



A cloud-based solution for a unified approach to community empowerment

Simplifying and standardizing applications for more seamless client engagement



THE CHALLENGE

Many Rivers is a for-purpose organization committed to providing economic development support to Indigenous and other Australians who want to access the economy; however, for various reasons, they lack the financial or practical business support to do so. Through tailored business support for small businesses and community economic development for Indigenous communities across Australia, Many Rivers is spearheading impactful initiatives at both local and regional levels, driving significant scale and positive change.

Many Rivers has set an ambitious target to create more meaningful jobs through economic participation and enterprise by 2030. Unfortunately, manual processes and 10-plus-year-old legacy technology will fail to keep in step to support these growth goals.

To support the 2030 target, Many Rivers initiated a business process transformation project, employing Lean Six Sigma methodologies. By modernizing its technological capabilities to align with this transformation, the organization aimed to enhance operational agility while ensuring sustainable scalability for its programs.

This would help enable Many Rivers to deliver greater impact—supporting the work of individuals, businesses and communities to improve their economic and social outcomes.

OUR OBJECTIVE

In 2022, Many Rivers launched “Project Refresh,” engaging Deloitte Australia to revamp and realign its technological capabilities to support its mission. Key objectives guiding the development of new applications encompass:

- Streamlining processes to facilitate seamless interactions between Many Rivers staff providing services to clients and communities, and its supporting systems.
- Enable greater automation and insights by replacing disparate legacy systems with an extensible technology stack.
- Implementing the standardized service blueprint utilizing a common journey approach for Community Development and Microenterprise program delivery.

“Designing processes should not be a mere reflection of technological capabilities. True design transcends the limitations imposed by technology. Instead, our technological framework should be tailored to support the ways in which our people engage with our clients and communities.”

—Dean Candler-Szabo,
Head of Operations, Many Rivers

SOLUTION

Many Rivers has been one of the longest-standing clients of Deloitte Access Economics, a member of Deloitte's global economics group dedicated to contributing to a better Australia. Through this ongoing engagement, the organization gained confidence in the Deloitte Australia practice as a trusted delivery specialist focused on business outcomes.

When Many Rivers was ready to reimagine its technology platform, it needed an implementation ally with strong technology consulting skills that could also embed an informed and forward-thinking program evaluation perspective into its technology capabilities.

The organization also needed to bring strong technical knowledge to the project. It was imperative that people and processes would be at the heart of the solution design—enabling the technology to be built for purpose. These requirements—along with the history of successful collaboration between Many Rivers and Deloitte—made Deloitte a trusted advisor for the project.

After analyzing Many Rivers' existing platform, Deloitte teams concluded that designing a modular, cloud-based architecture with reusable components, across both Microenterprise Development (MED) and Community Economic Development (CED) applications, was the best solution.

This modular architecture would support the cohesive framework across both MED and CED programs, enabling the scalability of business processes for guiding community development activities and facilitating continuous client journeys. At the same time, this solution would bolster the organization's ability to introduce new programs—while expanding support for existing businesses and communities.

THE MISSION

Many Rivers offers individuals and communities enterprise and economic development support over long-term engagements. By providing business development support, products and services—including pro-bono legal advice and microfinance business loans—the organization enables individuals and communities to regain control of their situation through economic participation.

Microenterprise Development (MED)

Through its MED program, Many Rivers works with individuals who experience a range of individual and structural challenges, including limited access to financial resources, in their efforts to start or expand their own businesses.

The program not only supports individuals who are pursuing an uplift in their living standards, but who also have a desire to reduce dependency on government assistance. This is achieved as independent income is generated by business owners and their employees.

Community Economic Development (CED)

The CED program offers support to Indigenous communities seeking to initiate or expand economic endeavors on their land, sea or assets.

CED managers work closely with Indigenous leaders and community organizations who represent their community and work for its benefit. The program journeys with communities who, over time, build the experience and capabilities they seek to manage their economic ventures and lead their ongoing work.

The Deloitte team was tasked with addressing the following objectives:

- **Provision a single CRM instance** on Microsoft Dynamics 365 platform to support a common MED and CED journey framework and provide a unified source for evaluation and operational reporting.
- **Conceptualize strategies for integration and enhancement**, including designing an agile, modular architecture with reusable components for future use cases, as well as new products and services.
- **Accelerate digital engagement, automation and workflow solutions** leveraging the Many Rivers' platform of choice, the Microsoft stack.
- **Design, test and deploy** a solution aimed at improving efficiencies and amplifying the potential to scale up support to individuals and communities seeking assistance.

