

Organisational Performance Excellence Review Of Gulf Savannah NRM Summary



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Introduction

This review was conducted as an independent evaluation of Gulf Savannah NRM performance against the *Performance Excellence Guide for Natural Resource Management Organisations, Version 3, 2019' (the Guide)*.

The review involved a semi-structured approach to the collection of information through discussions with members of the Board, senior management team, staff and a cross-section of external stakeholders. A review of internal policy, communication, and planning documents provided additional information that was drawn upon to prepare this report.

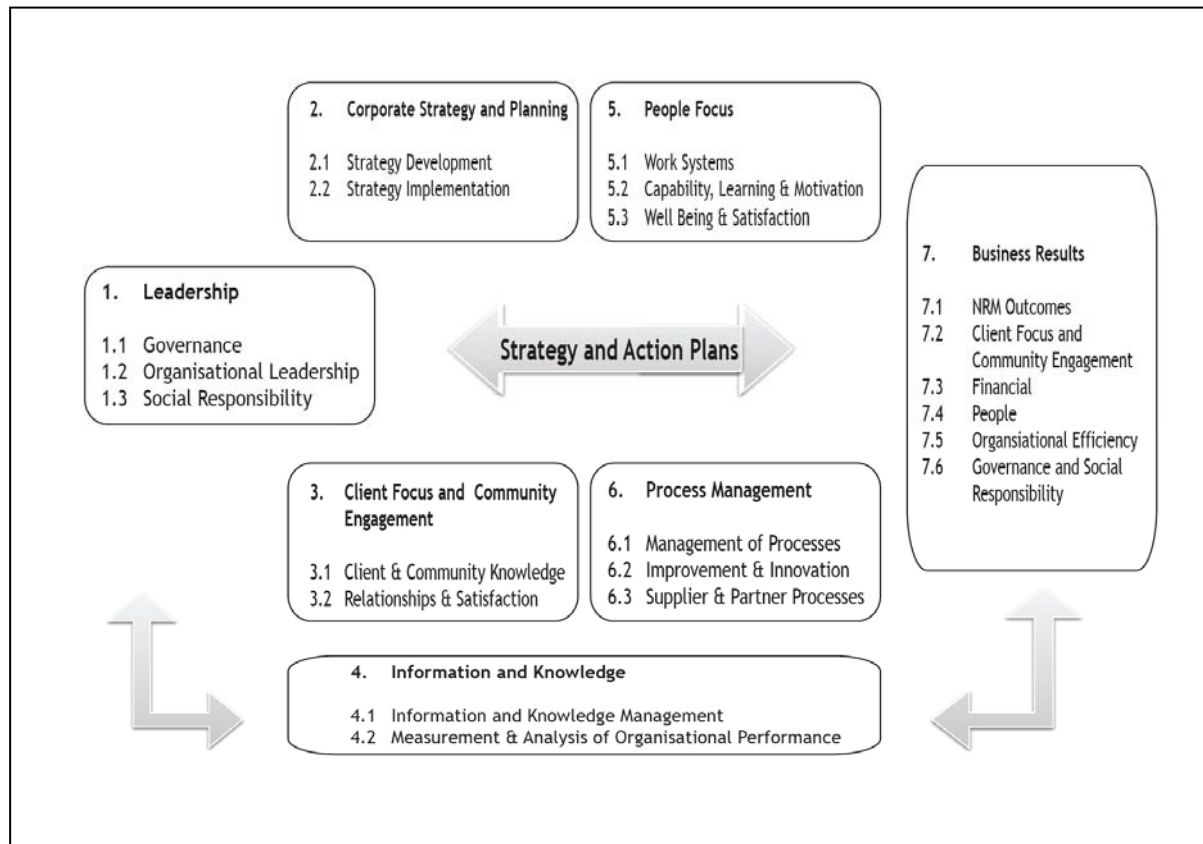
The objectives and potential benefits of this review to Gulf Savannah NRM and its stakeholders include:

- Identification of key strengths and opportunities for improvement
- Providing a basis for prioritisation of strategies for improving organisational capability and performance
- Providing a reference for monitoring progress over time
- Facilitating exchange of information and benchmarking of management practices across the NRM sector

It is recommended that the strengths and opportunities for improvement identified in this report be used as a basis for developing a set of prioritised improvement strategies, supported by action plans to implement them.

The Evaluation Framework

The “*Performance Excellence Guide for Regional NRM Organisations*” establishes a framework of seven components that serve as the basis of the organisational evaluation. The seven Components, together with Items within each Component are depicted in the diagram below:



Executive Summary

Gulf Savannah NRM (formerly Northern Gulf Resource Management Group) have chosen to undertake this review at a time when the organisation is experiencing a significant growth in budget and staff. The organisation has grown from a staff number of four in 2018 to 19 at the time of this review. Nine staff have been appointed since April 2021. Coupled with this growth spurt is the decision to move from having their corporate services provided externally through Corporate Nature to building the services and associated capacity within Gulf Savannah NRM. This growth reflects the organisation capitalizing on significant effort to develop and foster strategic partnerships and the organisation demonstrating to major investors their ability to deliver. The challenge identified by management is to maintain the level of investment whilst being ‘true’ to the organisations corporate and NRM goal and objectives.

