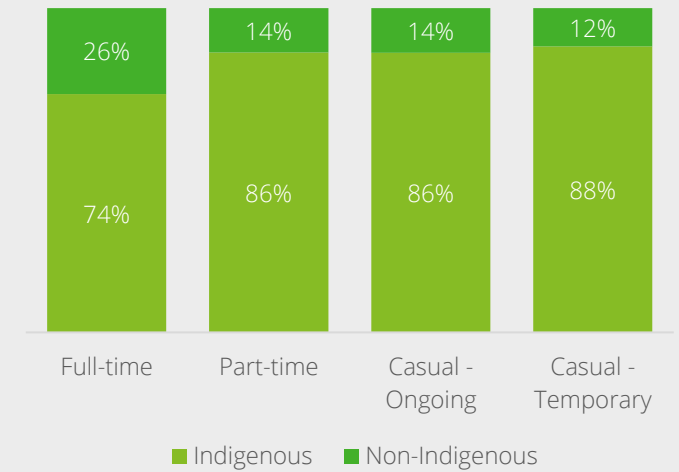
Chart 5.4: Additional increase to community employment by journey year compared to baseline



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026). Average baseline and total community organisation employment is calculated for communities that have employment data in both the baseline and journey year. Communities are excluded from a year if either baseline or journey year does not exist. Communities may be counted more than once over the journey.

82% of community organisation jobs are held by Indigenous Australians

Chart 5.5: Community organisation jobs, split by contract type and Indigenous/non-Indigenous, FY25



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026).

Community organisations occasionally hire external, non-Indigenous resources to access:

- Specialist support (i.e., legal, administrative management etc.)
- Immediate managerial capability needs at a point in time

Links to [Program Logic](#)

Assumptions:

6 Communities re-invest their additional profits into assets, community services and/or other Economic Initiatives.

9 The economic initiatives generated by the community organisation are sufficiently large to provide sustainable employment and income opportunities community members.

Medium-term outcomes:

Increased employment opportunities for community members

Long-term outcomes:

Created sustainable and meaningful employment opportunities

Improved employment and market incentives for individuals

Profile of employment within economic initiatives

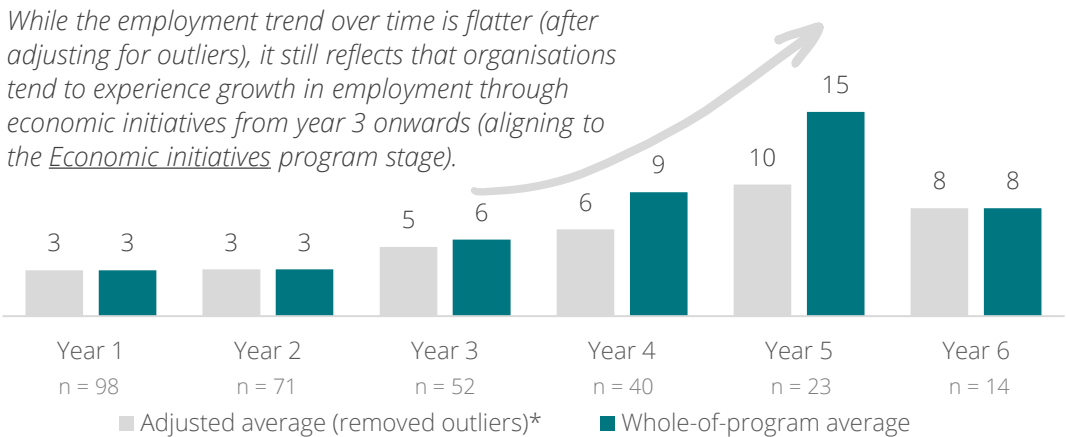
Employment through community organisations’ economic initiatives also increases over journey. Similar to direct organisation employment, the positions are largely held by Indigenous Australians.

Employment through economic work increases as community organisations mature, proxied through CED journey year. This may reflect Many Rivers’ role in helping communities to scale businesses, economic projects and activities.

There is a decline in employment through economic initiatives in between year 5 and 6 (from an average of 15 to 8 individuals). This reflects the drop off of two community organisations, both in their fifth journey year (Chart 5.6). Accounting for this, Many Rivers still supports employment within economic initiatives in a similar, but more modest, trajectory.

It is noted that growth in the number of and employment in economic initiatives are presented as averages (as opposed to relative to baseline), this is due to limited data or small samples of COs reporting economic initiatives at baseline.

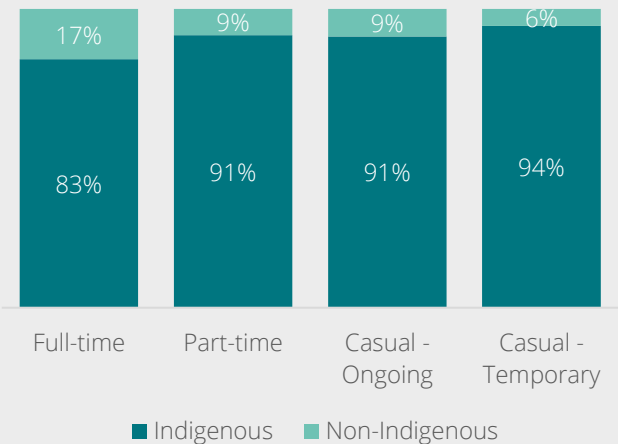
Chart 5.6: Average employment in economic initiatives by journey year



*Note: Two organisations (both in their fifth journey year in FY25) had high growth in employment through economic initiatives resulting in inflated whole-of-program averages. The adjusted average accounts for this by omitting these two community organisations from calculations. Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026)

89% of economic initiative jobs are held by Indigenous Australians

Chart 5.7: Economic initiative jobs, split by contract type and Indigenous/non-Indigenous, FY25



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026)

Benefits of employment go beyond the job and associated economic value created – with communities reflecting on the impact of employing younger community members.

“the older [members] have been able to mentor and teach... that’s what the older generation wanted.”

