



Integrated Long-Term Planning

AN INFORMATION AND RESOURCE
MANUAL FOR RURAL-REMOTE AND
INDIGENOUS COUNCILS



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The content of this information and resource manual is intended for generic application by local government administrative staff across all jurisdictions and does not address legislative requirements specific to any state or territory.

The Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG) acknowledges that councils in all jurisdictions are continuing to develop knowledge and experience in all aspects of integrated long-term planning. The information and content within this manual are not intended to supersede any endeavours or decision-making that councils are currently undertaking in this regard. Rather, it has been developed as a resource for councils that require assistance in developing or refining their integrated long-term planning (ILTP) processes and documentation.

The approaches and templates contained herein may require modification and adaptation to meet legislative requirements within each jurisdiction.

The templates within this manual are provided for open use by councils and ACELG authorises their modification and adaptation without notice or permission.

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Section 1:

A background to integrated long-term
planning (ILTP)

1.1 Introduction

This resource package has been developed by the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG) to provide practical assistance to rural-remote and Indigenous (RRI) councils in their development and implementation of integrated long-term planning processes.

The term *integrated long-term planning* (ILTP) is used generically within this package to encapsulate community, organisational and business planning processes that occur in local government across corporate, financial, infrastructure, land-use, community service and human resource functions and operations.

Whilst such planning processes are required to be undertaken by councils in most states and territories, each jurisdiction has established individual planning frameworks for local government and corresponding legislation to guide these processes.

Notwithstanding these individualities, there are common characteristics in the basic frameworks and intents of planning processes across most or all jurisdictions, and these commonalities are even greater in jurisdictions with RRI councils.

Some of these commonalities are:

- The intent of ILTP legislation in all jurisdictions is to ensure that councils conduct their day-to-day activities and decision-making according to clearly defined long-term directions and priorities.
- All jurisdictions have multi-tiered planning systems incorporating two or three layers depending on the timeframe of peak documents.
- All jurisdictions require councils to undertake community/stakeholder engagement in the course of their ILTP processes.
- All jurisdictions require councils to develop financial/resourcing plans at the highest planning level.
- All jurisdictions require councils to develop a plan that contains information on the organisation's priorities, intended activities and outcomes, funding sources and options, and performance measures for the duration of the plan. Across the jurisdictions this plan is variously known as the council plan, service delivery plan, annual plan, corporate business plan, strategic management plan, or delivery program.
- All jurisdictions require councils to develop a comprehensive annual budget.

NOTE. See Section 2 – ILTP frameworks and legislation – a national inventory.

The development of this resource package arises from ACELG's awareness of the unique challenges faced by RRI councils in addressing ILTP tasks and an appreciation of the benefits that can flow to local governments and their communities when councils wholeheartedly adopt an integrated approach to planning. This package is intended to provide RRI councils with practical assistance in addressing these challenges and in realising the benefits of integrated planning. In doing so, this package provides background information and helpful insights in the following areas:

- the relationship between sound ILTP processes and good governance

- the benefits of introducing good ILTP practices
- an examination of the primary challenges faced by RRI councils in addressing ILTP tasks
- the primary characteristics of key ILTP components
- assigning ILTP roles to staff and councillors
- involving communities, government and non-government agencies in ILTP processes
- measuring progress and performance in the ILTP context.

Along with information on the topic areas listed above, this manual provides practical resources to assist RRI councils in developing key ILTP documents. Section 4 of the package contains structural templates that may be used in the development of:

- a community plan
- a council / corporate plan
- a community engagement plan.

Each template includes sample content to demonstrate how key elements of each plan may be transferred between the documents to enable integration. Note that each template may need adaptation to ensure that the resulting plan is legislatively compliant.

It is important to note that whilst most jurisdictions require councils to undertake comprehensive financial, asset and workforce planning, this manual does not address these areas of ILTP. The reasons for this are twofold – firstly, councils have very diverse and individual needs in these areas and it is beyond the capability of a manual of this nature to properly address such needs. Secondly, there is already a wealth of information and support that exists in each jurisdiction to assist councils in these areas.

