# Case Study 1:  Program Overview and Way Forward

## ForestWorks Innovation Skills Program

*"The Innovation Working Group meetings have helped people to begin thinking outside of the box and start looking at all possibilities. The Innovation Skills Program has removed our blinkers, so we can now see real opportunities"* (Kersten Gentle, CEO of the Frame & Truss Manufacturers Association of Australia, and leader of the Frame & Truss Innovation Working Group)

## The Platform

The Innovation Skills Program (ISP) aimed to support new initiatives for productivity and growth in the forestry industry value chain. Industry associations and businesses were provided with access to skills and resources to develop and build their innovative capacity, so they could resolve complex challenges created by the rapidly changing operating environments.

The Program consisted of five main components:

- **Purpose-built Innovation Forums and Presentations.** The innovation forums were designed to raise business awareness of innovation concepts and how these work.

- **Establishment of Innovation Working Groups (IWGs).** The IWGs were designed to work with and through industry associations to address specific issues affecting different regions and sectors.

- **Providing support to the IWGs activities through the provision of a facilitator.** The expert facilitators were responsible to support the IWGs create 'ground rules' for their group activities and apply a disciplined innovation process.



Peter McLean, Director of Development Impacts, and Facilitator of the Innovation Working Groups speaking at the *Innovation in Action* forum in March 2015

- **Training and skills development programs.** Specific training programs were developed to support a) leaders to improve their leadership skills, b) business members to develop their innovative thinking and practice, and c) facilitators to use a standardised process for enabling innovative practice.

- **An online Innovation Hub.** The Innovation Hub was created to maintain open communication, publicise events, provide easy access to useful reference materials, and publish forums and project reports.

ForestWorks ISP's design and operation was supported through:

- **Funding** from the Australian Government via the Department of Industry.

- **Governance** from an industry-led National Steering Committee and a Project Executive Team, providing guidance and ensuring the Program's accountability.

- **Capabilities** from ForestWorks staff and a cohort of expert associates who were pulled together to provide assistance and support to the Program.

The structure of the program enabled ForestWorks to support and equip people involved to embark on a learning process based on innovation through collaboration.

This method of learning is grounded in practice, provides real outcomes, and is reflective of innovation concepts learnt from 'real world' innovation successes.

This approach supported ForestWorks to effectively implement the program in selected industry areas and demonstrate what could be achieved via proper execution of innovation methodologies.

## Tools and Processes

The methodology, tools and processes developed and used throughout the Program included:

- Eligibility Criteria – established for setting up participation rules in the IWGs component of the Program

- A Benchmark Report – which establishes the framework for measuring progress and outcomes

- An Expert Facilitator Program and manuals

- Information Processing Tool Boxes – which included critical thinking skills tools and frameworks for rational processing of information in a range of applications

- Innovation through Collaboration Scorecard

- An Innovation Leadership Program

## Results

The success of the Program is highlighted not only by the figures outlined below, but also by the tangible and intangible values gained by industry associations and businesses through their involvement in this Program's activities.

- **22 Innovation Forums** were held in different locations across Australia. Participants came from different sectors of the industry, with each forum attracting over 25 participants, some over 140. The forums allowed participants to engage in innovative group activities, hear from innovative industry experts and bring new ideas to fruition.

- **6 Innovation Working Groups (IWGs)** were established and supported to collaborate on finding innovative solutions for specific issues affecting different regions and sectors of the industry. Separate Case Studies for 4 IWGs and the lessons learnt by these groups are available (see Case Study 2-6).

- **Several training programs** were organised for industry leaders, people involved in the IWGs, and facilitators.

The ForestWorks platform is the foundation and environment from which an eco-system for innovation has emerged across the forestry and wood products industries. It is expected that current eco-systems are diffusing into new initiatives and projects. Companies have been able to make connections between each other's ideas which has become evident by the new relationships being formed across the industry, not only within a particular sector, but between other industries as well.

## Where to from here?

It is clear that the participation and contribution of leaders, businesses, and the facilitators at public events, workshops and conferences is leading to innovation in ways not seen before in the industry.

People and businesses involved in this 'innovation through collaboration' program, have communicated that their commitment and involvement would have not been as high without the underpinning foundation of properly designed facilitation, networks, coaching and support provided by ForestWorks. Results and feedback have demonstrated that the concept adopted by ForestWorks' ISP is successful.

It is equally clear that, to sustain and build momentum for innovation and learning in the industry, the role that ForestWorks played in this program needs to be continued. ForestWorks and the industry will need to find ways to ensure that the current capacity is maintained to support an ongoing impact on increasing industry value and innovative potential.