Links to [Program Logic](#)

Assumptions:

- 6 Communities re-invest their additional profits into assets, community services and/or other Economic Initiatives.
- 9 The economic initiatives generated by the community organisation are sufficiently large to provide sustainable employment and income opportunities community members.

Medium-term outcomes:

Increased employment opportunities for community members

Long-term outcomes:

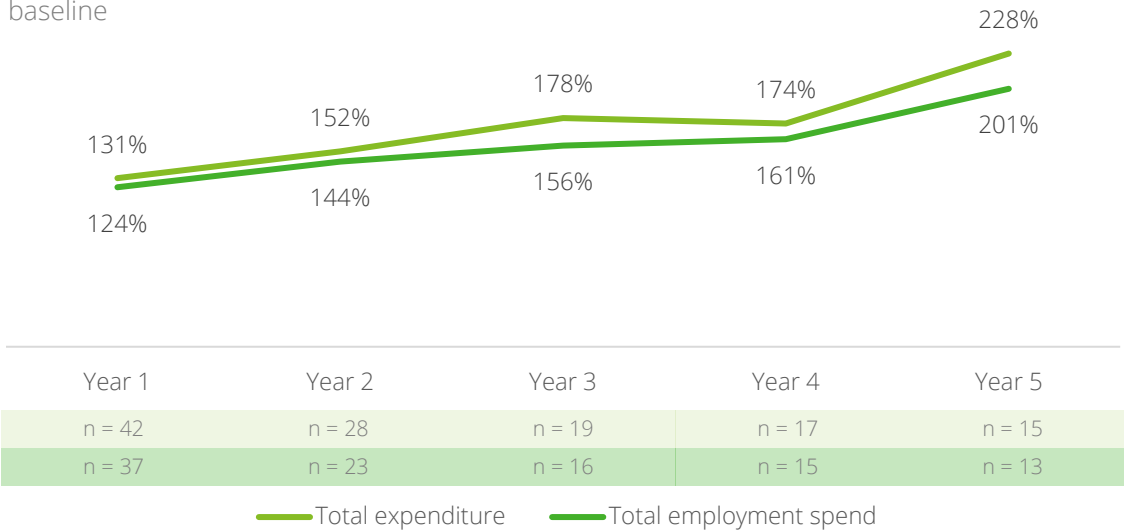
- Created sustainable and meaningful employment opportunities
- Improved employment and market incentives for individuals

Expenditure on employment

Community organisations are supported to re-invest revenue through employment that community wants and needs.

Growth in revenue enables COs to re-invest in community through employment.
Community organisations spend an increasing amount (compared to baseline) every year they are in the CED Program, reflecting the increased capacity from greater revenue (Chart 5.8).
The growth observed in expenditure on employment is similar (and higher) to that of total expenditure, reflecting the re-investment of organisation revenue back into community.

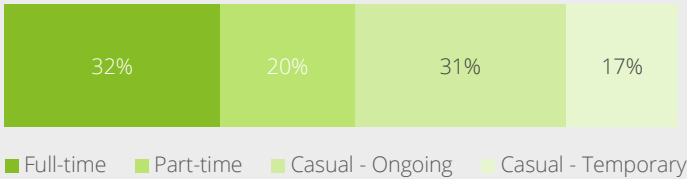
Chart 5.8: Additional increase to expenditure and employment spend by journey year compared to baseline



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026). Average baseline and total community organisation employment is calculated for communities that have employment data in both the baseline and journey year. Communities are excluded from a year if either baseline or journey year does not exist. Communities may be counted more than once over the journey.

In FY25, community organisations in the program reported spending \$32.4 million on employment.
Across the 1,391 individuals employed across the program, this implies an average annual income of \$23,300 per year. It is noted that almost half (48%) of total employment is casual, noting the flexible employment needs of Indigenous communities to allow balance between employment and community duties and responsibilities (Chart 5.9).

Chart 5.9: Total employment split by contract type



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026).

“We have transformed from a fully voluntary workforce to an operational organisation, [delivering] land management, a growing presence on country with our trainee rangers, and with a presence in Launceston with our administrative staff.”

- Nick Cameron, CEO of MTWAC

Links to [Program Logic](#)

Assumptions:

- 6 Communities re-invest their additional profits into assets, community services and/or other Economic Initiatives.
- 9 The economic initiatives generated by the community organisation are sufficiently large to provide sustainable employment and income opportunities community members.

Medium-term outcomes:

Increased employment opportunities for community members

Long-term outcomes:

Created sustainable and meaningful employment opportunities

Improved employment and market incentives for individuals

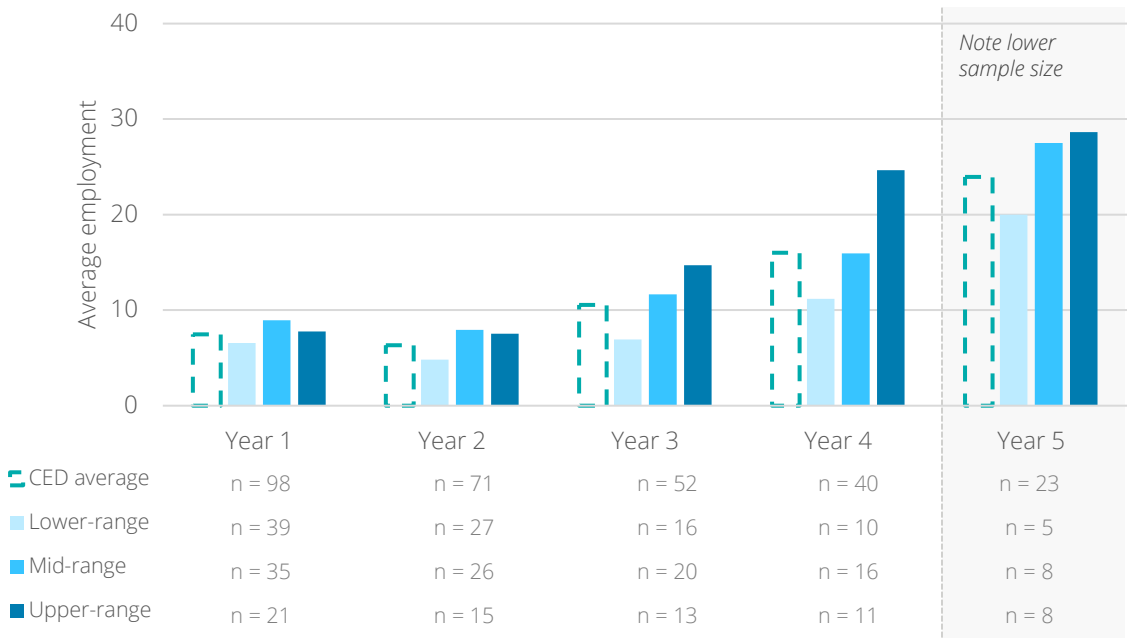
Comparing employment outcomes by community organisations' journey start attributes