1.2 ILTP frameworks and legislation – a national snapshot

The governments of all Australian states and the Northern Territory have developed legislation setting minimum requirements for the development of strategic and operational plans by councils. Whilst the legislation and resulting planning processes vary greatly between jurisdictions, the common aim across all is to achieve sound practices and high standards in ILTP. Table 1 shows the planning requirements for all Australian states and territories.

1.2.1 Planning Levels

Long-term planning in local government occurs at two or three levels depending on jurisdictional requirements. For the purposes of Table 1, these levels may be defined thusly:

Level 1

This represents the highest level, longest-term planning conducted by councils. Across the various jurisdictions plans developed at this level vary in their outlook from four to ten or more years. Some jurisdictions only require planning at two levels, and in such cases Level 1 plans tend to adopt a medium-term outlook of around four to five years, focusing on council operations and resourcing. For longer-term, more broadly focused plans at this level, most jurisdictions require community engagement to be conducted to identify future goals and priorities for the

council area. Most jurisdictions also require councils to address long-term financial and asset management in their highest level planning processes.

Level 2

This level of planning typically has an organisational focus and associated planning documents vary in outlook from one to five years depending on legislative requirements. Plans operating at this level are developed to provide a detailed account of a council's intended actions and activities that respond to goals and priorities documented in higher-level plans. Where planning occurs only on two levels, these second-level plans tend to adopt a one-year outlook, focusing on corporate or business planning and budgeting for the year ahead.

Level 3

A third level of planning is common amongst jurisdictions that require councils to develop a Level 1 plan that has an outlook of ten or more years. In such cases, the focus on the council's annual planning and budgeting processes occurs at Level 3, with Level 2 planning processes effectively bridging the sizeable gap between highest-level plans of ten or more years and annual operational planning and budgeting.

TABLE 1: JURISDICTIONAL PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

PLANNING LEVEL	PLANS DEVELOPED BY COUNCILS IN EACH JURISDICTION AND THE OUTLOOK OF EACH PLAN						
	QLD *	NSW *	VIC	TAS	SA *	WA *	NT *
1	Long-term financial forecast 10 years	Community strategic plan Minimum 10 years	Council plan Minimum 4 years	Strategic plan 5 years	Infrastructure and asset management plan Minimum 10 years	Strategic community plan Minimum 10 years	Regional management plan 4 years
	Asset management plan 10 years	Asset management plan 10 years	Strategic resource plan Minimum 4 years		Long-term financial plan Minimum 10 years	Asset management plan 20 years – whole of life	Community / strategic plan No fixed outlook - typically 4 years
		Long-term financial plan 10 years				Financial management plan 10 years	Long-term financial plan 4 years
2	Corporate plan 5 years	Delivery program 4 years	Annual budget 1 year	Annual plan 1 year	Strategic management plan Minimum 4 years	Corporate business plan Minimum 4 years	Service delivery plan 1 year
		Workforce management strategy 4 years					Annual budget 1 year
3	Operational plan 1 year	Operational plan 1 year			Annual business plan 1 year	Annual operating plan 1 year	
	Annual budget 1 year	Annual budget 1 year			Annual budget 1 year	Annual budget 1 year	

* = Jurisdictions with rural-remote and Indigenous councils

1.3 Integrated long-term planning – good governance in practice

One of the main reasons for establishing ILTP processes is the pursuit of ‘good governance’. The word governance is commonly used as an umbrella term to describe the internal structures, activities and decision-making of both public and private sector agencies. In Australian local government, the overall capacities and performance of councils in a governance context can be assessed according to:

- efficiency
- effectiveness
- transparency
- inclusiveness
- representation
- vision
- leadership.

Ideally, agencies that are funded by public money need to be accountable for their good governance. In reality, however, the degree to which good governance is practised varies greatly across agencies at all levels of government.

By their very nature, sound, well-developed ILTP processes enable councils to establish a structured approach to achieving and maintaining good governance.

