



**“Bridges to Understanding”
Building Community
Consensus**

Final Report

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Project Overview

The 'Bridges to Understanding – Building Community Consensus' workshop aimed to help participants build skills in conflict resolution, mediation and facilitation.

Women in Business and Regional Development decided to hold the workshop following the success of a series of three pilots held by the Foundation for Australian Agricultural Women in 2000. The pilots were an initiative of the then FAAW President, Val Lang. One of the pilots was held in Coonawarra and feedback from participants was extremely positive.

The expected outcomes for participants from the workshop were:

- Build facilitation skills to assist community and industry.
- Gain confidence in tackling and discussing difficult issues to reach agreement.
- Networking.
- Increased awareness of AWiA, its activities and role.

Informal feedback from participants indicated that the first three points were achieved very well by the workshop. A summary of the formal evaluation form completed by all participants is attached.



Participants at graduation together with Rhian Williams at right

The final point was achieved, as all participants became members of AWiA through their attendance at the workshop. The workshop coordinator explained AWiA's role in enabling the workshop to happen and the benefits of membership.

Report Against Assessment Criteria

1. *The workshop will deal with the impact of change*

Dealing with change often means dealing with conflict as different people and groups have opposing views about how to create and respond to change. 'Bridges to Understanding' was all about giving participants some skills and tools to help facilitate people through the process of dealing with change.

Topics covered included:

Setting the scene

- Establishing inclusive processes
- Identifying task and maintenance functions
- Clarifying the purpose of process interventions

Knowledge versus assumption

- Common stumbling blocks to understanding and sharing information
- Unpicking hidden levels of miscommunication
- Identifying 'cultural' impacts on communication

Collaborative problem-solving approaches

- Moving beyond adversarial thinking
- Generating and exploring options versus battling for positions
- Identifying mutual needs and benefits

Scenarios and role plays

- Exploring application of conflict resolution and mediation principles



Jan Kentish and Barbara Cameron deep in discussion

2. Open to AWiA members and others at extra cost

The workshop registration fee for non-AWiA members was \$120. This included meals, accommodation, tuition, a workbook and AWiA membership. Non-members were charged \$70. Seventeen non-members participated and one AWiA member.

The workshop was promoted using the Women in Business and Regional Development mailing list (about 500 women) and the AWiA member list (about 100 women in SA and Western Victoria). One newspaper advertisement was published and an article was distributed to regional media. In addition, an extensive interview on ABC Regional Radio was done.

The flier, advertisement and media releases are attached.

3. Expected to generate new AWiA membership

AWiA has 17 new members in South East SA as a result of the workshop.

4. Acknowledges the National Australia Bank's CommunityLink Program

All publicity material acknowledged the CommunityLink Program (see attached).

5. Will be organised by March 2001 and completed by June 2001

Achieved.

6. Budget will be within set limits of \$2,000

See attached financial report. The total workshop cost was \$5,923.50. Income support was received from CommunityLink sponsorship, FarmBis SA, Women in Business and Regional Development and from participants' registration fees. In addition, the facilitator's travel costs were shared with the South East Catchment Water Management Board, which also employed her while she was in the region.

7. Will strengthen networks between women in rural areas

Most of the women at the workshop had not met previously, so it was a networking opportunity for them. Many participants indicated that this aspect of the workshop was very beneficial. For example, one woman had very recently moved to the region for work and others who were having similar difficulties as local councillors were able to share ideas.

In addition, Women in Business and Regional Development is investigating the establishment of a database of mediators in South East SA for use by regional organisations and communities.

8. Will increase the profile of AWiA (i.e. through media coverage)

AWiA was recognised in all publicity undertaken for the workshop. Some 600 women received fliers featuring the AWiA logo and regional newspapers and radio recognised AWiA as a partner in the workshop. In addition, the workshop participants learnt about AWiA and became members as part of their registration fee.

Summary

The 'Bridges to Understanding – Building Community Consensus' workshop was a great success with very positive feedback from participants about its value to their work and community activities.

The workshop would not have been possible without sponsorship through AWiA/National CommunityLink sponsorship and support from FarmBis SA.

Attachments

1. evaluation summary report
2. workshop flier



Rhian Williams coaches Michelle Uren in effective mediation