The CED Program supports the creation of employment over time for all community organisations regardless of journey start attributes, for employment both within the organisation and for economic work purposes.

While employment increases over time (relative to baseline) for all communities, organisations with more starting attributes observe higher employment over time.

Growth in employment (including both [in organisation](#) and [in economic initiatives](#)) is more modest in the first few years of the program journey, aligning with the program focus on *Strong Foundations*, before increasing more substantially from year 3 (Chart 5.10).

Chart 5.10: Average employment (including organisation and economic initiatives) by journey year and journey start attributes

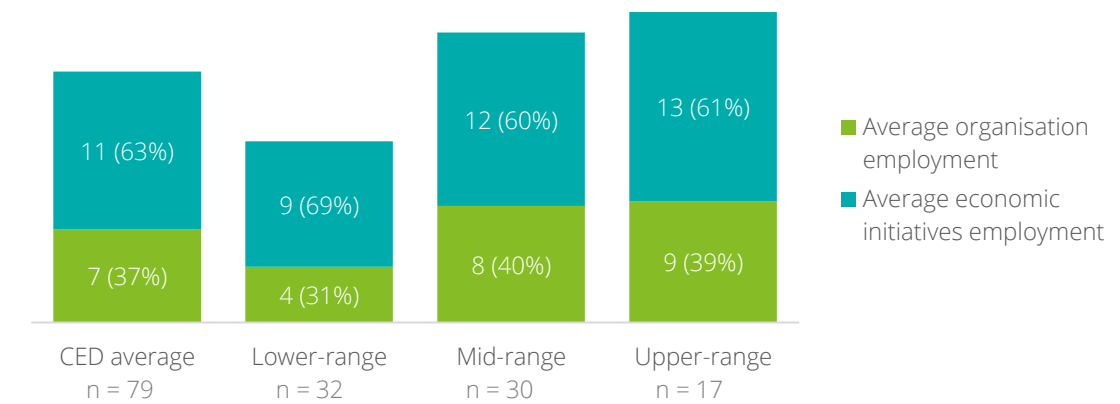


Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026). There are 3 community organisations (no longer active) that are included in the CED average but omitted from the disaggregation by journey start attributes due to missing entry in *Journey Start Recommendation* or employment data.

Composition of employment within the organisation and through economic work is comparable across COs with different journey start attributes.

On average, across the CED Program, 37% of employment created (or an average of 7 employees per CO) is focused on the running of the organisation. Organisations with mid and upper-range journey start attributes have a slightly higher share of organisational employment, at 39% and 40% respectively (Chart 5.11).

Chart 5.11: Composition of employment active in FY25 by journey start attributes



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026).

Scotdesco Aboriginal Corporation reflect on the importance of **employment to be created with and for community**, to consider community needs and wants, capability and to provide the support (i.e., training and confidence) that empowers them to do what they want.

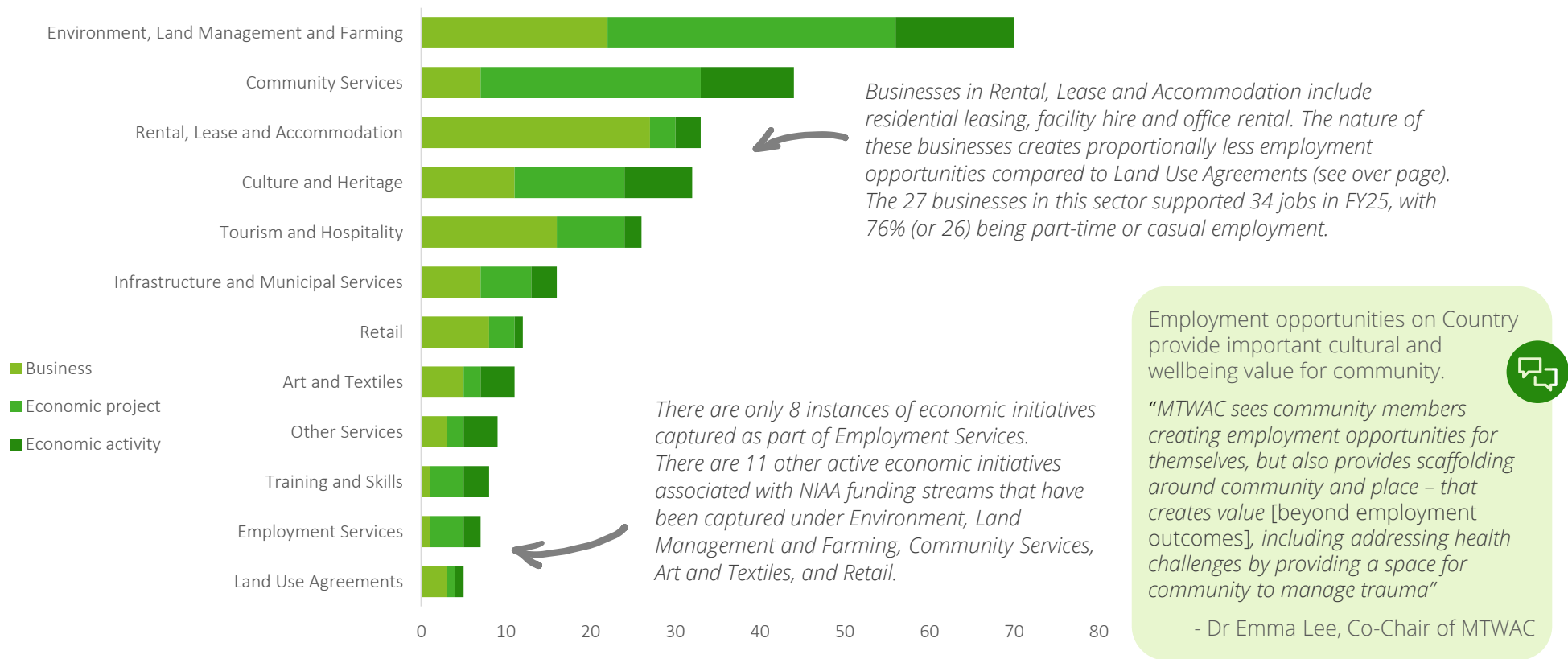
“[The Board and Many Rivers] moves at and with the capacity of our community.”
- Lahn Mickan, Chair of Scotdesco Aboriginal Corporation