The following is an outline of how each of the above areas of governance may be influenced and improved by the adoption of an ILTP approach:

- **Efficiency** and **effectiveness** are terms often used in reference to a council’s overall capacities in areas of service planning and delivery, budgeting, management and decision-making. Planning processes that define long-term goals and directions assist councils in ensuring their expenditure priorities and service delivery are effectively targeted and that organisational management and decision-making are conducted effectively and efficiently.
- **Transparency** describes the degree to which a council conducts its operations and decision-making ‘in the public eye’. Involving communities in long-term planning necessitates close and ongoing collaboration between a council and its communities, and this collaboration increases community understanding of how councils work and how and why decisions are made. This community involvement increases a council’s transparency and often strengthens community support and cooperation.
- **Inclusiveness** and **representation** refer to a council’s capacity to actively seek and promote the involvement of its stakeholders in its planning and decision-making. These stakeholders may include residents, workers, the local business community, other government agencies and visitors. Broad inclusion of stakeholders in long-term planning activities will enable the council’s governance and decision-making to be truly representative of stakeholder needs and interests.

- **Vision** is a term used in the governance context that describes a council's focus on the 'big picture'. The outcome of ILTP processes is typically a series of long-term goals that amount to a 'vision for the future'. Whilst short-term matters of management are often easier to grasp and act on than issues that lie over the horizon, the development of a long-term vision is fundamental to the effectiveness of a council in its day-to-day operations and decision-making.
- **Leadership** is increasingly regarded as a primary responsibility of councils. Whilst historically, councils may have existed only for 'roads, rates and rubbish' purposes, today they have a far broader and more influential mandate. Indeed, many aspects of local government service planning and delivery are focused on community wellbeing, social cohesion, and strong local advocacy. ILTP processes are one of the strongest means of demonstrating leadership by involving communities and other stakeholders in a spirit of collaboration in establishing goals and priorities for the future.

By introducing good ILTP processes, councils and their communities are likely to obtain many opportunities and benefits.

1.3.1 Benefits for communities

From a community perspective, ILTP allows community members and key stakeholders to participate, not only in shaping the future of their local area, but in collaborating with council, other agencies, and other community members to achieve their aspirations for the future. They also have more opportunities to address local issues and challenges, working with others to develop local solutions and provide mutual support in problem-solving.

ILTP benefits communities by:

- providing opportunities for *structured participation* in activities to shape the future of the local area and identify and prioritise issues and problems that require attention
- enabling communities to build *positive relationships* with council, other government agencies and NGOs through purposeful collaboration
- creating greater *community understanding* of the roles, responsibilities and limitations of council and other government agencies
- promoting opportunities for *all community members* to participate in the development of a vision and long-term goals for the local area
- harnessing people's energy and enthusiasm and providing a clear and visionary focus for community attention and action
- encouraging a positive community outlook by defining and working towards clear goals for the future.

1.3.2 Benefits for councils

From a council perspective, ILTP has potential benefits for every part of the organisation and every employee. RRI councils typically deliver a broader range of services than their urban and metropolitan counterparts and ILTP provides opportunities to set and review priorities, increase efficiencies in service planning and delivery, ensure the council's expenditure is well directed, and undertake planning and decision-making that is underpinned by strong community support.

It also assists by ensuring that services provided on behalf of other spheres of government are directed towards responding to the community's needs and aspirations.

ILTP benefits councils by:

- fostering the development of clear strategic objectives and directions for the council area and communities within it
- enabling councils to build their capacities in working with local communities
- supporting an organisation-wide understanding of the needs of local communities
- generating higher levels of community support by drawing communities closer into local government decision-making processes and working towards the achievement of long-term goals
- facilitating the development of collaborative relationships and common goals for the council area with other agencies within the public and private sectors
- assisting in identifying community expectations regarding services provided by government agencies, thereby putting councils in a stronger negotiating position
- providing powerful support for councils in demonstrating community needs and priorities to external funding agencies
- giving councillors opportunities for frontline involvement in community engagement activities and in determining directions and priorities for council
- building councillor awareness of the importance of their roles in civic and community leadership
- staying committed to the agreed issues of local importance.

It should be noted that the level of detail and achievement in ILTP processes and content varies significantly between jurisdictions councils and is typically reflective of jurisdictional requirements at a macro level, and each council's capacities, resources and commitment to ILTP at a micro level.

1.4 The challenges of ILTP for rural-remote and Indigenous councils

For RRI councils in particular, ILTP is not without its challenges. Whilst its benefits are indisputable, ILTP does represent a significant additional workload and allocation of resources, particularly in the process development and implementation stages.