The operating environment Gulf Savannah NRM finds itself in is a changing one. From a landscape and land use perspective the focus on developing northern Australia provides both opportunities and challenges for Gulf Savannah NRM. Significant investment has been committed by governments to drive the expansion and opportunities may exist for Gulf Savannah NRM to tap into this investment providing longer term financial security. The challenge is establishing where the organisation wishes to strategically

place itself in this changing environment. Government funding is cyclical and the Queensland and Australian primary NRM funding programs end in six and 18 months respectively. What follows the existing programs is unsure however it is quite possible that less funding will be available. Gulf Savannah NRM will need to continue to diversify its income streams to lessen the impact of any reduced program funding.

One of the primary findings of this review was Gulf Savannah NRM have a well-respected, energized and committed staff team. The establishment of the Leadership Team has been well received by staff and the board. Having this team will contribute significantly to consolidating the gains made by Gulf Savannah NRM over the last couple of years. Further consolidation will be gained by further refining the corporate service systems that have been developed or transferred from Corporate Nature and building the capacity and desire of the staff to use these systems effectively.

Gulf Savannah NRM focus has been on project delivery and recruiting staff to meet the increasing contractual obligations. In this 'forming' stage of the revitalized organisation, the development of organisational performance monitoring and evaluation frameworks has largely taken a back seat (the exception being meeting the monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) requirements associated with government funded programs). In a nutshell, the organisation has been busy 'doing' and not had much time for 'reflection'. Considering and implementing many of the opportunities for improvement identified in this report could provide the foundations of for the board and senior staff to build a performance monitoring and evaluation framework for Gulf Savannah NRM. Establishing a robust staff satisfaction and wellbeing evaluation process would be part of this performance framework and contribute to maintaining the staff culture that presently exists.

A summary of the key findings in each business area of the organisation follows:

- The board and senior staff leadership is providing a solid foundation for the organisation. The Board is operating efficiently and effectively and are ably supported by the CEO. There is an opportunity to build a more robust board performance framework beyond the internal review that exists. A part of this performance framework is to establish the level of shared understanding of the boards purpose amongst directors and senior management. The establishment of the Leadership Team will provide much needed support to the CEO and effective support and leadership for the staff teams.
- High-level strategies and plans exist, with the NRM plan undergoing a review and rewrite. A review of the Corporate Strategy will provide an opportunity for the organisation to discuss where it desires to be in the northern Australia development space and how to build further financial security for the organisation. The organisational performance against the strategies and plans goals can be more purposeful and further support the need for the development of organisational performance framework. An opportunity exists to provide greater clarity around the linkage between the strategic plan, action plan and staff work plans and makes these front of mind for staff.
- Gulf Savannah NRM's delivery model appears to be a combination of direct delivery by staff and through partnerships with Landcare/catchment and industry groups, local government, agencies and directly with landholders. Having robust partnership, relationship and engagement

mechanisms including plans and forums is essential to the successful delivery of outcomes through Gulf Savannah NRM's business model. This review identified an opportunity to assess the existing and likely future operating environment for the organisation and in doing so view the prioritising of partnerships through a lens of Power, Legitimacy and Urgency (definitions for these are provided in the report).

- Information and knowledge management systems exist. A focus of the Leadership Team on looking for improvements, particularly around staff compliance in using the systems, was identified as an opportunity for improvement. Staff felt the systems were 'clunky' but acknowledge they needed to be more vigilant in entering data and information.
- The staff appear to be a highly motivated, professional and content staff team who value the flexible work arrangements. The professionalism of staff was acknowledged by stakeholders and investment partners. Some concern was shared regarding the high turnover of field staff over the past years. To maintain the high level of existing staff satisfaction, an opportunity exists to work with staff to set performance targets and actions that will contribute to achieving these targets.
- Gulf Savannah NRM process management is captured in a number of documents. On the whole there is an opportunity to capture the process management in one or two primary documents. Building a monitoring and evaluation framework around the organisations process management will help ensure the process management of the organisation is appropriate, efficient and effective.
- There was significant anecdotal evidence collected through this review that indicate Gulf Savannah NRM is producing results, particularly in the areas of staff satisfaction, community and stakeholder satisfaction, driving innovation, community (including Indigenous) capacity building and development of strategic partnerships. Documented evidence was produced which demonstrate that Gulf Savannah NRM have gained a fair degree of financial security and organisational capacity through significant increases in the level of funding gained by Gulf Savannah NRM. The development of an organisational performance framework will significantly contribute to Gulf Savannah NRM being able to efficiently and effectively demonstrate they are a 'results' driven organisation underpinned by an ethos of continual improvement.

A 2013 review was carried out of Northern Gulf Resource Management Group. Due to the time between reviews, the changing landscapes and the organisation has been through several evolution cycles, little comparisons have been drawn between the 2013 review findings and this review.

