

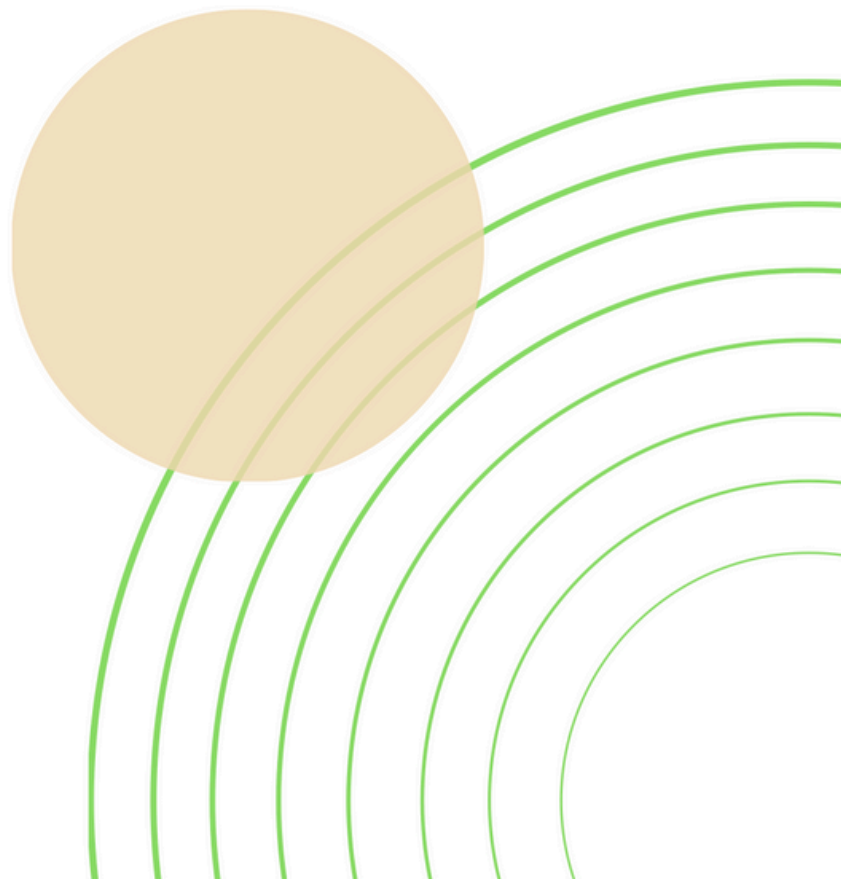


GIPPSLAND
Community
Foundation

Independent Impact Evaluation

November 2024

Prepared by Paula Jorgensen
from the Project Culture for
The Gippsland Community
Foundation



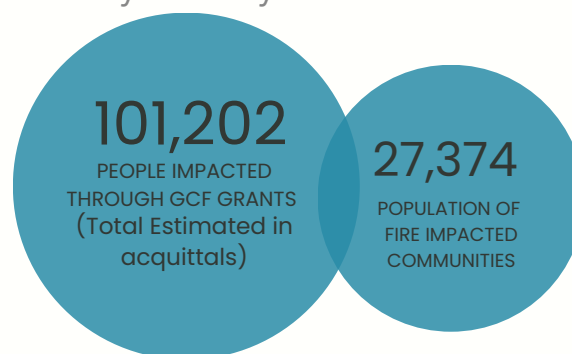
Executive Summary

The Gippsland Community Foundation has played a crucial role in East Gippsland's recovery following the 2019-2020 bushfires, delivering measurable improvements across community wellbeing, resilience, social capital, and sustainability through its supportive funding model.

The evaluation highlights significant outcomes, including strengthened infrastructure, enhanced social connection, environmental restoration, and capacity-building initiatives that have created lasting benefits for the region. By encouraging trust, partnerships, and collaboration, the Foundation has enabled communities to not only address immediate challenges but also develop the skills and resources to build resilience for the future.

This community-led model has proven highly effective in bridging funding gaps, supporting impactful projects, and shifting the focus from recovery to long-term opportunity and growth. The ability of the foundation to adapt processes to local contexts allowed projects to remain relevant, accessible, and sustainable.

The findings of this report provide valuable insights for refining future funding priorities and further strengthening community recovery efforts.



Purpose and Approach

The purpose of this evaluation is twofold: to assess the tangible impacts of projects funded by GCF and to understand how GCF's delivery model has supported community-led recovery.

Specifically, it examines how these projects have contributed to community wellbeing, resilience, social capital, and sustainability.

Data sources include surveys, interviews with community leaders and participants, grant acquittals, and thematic analysis. This mixed-method approach allows for a full understanding of the outcomes and processes.

Key Findings



1 COMMUNITY IMPACT

The independent evaluation examined 150 completed GCF funded projects with a total investment of over \$3 million.

These projects have directly and indirectly impacted over 100,000 people - more than double the population directly affected by the bushfires

Key Themes:

- Wellbeing
- Resilience
- Social Capital
- Sustainability



2 ENABLING RECOVERY

GCF's flexible grant process allowed communities to implement tailored projects.

Many grants acted as catalysts for further funding and collaboration, amplifying their impact.

70% of projects leveraged additional funding from other sources, doubling the overall investment



3 INNOVATIVE OUTCOMES

Grants supported diverse initiatives, from youth career expos in agriculture and technology to infrastructure

This flexible, community-driven approach encouraged innovation, enabling projects that might not have been possible under rigid funding criteria



Challenges and Opportunities

CHALLENGES

Burnout

Extended recovery efforts places significant strain on volunteers and community leaders

Equitable Access

Remote and smaller communities faced greater barriers in accessing resources and opportunities

Administrative Burdens

Simplifying compliance requirements further could enhance accessibility and efficiency.



OPPORTUNITIES

Sustainability

Strengthen focus on environmental sustainability to support long term resilience

Shared Learning

Promote shared learning opportunities among communities and partner organisations

Flexible Funding

Continue GCF's flexible funding model and prioritise community-led initiatives

Collaboration

Expand collaboration with stakeholders to enhance capacity and resource sharing

Conclusion

“ Creating a lasting difference in Gippsland by investing in projects that promote well-being, resilience and involvement in our community.”
- GCF Mission Statement

The independent evaluation highlighted the Gippsland Community Foundations innovative approach to recovery funding has profoundly impacted East Gippsland’s communities.

By focusing on community-led projects and reducing administrative burdens, GCF has encouraged trust, resilience, and sustainability.

This evaluation highlights the importance of empowering communities to shape their recovery and build a stronger, more connected future

The GCF approach helped shift the culture of recovery from lack and loss to building capacity and vision for an improved future.



GIPPSLAND
Community
Foundation



Scan here to
view our Impact
Summary Video

“The single best thing to come out of bushfire recovery has been the arrival of the [East] Gippsland Community Foundation.

By working on the ground with our fire affected communities, who all have differing needs and priorities, GCF has enabled non-competitive access to funding for community-led projects and activities.

This has reduced our workload, stress and definitely boosted our resilience. They are independent of government and government agencies which alleviates bureaucracy and red tape.

They are flexible and adaptive to assist with funding to achieve our community driven recovery priorities, which are not static, our needs change over time and GCF funding flexes with our needs.”

- Julie Saunders,
Wairewa Recovery
Committee