ILTP processes result in significant efficiencies and better targeted allocation of funds and other resources in the longer term. In the short term, however, there are some hurdles to overcome and it is important to be realistic in anticipating the impact that the development and implementation phases will have. The following are some of the more significant challenges for RRI councils in implementing ILTP:

- **Resourcing** – a lack of resources can present significant challenges to RRI councils in developing ILTP processes. The requirements of ILTP implementation will most likely see staff with already high workloads and levels of responsibility in other areas of council

divert some of their attention to ILTP tasks with the result being that other tasks are delayed and staff resources at times stretched thin.

ILTP also requires the allocation of financial resources beyond immediate staff costs. Funds are required to cover costs associated with community engagement, document production, and the acquisition of specialist remote or on-site assistance if needed.

Most RRI councils are heavily reliant on state, federal and territory government funding allocated for specific programs and are extremely limited in their capacity to raise their own revenue. This means that diversion of such revenue to address the requirements of ILTP may have serious impacts on other programs and service delivery areas.

- **Organisational knowledge and experience** – ILTP requirements are relatively new additions to local government legislation in Australian **states** and territories, and organisational knowledge and experience in this field is still developing, particularly in RRI councils.

Prior to these legislative changes, voluntary ILTP was largely the domain of urban councils in cities and regional centres. In general these councils have higher levels of resourcing, easier access to information and assistance, greater capacities to network and share information, and the presence of a pool of experienced practitioners, making the tasks involved in ILTP significantly more manageable.

In RRI councils, the introduction of ILTP prior to any legislative requirements was less common. The lack of near neighbours amongst RRI councils also means that opportunities to readily exchange ideas and experiences about ILTP are few and far between. One other significant limiting factor has been the difficulties councils face in attracting staff with the requisite experience.

- **External support** – as with many other aspects of RRI council management, ILTP is an area in which each council is required to ‘go it alone’ in terms of resourcing, direction setting, and decision-**making**.

In some jurisdictions local government departments have provided comprehensive support in the form of documentation (guidelines, manuals, FAQs, etc.); regional meetings and workshops; and on-site guidance and assistance. However, councils in other jurisdictions have had little external support beyond the directions and requirements set out in the legislation. Even when resources are available the use of consultants to undertake ILTP is problematic, as it reduces the opportunity to develop and acquire in-house capacities.

Legislation across states and territories varies between being very comprehensive and prescriptive to being generalised in its intent and its descriptions of the outcomes expected of councils.

Whilst the use of consultants to guide ILTP endeavours is commonplace in metropolitan councils, resourcing and logistical limitations make it very difficult for RRI councils to gain access to such assistance – and the use of consultants undermines the building of strategic planning capacity in RRI councils.

- **The tyranny of distance** – The distances that rural-remote and Indigenous councils cover is one of the greatest challenges they face in properly addressing ILTP requirements.

In practical terms the distance factor typically results in higher costs associated with the completion of ILTP processes. With communities often located hundreds of kilometres apart, communication and engagement processes can take considerable time and resources to complete. However, many councils have navigated their way around this hurdle by undertaking ILTP consultation around other scheduled visits to remote communities.

Another difficulty is that in large council areas the issues arising in different communities can be very different but equally important. In such circumstances and with responsibilities across the area as a whole, councils face a difficult task in encouraging communities to think beyond their own boundaries when identifying the priorities they want addressed in ILTP.

When issues of distance are at play, the involvement of elected members and the decision-making associated with ILTP can also make the process significantly longer. When councillors live in different parts of the council area and are significant distances away from the council offices, time, planning and additional support is required to facilitate their attendance at council and community meetings and this can prolong ILTP processes.

1.5 ILTP components explained

1.5.1 The community plan

Not all jurisdictions require a community plan to be developed. However, where it is present within an ILTP framework, the community plan typically sits at the top of the hierarchy of planning documents.

The content of the community plan depends mainly on the data gathered during engagement processes. This means that engagement processes need to be carefully designed to ensure that the data obtained are relevant and appropriate to the purpose of the community plan.