Economic initiatives by sector

Businesses, economic projects and economic activities deliver a range of community services; most commonly in Environment, Land Management and Farming or Rental, Lease and Accommodation.

Across FY25, the CED Program supported 273 economic initiatives, delivered by 79 community organisations. Of these, 111 (or 41%) are businesses and 162 (or 59%) are economic projects or activities (Chart 2.8). The largest sectors by number of businesses have not changed since FY24, and are *Rental, Lease and Accommodation*, *Tourism and Hospitality*, and *Environmental, Land Management and Farming* – reflecting the capital and resources available to community organisations for commerciality (Chart 5.12).

Chart 5.12: Economic initiatives in FY25, breakdown by sector



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026).). n = 79 organisations

Links to [Program Logic](#)

Assumptions:

- 6 Communities re-invest their additional profits into assets, community services and/or other Economic Initiatives.
- 9 The economic initiatives generated by the community organisation are sufficiently large to provide sustainable employment and income opportunities community members.

Medium-term outcomes:

Increased employment opportunities for community members

Long-term outcomes:

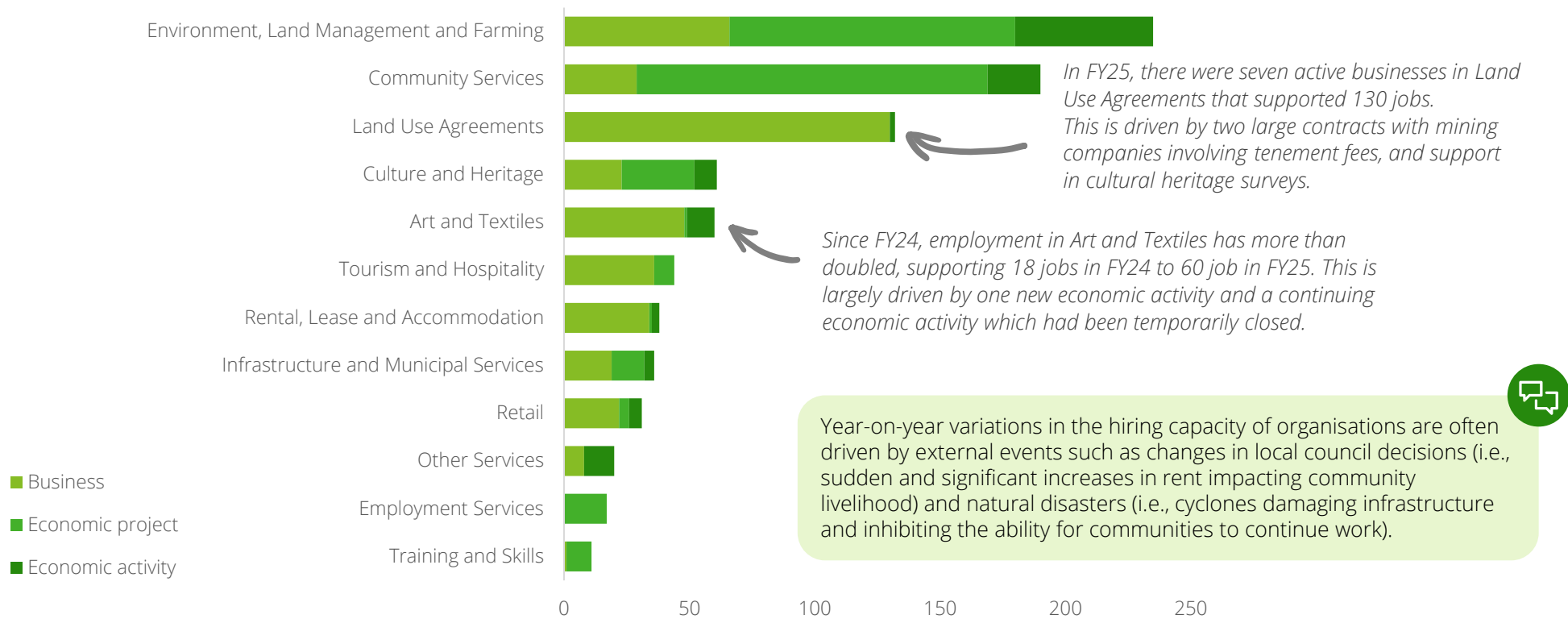
- Created sustainable and meaningful employment opportunities
- Improved employment and market incentives for individuals
- Increased local provision of goods and services

Employment in economic initiatives by sector

Employment opportunities are created through businesses, economic projects and economic activities. Nearly half of all employment supported is in Land Management and Community Services.

Economic initiatives, supported by the CED Program, sustained 872 jobs through FY25 – of which 416 were through businesses, 333 through economic projects and 123 through economic activities (Chart 5.2). *Environment, Land Management and Farming* and *Community Services* continues to create the most employment opportunities, representing 27% and 22% respectively of total employment created through economic initiatives in FY25. This aligns with prior community consultations that reflected on the prioritisation of community service programs that support immediate needs, such as access to health care, education, funeral assistance and aged care services (Chart 5.13).

