



Settlement Council of Australia

AT A GLANCE



Target Participants

People from vulnerable communities seeking to be entrepreneurs



Aim

Providing training and support to entrepreneurs and their businesses to ensure secure and meaningful employment



Organisations Involved

SSI, and partnership with Lendlease in Coffs Harbour.



Location

Coffs Harbour and Armidale, with facilitators supporting people across Northern Rivers, Mid North Coast and New England areas of NSW.



Funding

SSI and philanthropy from corporate sector

CASE STUDY

Ignite Regional

SSI's Ignite Program supports a diverse range of entrepreneurs from vulnerable communities, including in regional areas of NSW. Economic participation and social inclusion are at the heart of the Ignite program, recognising that meaningful employment is critical to a stable, secure and independent future for all Australians. Ignite facilitators use a human-centred approach to make sure that entrepreneurs can turn their 'passion into possibility'.

About the program:

Ignite is an initiative of Settlement Services International (SSI). Ignite supports people from vulnerable communities, including newly arrived refugees and migrants, people seeking asylum, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and Indigenous backgrounds, who are keen to establish a small business or expand an existing one.

Since 2020, Ignite has been providing support in regional NSW. The Ignite Regional program is currently headquartered in Coffs Harbour and Armidale. However, Ignite facilitators support entrepreneurs across the Northern Rivers, Mid North Coast and New England areas of NSW.

The Ignite program is free, confidential, and on-going for passionate entrepreneurs. Specially trained facilitators tailor support for each entrepreneur and support them on their journey. Their unique, person-centred approach offers one-on-one support via a specially trained Ignite facilitator. They have a large resource team of experts who provide advice and guidance to each entrepreneur on product development, marketing, financial management, and legal and compliance measures.



The Ignite facilitators support entrepreneurs at whatever stage they are in their start-up journey. That is, from an idea, to an established business which requires strengthening and sustainability support. No idea is too big or too small as long as it is accompanied by passion, motivation, and initiation.

An example of a recent project is **Ignite's Myanmar Community Agriculture Co-operative**, which was recently established in Coffs Harbour. Connecting to land was a desire expressed by the Coffs Harbour Myanmar community in a 2019 SSI consultation. With the arrival of SSI's Lendlease funded Ignite Small Business Start-ups in the regions, the dream to farm is becoming reality with the formation of the Myanmar Community Agricultural Cooperative.

Ignite began by connecting five passionate farmers to an expert local resource team. The resource team includes a Business Advisor from Nortect Business Connect, a Co-operative Expert from The Co-op Federation, a Volunteer Financial Advisor a local Burmese Businessman, and a local Entrepreneur and Agri-business Mentor. Work is undergoing to establish the Co-operative as a successful farming enterprise, and to allow others to join once in operation. The Co-operative is now registered as a not-for-profit organisation under NSW Fair Trading.



Another Ignite Regional success story is **Sabeeha's Kitchen**.

From a Yazidi family of 12 children, Sabeeha was born deaf and never went to school - instead, she worked on her father's farm in Iraq and cooked for the family every night. Sabeeha came to Ignite because she is passionate about cooking and wished to share her culture with the people of her new home. Thanks to the support of her family, her Auslan support worker, local volunteer Tessa, and her Ignite Resource Team, Sabeeha is now following her passion.

"I offer a cultural food experience to the Coffs Coast. It's an occasion of laughter and feast. I travel to my clients' homes with an interpreter to teach and share one of my family's favourite Iraqi dishes." - Sabeeha, Sabeeha's Kitchen, Coffs Harbour.



Challenges

There were several challenges in establishing the program in a regional area:

1. The distances between the main and smaller towns in regional NSW affected access to markets for products and services.
2. Developing relationships with key stakeholders who can support entrepreneurs whose language is not English and bridging the cultural divide of entrepreneurship practices.
3. Changing the narrative to ensure that Ignite is seen as accessible across the whole of the community - not just with refugees and people seeking asylum.

Outcomes

Ignite has supported the economic participation of refugees, people seeking asylum, people from CALD and Indigenous backgrounds, as well as those living with disability. Ignite has supported budding entrepreneurs to navigate the legal and compliance environment, test and develop products and services, establish marketing platforms and access financial management support for each entrepreneur. This has resulted in:

1. An increased number of people reporting enhanced knowledge and understanding of how to establish a business in Australia.
2. Increased confidence by refugees and people seeking asylum to better access self-employment opportunities.
3. Improved job readiness of refugees and people seeking asylum.
4. Improved access to self-employment opportunities through networks and connections.

Key Learnings

There are three key learnings for Ignite from running the program:

1. Refugees and people seeking asylum are highly resilient and creative entrepreneurs.
2. Refugees and people seeking asylum bring a wealth of knowledge and skills to the entrepreneurial landscape.
3. One of the biggest challenges facing refugee and asylum seeker entrepreneurs is that 'they don't know what they don't know' and a lack of information around the legal and compliance landscape impedes their success.

More information

For more information, visit:

<https://www.ssi.org.au/services/employment/ignite>

<https://www.facebook.com/Myanmar-Community-Agriculture-Co-operative-111269577921693>

<https://www.facebook.com/SabeehasKitchen>