The organization was already leveraging Microsoft technology, and Many Rivers sought to continue using the Microsoft stack in its transformation journey.

PROCESS

The Deloitte team began Project Refresh by bringing together a blended, agile team that included Deloitte Australia and offshore support, along with Many Rivers' internal business and technology teams. Deloitte divided project responsibilities into two main phases. The first phase encompassed delivering the CED application. The second phase, still forthcoming, will include leveraging configurable and extensible modular components to architect and deploy the MED application.

CRAFTING AN IMPACTFUL CED SOLUTION—IN RECORD TIME

In February 2022, Deloitte initiated the discovery phase of the project. This encompassed various onboarding tasks, such as preliminary reviews, securing system access, and testing of the existing production system. Additionally, high-level project plans were outlined, and solution trial demonstrations were conducted to evaluate alignment with Many Rivers' requirements. Subsequently, a month-long design phase ensued, dedicated to refining the CED platform.

Following the design phase, the Deloitte team transitioned to planning for the release of the CED solution. This involved preparatory activities, setup procedures, onboarding processes, and multistage final testing. After just eight months, Deloitte successfully launched the CED application.

The newly deployed CED application was purposefully designed to suit Many Rivers' unique needs, which included:

- Bringing transparency to community management and eliminating manual and inefficient steps to progress.
- Making information more accessible to Many Rivers' team members, leaders and executives.
- Enabling the seamless sharing of information across the CED team.
- Raising awareness and understanding of the CED program across the organization.
- Enabling digitization, workflow and automation of key activities to increase the quality and speed of services delivered to communities.

“Deloitte worked with the Many Rivers team to build a solution around the realities of the CED journey. This approach has ensured the technology supports the experience of communities and CED managers. Importantly, as a team of economic development practitioners, the CED team has been able to stay focused on the quality and impact of the CED program. With the system providing increased efficiency, transparency, data informed decision making, and the ability respond to the unique dynamics of each CED journey.”

—Bridget Centenera, Head of Community Economic Development, Many Rivers

OUTCOMES

The Deloitte team created digital applications that support and reinforce Many Rivers' approach to a common journey framework for delivering services to clients and communities. This renewed infrastructure is a key enabler in helping Many Rivers to maximize its reach and impact.

By introducing a more intuitive design, the system has helped improve efficiencies, simplify and automate processes, and integrate operations to better serve the organization and the clients and communities whom they serve. Ultimately, it has enabled the Many Rivers CED team to focus on delivering much-needed support to communities—rather than focusing on supporting the system.

And with the teams' 'three pillars of change' framework, Many Rivers was able to execute:

- 1. Organizational scaling:** With long-term success top-of-mind, Many Rivers designed the mindset, Journey Framework and supporting system to enable today's current initiatives and those of the future.
- 2. Quality journey, quality coaching:** With a common Journey Framework across MED and CED programs, Many Rivers simplified and standardized the way in which the business connects, coaches and cultivates success.
- 3. Improved ways of working:** Many Rivers enabled technology that supports modern ways of working with clients and communities with simplified processes, automations and integrations within the Journey Framework.

Within the initial eight months post-rollout, the new digital infrastructure has enabled Many Rivers to expand its client base and community reach by 30%.

WHAT'S NEXT

With continued utilization of the system's full potential, the organization aspires to double its impact alongside clients and communities. Many Rivers will also soon be developing the migration of the MED program to sit alongside CED on the same instance—as well as the integration of the new solution with the organization's loan product and case management functions. As pilot initiatives take hold, these too will be integrated into the CRM instance, leveraging the modular design.

168

new leads since deployment

250

total leads in the system

120

total accounts in the system

40%

Increase in accounts (journeys)

48

new accounts (journeys) since deployment

Doubled

in CED managers since deployment



“Being CRM users and developers for close to 10 years, we had preconceptions of the solution design. Deloitte challenged our design assumptions, leading us towards a leaner, fit-for-purpose solution. The conversations were robust and challenging and, ultimately, provided a better offering.”

Dean Candler-Szabo
Head of Operations, Many Rivers



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