Chart 5.13: Employment in economic initiatives in FY25, breakdown by sector



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026). n = 79 organisations

Links to [Program Logic](#)

Assumptions:

- 6 Communities re-invest their additional profits into assets, community services and/or other Economic Initiatives.
- 9 The economic initiatives generated by the community organisation are sufficiently large to provide sustainable employment and income opportunities community members.

Medium-term outcomes:

Increased employment opportunities for community members

Long-term outcomes:

Created sustainable and meaningful employment opportunities

Improved employment and market incentives for individuals

Increased local provision of goods and services

Case Study: Bima Wear

The Tiwi women in Wurrumiyanga, Bathurst Island, with the assistance of Sister Eucharis, created a women-led creative enterprise in 1969 – *Bima Wear*. The women proudly design, print and produce garments, homewares and cultural fabric prints. The everyday, occasional and ceremonial garments produced by Bima Wear celebrates the distinct language, traditional symbols, structures, family and environmental representations that are central to Tiwi culture. Bima Wear holds a significant cultural and social role in the Tiwi community and produces custom made coffin covers for funerals, ceremonial nagas for men, ceremonial skirts and tops for women, and outfits for religious and sporting events.

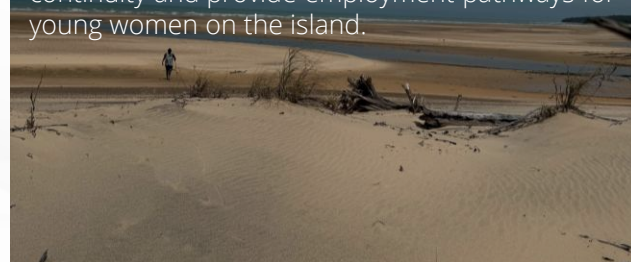
The organisation has grown to become a well-regarded and valuable Tiwi art centre, serving to help preserve cultural continuity and provide local Tiwi employment. Bima Wear creates a safe space for Indigenous Tiwi women of all ages and clans to share knowledge and skills between generations, and support mentorship.

Over the years, Bima Wear has created strong relationships with the neighbouring communities and art centres on the island and in Darwin. The Bima Wear team showcase their work and connect with other Indigenous communities at local events and festivals such as the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair.

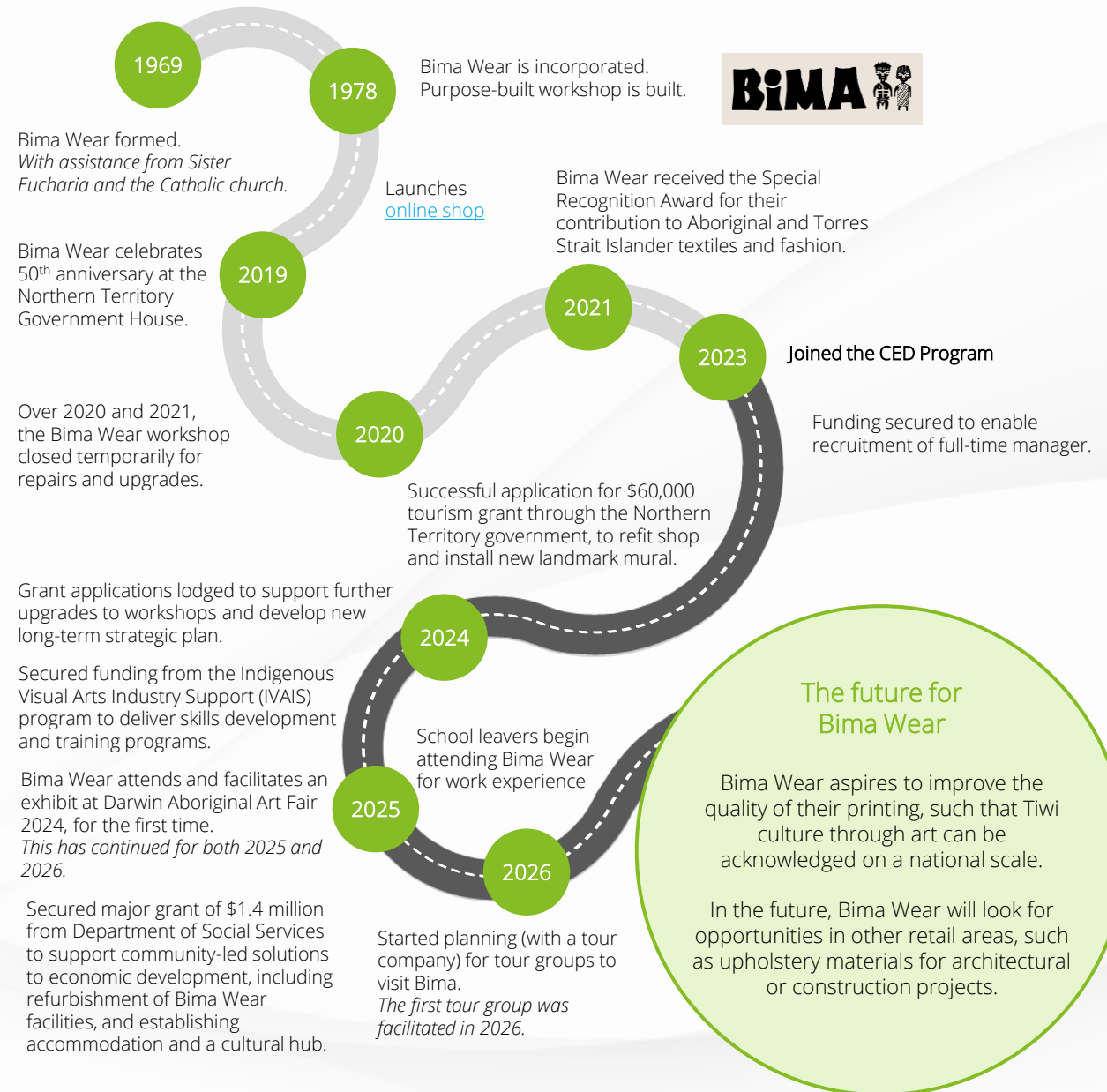


Goals

Continue to look for opportunities to improve the quality of printing and production – *for example, through training and skills development and access to grants to purchase new screen (i.e., for printing)*. An ongoing focus for the community is the recruitment of young women (school leavers) to Bima Wear; to encourage cultural continuity and provide employment pathways for young women on the island.