The community plan may be defined as a comprehensive account of the ideas and opinions of local communities and other stakeholders regarding long-term goals and aspirations for the council area. The community plan typically categorises these ideas and opinions in a range of focus areas taking in aspects of community and cultural life, the local economy, the natural and built environments, public infrastructure and other topics.

Depending on jurisdictional requirements, a community plan may focus on the council's role and functions, or it may be a broader expression of ideals for the future of the local area, regardless of where the responsibility for achievement lies. In the latter case the council may be regarded as the *steward of the process* to develop the plan rather than the *owner of the plan*. Ownership of the plan should be broader than council alone, as responsibility for the achievement of long-term goals expressed in the community plan goes well beyond council. It will involve state, territory and federal governments, the business and not-for-profit sectors, and communities themselves.

If the community plan is developed with a singular focus on the council's roles and responsibilities, agencies beyond council will have no major role in planning and delivering services according to the long-term directions described in the plan. However, developing the community plan as a more holistic document, with a focus well beyond the role of local government, will involve outlining roles for other parties, including higher levels of government, in bringing the long-term goals to fruition.

1.5.2 The council plan

The council plan, which can also be referred to as the corporate plan or business plan, is in many ways the 'kernel' of a council's planning documentation. It has the potential to be enormously valuable as a tool in ensuring the council's programs and activities are planned, prioritised and co-ordinated according to the goals expressed in the community plan.

Ideally, the council plan is structured not only to describe the council's activities, initiatives and priorities for the years ahead, but also to bring together and integrate the content of other important documents.

Whilst the community plan focuses on the long-term priorities and aspirations for the local area as expressed by the community, the council plan provides an account of the organisation's ongoing programs and activities, along with specific initiatives that the council will undertake in working towards the long-term goals described in the community plan.

The council plan effectively 'breathes life' into the community plan by providing a detailed account of the practical actions and measures that the council intends to undertake in working towards the long-term goals. It is where the 'rubber hits the road', providing an account of the council's actions in pursuing the long-term goals of the community plan. The following are some of the primary benefits of a well-structured, comprehensive council plan:

Proactive planning – Whilst the council retains the flexibility to be responsive to immediate circumstances and influences, a good council plan provides staff and councillors with opportunities to set priorities and directions for the years ahead and to work proactively towards them in a coordinated manner. Without such a plan, councils inevitably become reactive to immediate circumstances and pressures, engaging only in short-term planning and focusing only on the 'here and now'.

A single point of reference – Along with its account of programs, activities and initiatives, the council plan is also a valuable opportunity to integrate other planning documents that operate in areas such as budgeting and finance, asset management, community and social planning, workforce planning, environmental management, and governance. Whilst councils vary greatly in their range of planning documents, the council plan provides a single point at which these plans may meet. Invariably some plans will be required as stand-alone documents according to prevailing legislation. However, to reduce the overall number of active documents and streamline the planning process, councils may assess all other plans and strategies and consider whether the council plan may accommodate their goals, strategies and actions.

Strengthening advocacy – Councils have an important advocacy role. As organisations fulfilling a vital civic leadership role, councils are able to identify areas of local need such as infrastructure and essential services, community development, environmental management etc., and advocate for their communities to access support and assistance from other levels of government.

Enhancing the role of elected members – As members elected by local communities to represent their interests, councillors need to fulfil their role effectively and this requires them operating at a strategic level in their deliberations and decision-making. A council plan, with an outlook spanning the full council term, provides councillors with opportunities to work towards the goals of the community plan, basing their decision-making on a long-term outlook which will increase their awareness of the fundamental directions of the council, giving their role as elected representatives added meaning.

A ‘big picture’ for staff – One of the greatest obstacles to staff satisfaction is a lack of understanding and awareness of what they are working towards in a ‘big picture’ sense. Whilst they may carry out their day-to-day duties with skill and competence, an awareness of the directions and priorities of the organisation will provide them with greater context regarding the importance of their work in achieving the community’s long-term goals. The community plan and council plan will together provide this context – or ‘big picture’ – for staff, and this will be further enhanced by the direct participation of staff at all levels in developing these plans. Section 4 of this manual provides a template that exemplifies how a council plan may be developed.

1.6 Putting the I into ILTP – examining integration and how to achieve it

One of the greatest challenges of ILTP is the achievement of real *integration* of plans across the framework. Integration must be regarded as one of the most important tasks in the ILTP process overall.

