

Snowy Mountains Innovation Network



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Challenges Definition Workshop

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Rydges Snowy Mountains, Jindabyne, NSW

Duncan Isaksen-Loxton
duncan@sixfive.com.au
0416 325673

Thor Slater
the.real.thor@icloud.com
0450 788 711

Executive Summary

The Snowy Mountains Innovation Network (SMIN) gathered together 23 Snowy Monaro thought leaders to discuss and agree the challenges faced by the region, that, if addressed with new companies, products and services, will improve livability (including economic diversity and community growth). The most important challenges were agreed to be:

1. Accommodation capacity and utilisation (year round)
2. Skills shortages for current businesses
3. Year-round tourism products and resident services
4. Brand agreement and ownership

SMIN will now use these challenges as input for:

1. Bringing the community together to create new products, services and companies to be built in our region
2. Progressing partner recruitment, funding and premises for creation of the first SMIN hub

Background

1. Objective for the event - Uncover the biggest challenges for our region, that, if addressed with new companies, products and services, will improve livability (including economic diversity and community growth).
2. Actions from the event:
 - a. Include identified challenges in federal funding application for SMIN
 - b. Engage with partners to contribute to funding application
 - c. Deliver ideation event, for teams and individuals to create and prototype solutions that address the challenges

Primary challenge outputs

Accommodation Capacity & Utilisation

- Lease and purchase are challenging for both permanent residents and seasonal employees, including:
 - Year-round rental is difficult to find, contributing to difficulties in attracting employee talent (see also skills shortage)
 - Limited supply of rental properties for seasonal workers (existing beds are sold at greater prices due to demand from customers)
- Excess / empty accommodation outside winter peak
- In peak winter times we are stretched to the limit with the resources available
- In shoulder, and off peak season availability of services for visitors and locals drops quickly

The focus: designing innovative ways to better utilise the assets we already have, and work with businesses to stay open more frequently.

Skills Shortage

- In peak summer holiday, and event weekends certain essential services are barely able to cope. These periods are short bursts of peak visitation (e.g. Snowy Ride, Easter)
- Existing businesses find it hard to attract, develop and retain skilled employees
- The region needs to offer more in the way of training for current employees, to retain them in the community
- The region would benefit from internships and avenues for learning after school to retain people in the community
- Partners - Business has a big part to play with internships
- Digital infrastructure - Access to technology, mobile coverage and WiFi in our population centres
- Infrastructure - a centre that can be a focus for skills development
- Content - programs for business development and entrepreneurship

Recognition and utilisation of the skills that come here with the people working in tourism, but also those who are not working in tourism

The focus: delivering training, internships, developing access to technology, creating collaborative networks and places to learn & work.

Year round Tourism Business & Resident services

- Growth in baseline visitor numbers - We are challenged to work on broadening our tourism product, with season-independent activities, with the aim of growing visitor numbers for Spring, summer and autumn, that will have the effect of utilising accommodation capacity and enabling more year-round employment opportunities.
- Transportation challenges exist,
 - Access to the region - road network issues for private transport, public transport outside winter season
 - Access around the region for tourists (internal cross promotion)
 - Access around the region for workers (eg resort staff to get to Cooma for shopping and admin tasks)
- Developing the product for non tourism workers, such that the region is engaging and stimulating to live here
- Making the business environment for tourism providers easier to set up and operate

The focus: Look at how to assist business owners and entrepreneurs to create businesses that meets set of identified goals

Context - Heritage of Natural & Built Environment

Whilst addressing these challenges we acknowledge that our natural environment forms the heritage that people come to visit for, and why people move here, protection here is key. Maintaining the built environment to resist external corporate interests that often dilute the attractiveness of other tourism destinations.

Brand

- There is a lack of ownership from the community in the 'Snowy Mountains' brand
- Visibility of the deliverables is underwhelming, in part as its an externally facing campaign
- Is there a part to play in promoting the region for living as well as visitors

The focus: how to gain greater ownership and pride in the brand from community, expand branding to cover summer product, and liveability aspects (this challenge should likely be owned by TSM as the existing keepers of the Snowy Mountains brand)

Next steps:

- Engage with TSM to discuss alignment with its objectives
- Include in SMIN ideation event, with marketing youth engagement
- Proposal to engagement student population for some input on ideas

SMIN proposed action summary

This is what we propose to do, let us know if you agree.

1. Hand-off issues that are outside SMIN's core activities, namely:
 - a. Brand: TSM should have ownership of this. SMIN could contribute by assisting with a great ideation competition to produce things like logos, apps - to engage community, especially schools.
 - b. Roads (Council / RMS)
 - c. National Parks leases
2. SMIN internal
 - a. Format challenge content for next events (listed below)
 - b. Set calendar for next events
 - c. Bring challenge content into SMIN funding application process::
 - i. Partner recruitment
 - ii. Securing premises
 - iii. Updating funding application and regional coordinator
 - d. Marketing activities next events

Next events:

1. Challenge Familiarisation - open to public - 2 hours

- a. Walkthrough of defined Challenges
 - b. Q&A session
 - c. Briefing on next session
2. Design Thinking workshop - ½ day
 - a. Learn how to apply solutions based approach to problems
 - b. Understanding the people you are solving the problem for
 - c. iterative process to understand the user, challenge assumptions, and redefine problems to identify alternative strategies and solutions
3. Idea to Impact workshop - 1 day
 - a. Intensive program introducing practical tools to master the art of turning an ambitious idea into a high-growth high-impact business
 - b. Develop an idea into a potential business model
4. Pitch workshop - ½ day
 - a. Learn how to take your potential business model and develop a pitch for it to seek backing or investors
 - b. Pitch to become part of SMIN's accelerator program

Appendix 1 - Full list of challenges recorded

- Seasonal nature growth
- Tourism
- Remote employment is a forte
- Enhancement of areas attraction as a alternative liveable lifestyle
- Facilities to support tourism growth in town (activities, transportation)
- Infrastructure to get here, and also telecommunications
- Availability of accommodation and also planned development in a meaningful way
- Seasonal tourism is not equal to year round employment
- How to source the funding for better promotion
- Marketing of the brand and region
- Transport Infrastructure, housing
- Opportunity - jobs, education and innovation
- Year round tourism destination
- Commercial Freight, public transport links to key destinations (Sydney/Melbourne/Canberra)
- WiFi and technology to remain connected
- Update LEP / DCP to enable future focussed development
- Strategically positioned to deal with impacts of climate change
- Branding
- Regular strategic planning across region
- Vision and execution line up so we do not degrade product quality as we grow
- Facilities for young and old
- Sharing resources across region
- Schools improvement and education opportunities
- Cultural activities, young children activities
- Liveable community

- Farmers are the growth houses
- Ski families > Units // Residential Families > Houses
- Huge summer potential lets welcome summer
- Local government services
- Regional Transport
- Decentralise agencies
- Shared brand
- Internet
- Skilled year round staff
- Accommodation / Better asset utilisation
- Skills development requires balance
- Skills shortage - address Attracting / Retaining / Housing