Pictured: Wurrumiyanga Beach, Bathurst Island, NT.



Community impact: Bima Wear

Bima Wear has created an organisation and space that serves local community by enabling access to cultural art and garment, as well as providing employment and training opportunities for Tiwi women on the island.

In 2024, Bima Wear completed the Shop Fitout and Mural project which proudly showcase Tiwi designs on a mural outside of the Bima Wear workshop.

Older women, including founding members of Bima Wear, have been able to pass down cultural knowledge, skills and mentorship to the younger generation through work experience programs.



66

"[Bima started] sitting under a tree and making leather work.. all these decades later we are still here."

.....

"I like my job at Bima. My favourite part is helping the other women – the teamwork. I like sewing and helping the older ladies."

.....

"It is amazing to have Clare [CEDM] with someone who totally knows and understands. Not just understands Bima, but other communities and the broader knowledge of context."

.....

"Last year we made more money at the Darwin Art Fair than we had in previous years. It was a great to be able to say 'Bima is Back!'."

- Bima Wear

A background image for the quote section showing a sunset over a body of water. There are silhouettes of trees in the foreground and a person standing in the water in the distance.

Case Study: Melaythenner Teeackana Warrana (*Heart of Country*) Aboriginal Corporation

Melaythenner Teeackana Warrana (Heart of Country) Aboriginal Corporation (MTWAC) was formed in 2008, after a group of Tasmanian Aboriginal people came together to discuss how Community could be inclusive and have a voice especially in the area of Cultural Heritage and Knowledge. It currently operates as a not-for-profit organisation with operations centered on Tebrakunna Country (Cape Portland) in Trouwunna (Tasmania). MTWAC members are the direct descendants of the ancestors of Tebrakunna country, who were removed from their traditional lands in the early-to-mid-1800s.

The organisation's current co-chairs are Mark Harriss and Professor Emma Lee OAM. Nick Cameron is the outgoing chair and incoming inaugural CEO of the organisation. Nick has worked closely with the CED Manager in the region as part of the organisation's 5-year journey with Many Rivers.

The leadership group noted that by taking small progressive steps, the organisation has grown to over 300 members and hosts an annual event with 1000 people in attendance last year. Their success is both in organisational governance – the organisation received an Australian Indigenous Governance Institute (AIGI) Award in 2024 – and in the rapid growth in the organisation's programs and employment – particularly through the scaling of their *Tebrakunna Rangers* program since 2023.



Goals

Following a period of growth in the organisation's activities, which has coincided with growth in employment (within the organisation's administrative teams, and across its programs), the Co-chairs and CEO described their next goal as "*bringing MTWAC into a stabilisation phase*", with a continued presence on

Tebrakunna Country, delivering the Ranger Program effectively (with a view to seek further funding in 2028), and continuing to deliver the annual *Mannalargenna Day*.

MTWAC is also **increasingly focused on youth**, through the establishment of the Youth Hub in Launceston continued delivery of the Junior Ranger program (separate to the IRP, also working on country) and the delivery of school camps.



Unpacking the 'how' of community economic development

Examples of the CED activity and outcomes in the Melaythenner Teeackana Warrana Aboriginal Corporation Journey

Community agendas and conversations with community highlight the CED Program's role in supporting MTWAC to:

Translating a vision to a sequenced, strategic plan

Informed by meeting with the MTWAC Chair at the time, the CEDM drafted a proposed '8 year plan' (to 2030) which set out a sequenced set of tasks to build toward the goals defined by the community. This plan was then refined through discussion with the board and has been used as a basis to prioritise activity around 5 strategy priorities (see right).

Supporting operations

The CEDM focused initial support to the organisation as it moved from volunteer, Board-run to an operational entity. This included:

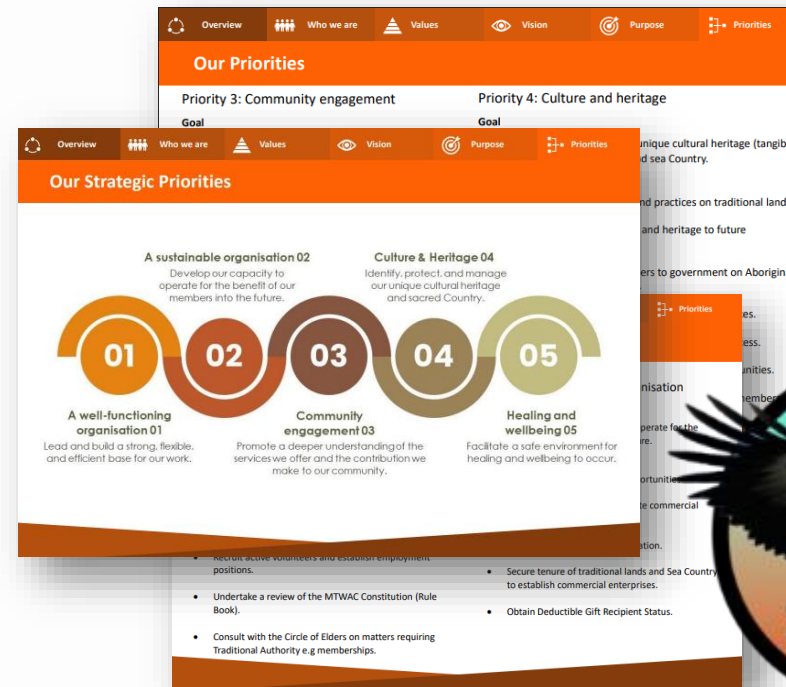
- Supporting the Board to secure funding to initiate their first program (Ranger training program)
- Working alongside their first part-time paid staff (an organisational manager on a short-term contract) to identify resources, necessary policies and procedures and funding priorities.
- The scoping and recruitment of a fulltime GM role (development of the PD, recruiting and onboarding)

More recently, as the organisation has funded more administrative positions and trained staff, the CEDM has become an advisor, focuses less on day-to-day operations and supporting with new processes, such as the recent CEO recruitment.