In relation to ILTP, the term ‘integration’ may be best explained in terms of two planes – ‘lateral integration’ and ‘vertical integration’. These two planes define the two major forms of connectivity that should be established between plans in the framework.

1.6.1 Lateral integration – a focus on cross-council relationships

In the ILTP context, a council’s primary planning activities are undertaken concurrently within four key operational areas. These areas are:

- community planning
- asset planning
- financial planning
- workforce planning.

FIGURE 1: A SCHEMATIC OF NON-INTEGRATED COUNCIL PLANNING PROCESSES



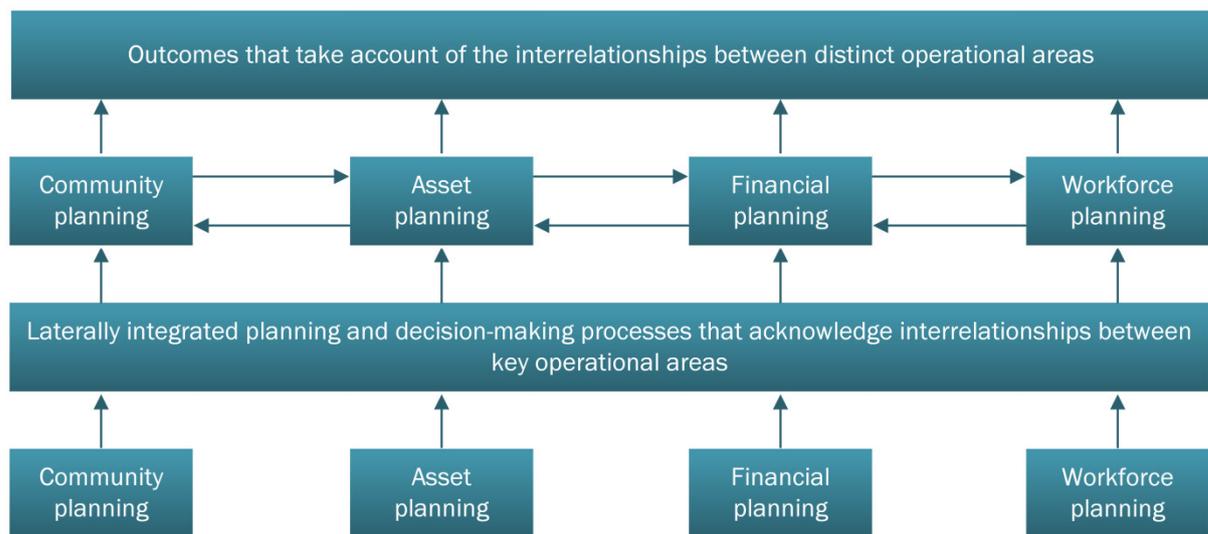
Whilst operations within these areas are in many respects distinct, it is inevitable that they are variously connected through complex interrelationships. Therefore it is likely that the activities and decision-making that occurs in one operational area will impact on what happens in other areas.

Despite the potential impacts arising from these complex interrelationships, they have typically remained unaccounted for in the plans and planning processes developed by most councils. Equally, frequent reference is made throughout local government to issues arising from ‘silos’ that exist in councils, whereby staff initiating and leading planning and decision-making

processes within each operational area do so in relative isolation to their peers in other operational areas.

Lateral integration will ensure that ILTP processes and the corresponding documentation transcend the distinct, siloed nature of the council’s operations and are instead based on a more holistic, global approach. ILTP plan development involves continuous improvement over time, creating ongoing opportunities for the council to improve its inter-departmental relationships and coordination.

FIGURE 2: A SCHEMATIC OF LATERAL INTEGRATION IN COUNCIL PLANNING



1.6.2 Practical avenues for implementing lateral integration

Achieving lateral integration requires an understanding not only of the principles that underlie it, but also of avenues through which it may be applied in the ILTP context. Here again, simplicity is the key to success and documents in the ILTP framework may be developed in ways that enable lateral integration to be practically applied and demonstrated.

