

NSW Social Sector Transformation Fund Tranche 3 (SSTF T3)

Advisory & Information Services

End-to-end support to restructure for sustainability

Client story: Wheels Connect

This story was contributed by Social Impact Hub and Justice Connect, and is an excerpt from the [NCOSS SSTF Coordination Highlights and Outcomes Report, Dec 2022](#).

Wheels Connect Inc is a not-for-profit, regionally based organisation that supports older people, people with a disability, their carers, as well as people who have difficulty accessing public transport or are disadvantaged by the lack of transport options in their area.

Wheels Connect is a NSW incorporated association registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission and endorsed as a deductible gift recipient in the category of public benevolent institution. It is also a registered provider with the NDIS.

Over the last few years, Wheels Connect has seen a significant decrease in its income alongside increasing costs. With an imminent change to the government payment model about to be introduced, Wheels Connect requested assistance through the Social Sector Transformation Fund (SSTF) program to examine how they could financially restructure their business in order to continue supporting the community with its vital transport service.

The Social Impact Hub provided strategy advice and developed a financial model to determine the relative margins for different service offerings and gain a better understanding of the revenue and cost structures in preparation for the move to the new government payment model. Based on the financial modelling and future business needs, Wheels Connect identified the need to restructure its workforce.

Through a seamless referral between SSTF service providers, Wheels Connect accessed Justice Connect's Not-for-profit Law program, as it needed legal advice on its options for restructuring its workforce while ensuring it was complying with its employment law obligations. Justice Connect referred Wheels Connect to a member law firm for assistance with the above, including specialist advice on award classifications for its employees.

**The name of the client has been changed to protect its confidentiality and the privacy of its personnel.*

What worked and didn't work?

- The highly collaborative approach between SSTF Tranche 3 providers meant that Wheels Connect was able to access the end-to-end support when it was needed. Based on the analysis undertaken, Social Impact Hub referred Wheels Connect to Justice Connect to obtain specialist advice to determine next steps.
- The support offered from all Tranche 3 providers was highly responsive, with Sefa and ACWA also prepared to provide additional assistance to Wheels Connect given the urgency of the need.
- The legal advice provided by a Justice Connect member law firm meant that Wheels Connect felt confident in implementing the restructuring advice without fear of falling foul of the law.
- The short duration of the SSTF program and the capacity constraints within teams like those at Wheels Connect inhibits in-depth capability building, and highlights the need for support and ongoing coaching and mentoring.
- The retirement of a long serving finance staff member at Wheels Connect meant that capability building and knowledge transfer could not take place for this key role.

What were the outcomes?

- The financial modelling work has allowed Wheels Connect to gain a stronger understanding of the revenue and cost structures for the organisation and by service offerings, e.g., community bus trips versus private car trips. This included visibility of the activities and roles required to support each revenue line and the identification of opportunities for improvement.
- The 1:1 support focused on building skills and capability of the Wheels Connect team to enable them to continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the critical services they are delivering to the community.
- The legal advice provided to Wheels Connect built the capacity of the organisation to understand its employment law obligations owed to its staff, and to be in a position to implement its restructuring plans with peace of mind, knowing it had the benefit of high-quality, specialist employment law advice.
- In the absence of SSTF funding for these services, it was unlikely that the organisation would have sought paid professional services, resulting in likely poorer outcomes.

What did we learn?

Wheels Connect provides a critical transport service to a large geographic area in regional NSW and there is an opportunity for the analysis and recommendations from this work to be reviewed collaboratively with policy makers and funders, in order to determine viable and sustainable services in the future.

For queries about NCOSS SSTF Tranche 3 Coordination Project, please email:

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