



Success. Mapped.

A photograph of a smiling man with a mustache, wearing a dark grey baseball cap with a red logo and a grey polo shirt with green trim. He is holding a white vertical pole with his right hand. The background shows a building with a blue wall decorated with various fish and marine life murals. A green exit sign is visible on the building. The sky is blue with some clouds.

Is staff turnover costing your business?

A case study in moving from measurement to improvement

West Arnhem Regional Council

West Arnhem Regional Council (WARC) covers an area of almost 50,000 square kilometres in the western part of Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. It is an area that is filled with stunning natural landscapes and is steeped in the cultural legacy of the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory.

More than two thirds of the region's population of just over 6,000 identify as Aboriginal Australians, who reside in a collection of towns, communities, and outstations. WARC provides a range of services to five towns and communities across four wards. **It is also one of the largest employers in the region, with more than 250 staff.**

WARC's core services include waste management, maintaining parks and gardens, infrastructure, and roads. WARC also delivers a range of community and commercial services.

The need for change

Leading up to 2020, WARC's employee turnover had been at 57% for the past three years. This was costing WARC an estimated \$2.9 million dollars each year. In February of 2020 an internal organisational review was carried out which recommended significant changes. The high levels of employee turnover and the results of the review, prompted WARC to take a closer look at its employee experience. The new CEO Daniel Findley met with a majority of the 250 staff to understand what it is that gets his staff up in the morning, and what keeps them awake at night. During his discussions, he realised that staff wanted change.

WARC decided that setting a baseline for employee engagement and employee experience was critical for the improvement journey. Insync was selected to partner with WARC to deliver an important employee survey across the business.



What WARC needed from Insync

- An extensive local government benchmark
- Comprehensive reporting by various demographic splits
- Flexibility in rewording questions into plain English where possible
- Ability to roll out a survey and reporting at light speed

The solution

Over the past two years Insync has been working with WARC to measure levels of [employee alignment](#) and engagement, identify problems and provide the following solutions:

- An evidenced based framework that has been academically and statistically validated
- Extensive Australian local government benchmark data with over 40,000 responses to contextualize results
- Research and project management expertise to guide WARC's team through the exercise
- Use of multiple modes of survey administration to increase response rates
- A comprehensive set of reports housed in a central portal for secure storage and easy distribution
- A comprehensive debrief of the survey results with the CEO and survey project team highlighting areas of strength as well as optimal areas of investment to boost engagement and alignment

What was done after the first round of feedback

Based on the employee feedback, WARC decided to focus on four key areas:



**Performance building
through professional
development**



**Top-down communication
– improving the way
changes and decisions are
shared with employees**



**Employee reward
and recognition**



**Collaboration between
departments and offices**

WARC moved swiftly from reporting on the survey results to action planning. Execution of the action plans was a high priority task. The results of these efforts were evident when WARC resurveyed in 2021.

Overall alignment scores had improved by 16% which put the WARC's results into the top quartile of Australia's local government benchmark.

Employee engagement improved by 10% and this result put WARC's engagement levels into the top 10% of the Australian local government benchmark.

Survey results for pride in the organisation and advocating WARC as an employer of choice, rose by 11 and 16 percent respectively.

The table on the following page shows the various action initiatives taken by WARC and the improvements in the relevant survey results.

Action initiatives and improvement in survey items

Area of focus and actions	Improvements in relevant survey items
Top-down communication • Introduced weekly CEO update emails. • Introduced 'In the Loop' – a monthly staff newsletter. • Multiple Executive staff visits to every community and office. • Developed large posters across all offices and communities on a range of subjects such as; Employee Assistance Program, Reconciliation Action Plan, high-level organisational charts, special events etc. • Held 'Let's Talk' sessions in every community and office by the People and Learning Team. • Held Payroll information sessions by the People and Learning Team. • Introduced fortnightly WARC Service Manager meetings with the Chief Operating Officer.	• I am kept updated on West Arnhem Regional Council's progress towards its overall goals of +27%. • I can easily look at our list of organisational goals when I need to +20%. • I understand how West Arnhem Regional Council expects to achieve its overall aims of +20%. • Our everyday tasks at work are clearly linked to West Arnhem Regional Council's goals +19%. • Our executive team is open to feedback +18%. • The reasons for big changes in West Arnhem Regional Council are explained to me +14%. • There is a clear connection between what my work group does and what West Arnhem Regional Council wants to achieve +13%. • My work group copes well with change +13%.
Performance building • Created a learning and development framework. • Employed a dedicated Learning and Development Officer. • Updated every position description across WARC (after consultation). • Introduction of 'Lunch and Learn' sessions. • Offered apprenticeships and traineeships. • Provided training assistance for employees undertaking Certificate 3, 4 and CPA courses.	• West Arnhem Regional Council capitalises on the strengths/skills of all employees regardless of gender, ethnicity or disability +23%. • West Arnhem Regional Council has effective plans for developing and keeping its people +21%. • I have a real opportunity to improve my skills in this organisation +14%. • My skills and talents are used to their full potential +11%.