Whilst it is possible to acknowledge and incorporate lateral integration within all ILTP documents, the simplest approach is to use the council plan as a single focal point to demonstrate and apply an integrated approach. As the central document in the ILTP framework, the council plan is ideally placed as the focal point for lateral integration for two main reasons. Firstly, it can be written in a way that allows for commentary on the impacts and influences that arise between key operational areas. Secondly, it records and demonstrates how these impacts and influences may be addressed through practical strategies.

The council plan template in Section 4 of this manual provides insights into how lateral integration may be applied.

1.6.3 Vertical integration – connecting core ILTP plans through structural alignment

It is important that all plans in the ILTP framework can be understood by the broadest possible cross-section of readers. Just as the avoidance of jargon and the use of plain English are paramount, it is important to ensure that, as core plans within the framework, the community plan and council plan are well integrated through the use of common themes and headings.

Vertical integration is achieved through the creation of these commonalities, enabling readers to move easily between plans that operate at different levels in the ILTP hierarchy and follow logical pathways that connect council planning and activities at all levels. Through this integration, readers should be able to link council's immediate priorities and activities as described in the council plan to long-term goals and strategies that may be established for up to ten or more years ahead in the community plan.

In examining the planning templates in this manual, the structural alignments that enable vertical integration of these core plans will become evident. It is also important to consider that structural alignment is an important step to achieving integration and should be comprehensively examined and applied as far as possible across plans in the ILTP framework.

1.7 Determining staff and councillor roles in ILTP

As a tool for organisational development, ILTP introduces a host of potential opportunities for staff and councillors alike. These include:

- efficiencies emanating from alignment of council's service planning and delivery with community expectations and agreed long-term goals
- broad staff involvement in setting and achieving long-term goals
- collaboration with local communities and other agencies to achieve long-term goals
- organisational capacity building in areas such as communication, community engagement, long-term planning and event management
- improved councillor / staff collaboration
- central involvement of councillors in whole-of-term planning
- active promotion of councillors' civic leadership role.

1.7.1 Staff roles in ILTP

In order to obtain the benefits of ILTP it is necessary to select staff that are appropriate for each task. For example, some staff may possess strong logistical skills and may therefore be appropriate for planning and organising team meetings and community engagement activities. Other staff may be good communicators, and may therefore be appropriate to facilitate community forums. Still others may excel at research and writing, and these staff may be ideally suited to researching best practice examples of ILTP processes and to writing the community plan.

The initial step should be to assemble a team of senior staff to manage the ILTP process overall. The team can then identify the tasks that need to be addressed in each stage of the ILTP process and nominate appropriate staff for each task.

When considering the allocation of ILTP tasks amongst staff, it is vital to cast the net as widely as possible across the council. In doing so, it is important to consider that there may not be alignment between the work roles that staff occupy, and the ILTP tasks for which they may be best suited.

From accounts staff to road crews, from gardeners to the CEO, all staff should be considered and selection for ILTP tasks should be based not on what they do within council, but on the natural

or innate skills that they possess. This will be the primary basis for their ongoing enthusiasm and support for the ILTP process, and for their continued willingness to be involved. ILTP presents valuable opportunities for staff to improve and expand their skills, and this will bring rewards to many other operations in which the council is engaged.

1.7.2 The role of councillors in ILTP

The implementation of ILTP processes is typically the responsibility of council staff. Nevertheless, elected councillors can and should play a pivotal role in many aspects of ILTP. In particular, the mayor can be the most influential person in the council in rallying community and stakeholder support for ILTP, and in informing them of progress and events surrounding ILTP processes.

Councillor involvement in ILTP requires careful management to ensure they are centrally involved in planning and decision-making without overly dominating or directing the process. It is most important to seek councillor agreement at the outset as to the specific nature of their role and how involved they wish to be.

In particular, the level of councillor involvement in community engagement activities needs to be discussed and agreed. Without such agreement there may be potential for some to attempt to use engagement activities inappropriately to achieve personal, political or electoral ends.

Equally, it is important to recognise the position of councillors and to be mindful that they have been elected as local community leaders. It would therefore be wrong to deny them any role in the ILTP process. Rather, they should be encouraged to collaborate with staff in developing the council's ILTP framework, shaping the outcomes, and to fulfil their role not for personal gain, but for the greater good of the council area and its community as a whole.

