



THE CENTRE FOR EYE RESEARCH AUSTRALIA

CASE STUDY

Engaging stakeholders in the planning process builds relationships

“The stakeholder involvement provided the foundation for strengthening relationships. It has also maximised the value of the relationships to all parties.”

Professor Jonathon Crowston, CERA CEO

CERA engaged SVA Consulting to help better understand its options for growth and develop a plan to achieve that growth. With two strategic partners, the process needed to be heavily consultative.

Funding in jeopardy

In 2009, CERA had a national and international reputation for excellent research results and had increased its national competitive grant funding. However, this was in jeopardy. Funding was under threat as a result of proposed changes in Government policy preferring larger medical research institutes, greater competition, and because it focused on research disciplines that CERA had little expertise in.

Adding to these external pressures, two of CERA's top researchers had left and relationships with the key strategic partners, the University of Melbourne (who provided both funding

and a pipeline of talented researchers) and the Royal Victorian Eye & Ear Hospital (where it was physically located) were untended and needed strengthening.

Two worlds meet

CERA needed to know:

- What scale of growth did it need to maintain funding?
- What were the options for growth?
- What would it take for the organisation to implement such a strategy effectively?

The planning process needed to engage many of those with a stake in the success of CERA. The process also needed to be designed and managed well if it was going to produce more substantive ideas and help build the relationships and legitimacy required.



SERVICES

- ✓ Strategy & policy

IMPACT AREA

- ✓ Healthcare & research

FIND OUT MORE



Quarterly.

www.svaconsultingquarterly.com

SVA Consulting



www.socialventures.com.au



Engaging the stakeholders

Before answering CERA's strategic questions about growth, SVA Consulting first worked to understand the issues and opportunities from the perspectives of the key stakeholders.

Then, SVA Consulting and CERA established a strategic steering committee with representatives from the Board (which included Hospital and University representatives), CERA staff, and CERA's CEO. The committee was tasked with guiding the process, ensuring the primary stakeholder group they represented was engaged and also making key decisions along the way.

SVA Consulting reported back to this group at the end of each of the following four steps:

1. Engage stakeholders through one-on-one discussions and gather a 'fact base' on CERA's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
2. Interview a number of external parties, including leading medical research institutes locally and internationally to understand their journey and what contributed to their success.
3. Analyse and identify insights for CERA together with a hypothesis for its goals and growth plans.
4. Refine and test this hypothesis, re-engage with the key stakeholders and develop an implementation plan.

As part of this final step, SVA Consulting offered a number of models describing how the three parties could work more closely together.

SVA Consulting also outlined a plan to help the board assess what skills and capabilities were needed to support the growth and transition to a board structure that more closely aligned with CERA's strategy.

Closer collaboration and focused research

The strategic steering committee committed to build a closer

collaboration between CERA, the Hospital and the University akin to a "centre of excellence". The committee also set clear objectives in relation to CERA's research, culture, collaborative approach and infrastructure.

The other major decision was to focus research from 'bench to bedside' on the top untreatable eye diseases. The aim of this was to translate research into practice faster, attract the best in the field and to increase grant funding opportunities.

Strong strategic partnership

Three years after the planning process, CERA was ranked fifth among the world's ophthalmology research entities behind much larger organisations. It had a team of over 120 committed staff working on the major causes of blindness and vision impairment in Australia. Supporting this growth, CERA's strong strategic partnership with the Hospital and the University is seen, both locally and internationally, as an exemplary collaboration between an academic institute, a hospital and a research institute.

"The engagement of primary stakeholders through the planning process meant that CERA was able to execute the strategy with minimal road blocks."

Tina McMeckan, CERA Chair

ABOUT CERA

Established in 1996 and now Australia's leading eye research institute, CERA's vision is to eliminate the major eye diseases that cause vision loss and blindness and reduce their impact in the community. Research ranges from basic science seeking to understand disease processes at the molecular level through clinical research, including trials of new treatments, to population and health services research.

Contact SVA

Duncan Peppercorn

Executive Director, Consulting
Social Ventures Australia
+ 61 2 8004 6724
dpeppercorn@socialventures.com.au

Olivia Hilton

Partner, SVA Consulting
Social Ventures Australia
+61 3 8688 0053
ohilton@socialventures.com.au



www.socialventures.com.au