Strengthening financial management

Across the organisation's journey, the CEDM has worked with the Chair, GM and CEO to:

- Refine 5-year cashflow projections
- Support the development of Ranger sponsorship package and commercial costings
- Review IPA funding guidelines and prepare for IPA community consultations presentation
- Supporting funding applications for the Ranger Program (IRP)
- Preparing business plans which sit within funding /grant applications (e.g., the ILSC application).



Mapping to the program logic, these examples map to the following outcomes:

Improved governance foundations including:

- Legal structure
- Compliance with legislation
- Financial literacy
- Policies and procedures

Improved capability of community organisation leadership, management and operations

Access to new funding opportunities

Increased employment opportunities for community members

Increased community control over community assets

Increased organisational influence, choice and control over its agendas



Case Study: Scotdesco Aboriginal Corporation

Scotdesco Aboriginal Corporation is located on 25,000 acres of property called Tjilkaba (meaning prickly) in Ceduna, South Australia. In 1992, the Scott family prepared a community plan and secured funds to purchase a large farm west of Ceduna on which the community was established and continue to live.

Since then, significant developments have been progressed – such as office and accommodation buildings, water catchment systems and solar panels – which contribute to the self-sufficiency of the Scotdesco community. The infrastructure services the community and presents opportunities for commercial endeavours; for example, Wardu Camps.

Wardu Camps have been a success. The immersive experience allows student and corporate participants to connect with Scotdesco's culture, history, land and language, and have provided the community with a revenue raising opportunity. The experience includes activities such as Artifact making, sourcing ancestral plants and bush medicines, being exposed to local Aboriginal languages through storytelling, and touring the surrounding landmarks.



Goals: To achieve self-sufficiency for the Scotdesco community by actively working on their underpinning priorities: Proudly building cultural competence and confidence, developing strong relationships, continuing the success of Wardu Camps, maintain family focused community wellbeing, implement purposeful community maintenance and services, and create revenue raising opportunities that are aligned to Scotdesco values.



"Technology is helping us to be more sustainable. We upgraded the water tanks on the hill and now we are self-sufficient. Last year we were battling to build more houses because we didn't have enough water."

"Organisations came and then left. We waited and waited and I decided that it wasn't going to work for us, so we invested in our solar instead."

– Robert Larking, CEO of Scotdesco Aboriginal Corporation

"I am here for community, my voice is a vehicle for community."

– Lahn Mickan, Chair of Scotdesco Aboriginal Corporation

Scotdesco purchased Tjilkaba in Ceduna, South Australia.

The community commenced developing infrastructure which continues to be used and built upon to this day; providing housing, office space, and opportunities for commercial ventures.

2019 Joined the CED program with support needed in introducing governance and structure to the Board, and support in expanding existing activities.

Over time, Scotdesco fostered **relationships and networks** to expand operations; such as partnering with Camps International and Intrepid to consider ways to improve their reach.

The **Scotdesco Water Security Project** was set up, which provides water to community members.

Installation of **solar panels** across Scotdesco community properties, to support self-sufficiency.

Ongoing infrastructure upgrades, including installation of floodlights, and upgrades to offices and spaces used in the facilitation of Wardu Camp activities.

Camp participants attending Boomerang making classes.

1992

2013

Scotdesco continues to invest in infrastructure such as the community hall and accommodation to **create community-led economic opportunities**, including catering meals, renting out office and function space, accommodation and Scotdesco Art Gallery.

2019

2021

2022

Scotdesco, with Many Rivers' support, formalised **business planning processes**. As part of this process, leadership identified the water and electricity supply as key risks to the success of the business plan, as well as to community wellbeing.

First Wardu Camp held for 21 children over 7 days. *Wardu is the Wirangu language name for the Southern hairy-nosed wombat.*

2024

Many Rivers supported developing the **2024-27 strategic plan**.

Secured \$650,000 funding from the Commonwealth Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) as part of the **Scotdesco Water Security Project**.

2025

2026

A new project officer was hired to support the CEO and day-to-day operations.

The future for Scotdesco Aboriginal Corporation

The community will continue to strengthen their financial independence through increasing revenue from Wardu Camp – by investing in marketing and social media, continued upgrades to camping facilities, and building a bushcamp kitchen. Scotdesco aspires to contribute to the education of local community through facilitating a scholarship local students in Ceduna.



The pathway to succession is built on *Strong Foundations* and community values

Examples of the CEDM activity and outcomes in Scotdesco Aboriginal Corporation

The CEDM supports tasks and activities that contribute to the capability and readiness for the community to plan for succession over time, both from the CED Program and for communities' long-term success. These governance activities help ensure continuity in midst of change, and builds operational resilience in the community.

It is critical that these plans and decisions are community-led, enable self-determination and empower all levels of the community to provide input.

"We have done everything, but every year there are new things and new board members that need to do the learning again."

- Robert Larking, CEO of Scotdesco Aboriginal Corporation

Establishing and continual strengthening of governance with community and the Board

Across the organisation's journey, the CEDM worked closely with the CEO, Chair and Board to:

- Understand and align the CO's operations and decisions against community needs.
- Develop and articulate shared community values as part of the *2024-27 Strategy Plan*
- Support the development of Board induction packs

"Culture is the basis of communities that I see succeed. We need Elders to come in and lead, and [to] be involved in decisions [with community]."

- Lahn Mickan, Chair of Scotdesco Aboriginal Corporation

Creating jobs and opportunities with and for community

At Scotdesco Aboriginal Corporation, it is important for decisions about the community and community members' future to be community-led, including those relating to employment. Community members are empowered to create employment opportunities that are flexible around their personal, family and community obligations.

