

Project: PIG 00010: Partners in Grain WA's INSPIRE SUMMIT 2016

BIO:

Partners in Grain is a national organisation that supports farm businesses by providing locally relevant professional development opportunities that are otherwise not readily available or easily accessible. The opportunities PinG provides are for all members of the farm business, however The INSPIRE Summit was a niche event for women.

Presentation Contact: Jules Alvaro. Mob: 0429 141 668. Email: julpep@bigpond.com

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Held in April 2016, the INSPIRE Summit was an advanced farm business skills summit for 130 women from WA farm businesses. INSPIRE was held in Perth as a two day program plus a networking sundowner.

As the management of farm businesses becomes more complex and time consuming there are great advantages to be gained in sharing responsibilities between various partners. Many of the existing professional development opportunities in WA are either localised or attended mainly by the male partners in the farm business. As women are becoming more involved in the management of their businesses, this summit was an opportunity for women to learn from others, from across all of WA's grain growing regions.

INSPIRE was promoted as the next step on from PinG workshops, for women who are highly involved in their farm business and are interested in increasing their own skills, capacity and confidence for the benefit of their business, their community and the wider industry.

KEY POINTS:

- The event was only open to growers, speakers and sponsors. Initially PinG thought having 80 growers attend would be a good result. Those registrations quickly sold out and were extended to the limit of the venue. 130 growers from across the 5 RCSNs attended. 160 people in total. It was only promoted through PinG networks - paid advertising was not needed to fill places.
- The program's emphasis on grower-to-grower learning was integral to the value derived by growers and the confidence it gave them to make business changes. Hosting a quality event that allowed interaction between participants, was the priority and the outcome.
- The program was 'business skills' focussed but participants really valued learning about how the people within the business can work together to manage the various aspects more effectively.
- Feedback from participants, speakers and sponsors was all extremely positive. All participants said they would recommend INSPIRE to others. All participants requested the Summit be held either annually or biannually.
- GRDC's investment into INSPIRE was \$7500 (less than \$60 per grower). Attendees paid \$230 - \$280 to attend (plus accom & travel). 94% of participants strongly agreed that it was value for money for their business. 6% answered neutrally.

FURTHER WORK REQUIRED:

- The quick uptake of registrations, positive feedback and requests for future similar opportunities highlights the need for this type of professional development opportunity. The INSPIRE Summit is planned to be a bi-annual event with the next one scheduled for 2018.
- Having a program built from “the ground up”, from growers’ needs was crucial and delivering what was promoted was key to the success of the event. It would be great to work with the RCSNs to ensure some of their identified grower key issues are included in the next program.
- A larger venue will need to be considered for the next Summit.