The figures represent the change from 2020 to 2021, in the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the survey statement.

Action initiatives and improvement in survey items continued

Area of focus and actions	Improvements in relevant survey items
Reward and recognition - Introduced service awards for five, ten and fifteen years of service. - Presented over 75 'Thank You' awards – these were peer-nominated awards linking WARC's values with actions of the employees. - Presented a \$100 thank you gift card to all employees in the first half of the year. - Provided goodie bags to the entire staff. The goodie bags had a new shirt, coffee ramekin, fishing gear and a lot more. - Every office and community hosted an end of year celebration as a thank you to all staff for everything they do. - A substantial number of staff were successful in applying for promotions and as a result, received a step increase in their salary during 2020. - All award-based staff received a 2.5% salary increase in July 2020.	- West Arnhem Regional Council has effective programs for recognising and rewarding achievements of its people +31%. - Our executive team go out of their way to acknowledge and thank people for their contribution of +23%. - I am paid fairly for my current role +19%. - West Arnhem Regional Council is committed to ensuring that the right people get promoted +14%.
Collaboration - Implemented WARC's first Community Initiative Experience where all employees could spend one or two weeks in any West Arnhem community with their family. - This could be annual leave or employees could work from the location. - WARC covered the cost of transport and accommodation. - Over 25% of staff and their families participated in this initiative. - Hosted three Senior Staff workshops where WARC Services Managers and Senior Staff from across the organisation came together to learn, develop strong relationships and work together on the future of West Arnhem Regional Council - Developed a Reconciliation Action Plan	- Departments in this organisation work well together +15%. - My work group has a strong customer service understanding +8%.

The figures represent the change from 2020 to 2021, in the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the survey statement.

Outcomes

West Arnhem Regional Council continues to better engage with their staff and provide an employee experience that is second to none. WARC is a great example of turning measurement into improvement through valid measurement, structured action planning and concerted effort.



Employee turnover in 2021 was 32%,
a 25% drop from 2019 figures



WARC also doubled the infrastructure projects
completed in the 2020/21 financial year



“Insync has been wonderful to work with and the team has added a great deal of value. The reports that we received were straightforward and insightful, making it easy for us to move from measurement to improvement. Insync’s team is very professional, knowledgeable and experienced; they always had our best interests at heart and made the entire process easy and trouble-free. Turnaround times were quick and the project was executed smoothly. I would highly recommend them as improvement partners.”

Daniel Findley
Chief Executive Officer | West Arnhem
Regional Council

Who we've worked with

Insync has worked with over 100 councils across the country and have a benchmark of over 40,000 responses from recent surveys. Here's a sample of our partners.



Why Insync



**Actionable
insights**



**Passionate
experts**



**Trusted
Advice**



**Partnership
all the way**



**Own tools &
frameworks**

Local government is one of Insync's specialist industry sectors supported by a large, dedicated team that understands the priorities and challenges faced by councils. Our partnership with local government over the last 21 years has allowed us to gather extensive survey data. As a result, we have a rich benchmark that councils can use to compare themselves with industry peers and best practice measures.

Whether you're looking to gauge trust amongst staff, retain skilled employees, engage and consult with your community, increase cooperation across work areas or even provide career opportunities, we can help.

Talk to us today.

Images supplied by West Arnhem Regional Council

**Talk to us today about how an integrated EX and CX
program can transform your organisation.**

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