"They can work five days, but they choose [to work] four days. They need the fifth day for shopping and appointments."

- Robert Larking, CEO of Scotdesco Aboriginal Corporation

Reaffirming ownership and accountability in community

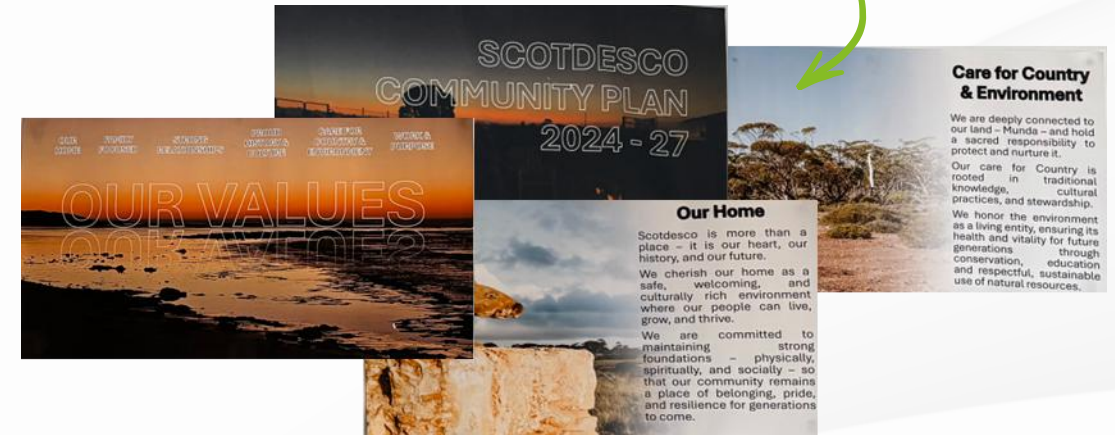
The CEDM has supported the organisation in governance activities that are focused on improving the capability, ownership and accountability across the community as a whole:

- Documentation of *Roles and Responsibilities* of all Scotdesco employees, including individual working sessions with each worker to determine what they want their role to look like, and to document agreed job descriptions.
- Documentation of *Activities and Tasks* necessary to the operation of Scotdesco, including Wardu Camps. The step-by-step descriptions enable any community member to be able to share knowledge and responsibilities. In addition to creating accountability and responsibility, these governance activities are intended to support Scotdesco in becoming resilient to changes (i.e., in personnel).

"Everyone [needs] to know their roles and their responsibilities, [to be resilient to and] know that change is there."

- Robert Larking, CEO of Scotdesco Aboriginal Corporation

Many Rivers supported the community in developing a 4-year strategic community plan, including articulating the core underpinning community value – *Our home, Family focused, Strong relationships, Proud history & culture, Care for country & environment, and Work & purpose.*



Mapping to the program logic, these examples map to the following outcomes:



Emerging research focus areas from this 6th evaluation

This year's evaluation introduced new inputs to and components of analysis, which has in turn uncovered areas for future research, particularly around understanding variations in progress and context across communities' CED journeys.

The opportunity to using *Community Agendas* as an evaluative input

In its current form, the *Community Agendas*, can be used to inform:

- **A review of the Program Logic** by identifying specific activities and tasks that have been planned for and progressed by communities. This review could also compare planned and actual progress of COs with similar contexts (i.e., by geographical location or journey start attributes). Strategic hypotheses and research questions may include *whether the shift to Economic Initiatives (from Strong Foundations) is consistently occurring at year 3* and *whether similar or shared external headwinds (and tailwinds) result in similar impacts to comparable communities*.
- **Activities, objectives and progress of ceased and/or completed communities during their CED Program journey.** Many Rivers has, in past evaluations, sought to understand journeys of ceased communities post-program (i.e., in consultations or via surveys). It is understood that this has not always been successful, given the context of relationships. The agendas may provide insight into the planned and completed activities in the lead up to completion of program and form hypotheses around reasons for exit (for those that ceased before program completion).
- **The trajectory of community organisations** – where the agendas present a workplan view and the annual updates to community stories provide the change in community context.

Community consultations and CEDM voice are critical inputs into the annual evaluation, and there is no intention to replace or discontinue these existing processes. However, there is an opportunity to incorporate additive and complementary information through the *Community Agendas*. In the initial review this year, there are a few limitations to relying on the agendas, including:

- Consistency in naming and description of tasks to support tractability over time.
- Clearer reconciliation of tasks over time (i.e., whether and when tasks are completed). Over the past 10 years, Many Rivers have incrementally revised and adjusted the way agendas are documented and structured based on continued learnings over the life of the program. Review and alignment of these changes over time would be helpful in informing the interpretation and analysis of agendas going forward.

Other analytical enhancement considerations

Concurrent to the analytical enhancements specifically relating to agendas, there are several other opportunities worth highlighting for future evaluations:

- **Extending and expanding the analysis by journey start attributes:**
 - To assess which (or what combination) of characteristics at journey start and over the program journey are most influential to progress and program success. For example, testing the hypothesis that grants provide immediate financial stability to COs, while investment in commercial enterprises brings exponential growth and potentially financial sustainability.
 - A scorecard approach to assessing economic outcomes at journey start and point-in-time points. For example, observing whether there are common trends and relationships in growth across revenue, asset value, economic initiatives and employment by the three starting attribute categorisations.
- **Interpreting CED journey from the full suite of CED Program information and data,** and testing with community and CEDMs, to assess the accuracy and completeness Many Rivers' documentation. Based on this year's consultations, information includes *community agendas*, *community stories* (at journey start and updated annually), *journey start recommendations* and interactions logs (in CRM). This exercise should be piloted for a few communities.
- **Identification of economic initiatives by Employment Services,** where this is currently reliant on the classification by sector. It is expected that there are more than the [8 recorded instances](#) of economic initiatives in Employment Services which have been captured under other relevant sectors (i.e., Land Management).



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