(Refer to Section 4.1– The community plan, for more information on staff and councillor involvement).

1.8 Setting targets and measuring performance

Performance measurement is an essential process across all components of any ILTP framework, including community, infrastructure, financial, workforce and organisational planning. Without performance measurement, a council has no means of assessing whether its planning, decision-making and service delivery are properly responding to, and working towards the goals listed in the community plan or other plans within the ILTP framework.

1.8.1 Challenges in measuring performance

Establishment of sound performance measurement processes can present councils with significant challenges, and is an aspect of long-term planning that is interpreted and acted on differently by every council. The following provides an account of some of the challenges to be aware of in developing a performance measurement system.

Consistent terminology – one of the paramount tasks for councils in this regard is to sift through the language and terminology used in this area of planning and develop organisation-wide consensus about which terms to use and the specific meaning assigned to each of them.

The terminology associated with performance measurement can cause considerable confusion, due mainly to the inherent flexibility in its application and meaning. Words such as 'goals', 'objectives', 'outcomes', 'outputs', 'measures' and 'indicators' are all subject to unique interpretations in all levels of government and the private sector. Therefore, it is important to select terms that make sense to the organisation, to clearly define each term so that readers understand their meanings, and to apply them consistently throughout the planning framework.

Getting it right first time – the performance measurement system, once developed, must remain unchanged throughout the life of the plan for which it has been developed. Therefore it requires research, consideration and agreement across the organisation to ensure it is a robust, well-refined system. Moreover, it must be developed with honesty and integrity to ensure that the process provides balanced, accurate indications of the organisation’s progress and performance according to the goals expressed in the plan.

Keeping it real – in establishing a performance measurement system, care should be taken to ensure that the adopted approach is based on quantifiable indicators and realistic outcomes that provide true measures of progress in relation to stated goals. This will often require research to locate good examples of indicators that may be compatible with the council’s overall ILTP approach. Further, indicators may need to be tested to ensure that the measures chosen will provide true indications of progress towards, and achievement of the goals in question.

Context and timeframes – performance measurement systems need to take account of the timeframe in which they are operating and they need to be developed accordingly. Whilst it is a relatively straightforward task to develop a suite of indicators to apply over a four-year period in the context of the council plan, it can be more difficult to develop indicators to apply over a 10-year timeframe in the community plan.

In developing its own council plan, the council is able to control progress towards its own goals. Therefore, corresponding indicators can be specific and targeted. However, in the case of the community plan, the focus and aspirations reach well beyond the council and there is a greater dependency on other agencies to play active roles in achieving long-term goals. For example, if a community plan expresses a goal regarding improved health or education services for the area, it is likely that in most jurisdictions the council will be dependent on higher levels of government for funding or direct service provision to realise that goal.

1.8.2 Developing a good performance measurement system – where to start

All plans within the ILTP framework should have performance measurement systems incorporated. This will enable the council to monitor, assess and report on progress towards the achievement of the goals or outcomes listed in each plan. In most jurisdictions performance measurement is a legislative requirement in relation to plans that comprise the ILTP framework.

A good performance measurement system is dependent on the presence of well-developed goals, objectives and outcomes, and the ‘SMART’ checklist is a commonly used tool for ensuring that goals are developed according to a set of criteria against which their appropriateness and integrity can be assessed:

Specific.....the goal identifies a specific area for improvement

Measurable.....progress towards goal can be measured

Achievable.....the goal describes an endpoint that is able to be reached

Realistic.....the goal is realistic given available resources

Timely.....the goal can be achieved within the given timeframe.

The establishment of goals in accordance with this checklist will then enable the development of corresponding indicators to measure progress. Table 2 provides some examples of a range of goals and their corresponding indicators in community plans developed by councils.

As can be seen in Table 2, all indicators of progress towards the stated goal are specific and measurable over the life of the plan. The table also includes a series of action-based strategies that will deliver each goal, and on which the indicators may be based.

Other columns are often included in community plans that provide additional information such as an account of specific outcomes that represent the achievement of each goal, and the identification of responsibilities and partnerships in working towards a goal.

TABLE 2: SOME EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY PLANNING GOALS, STRATEGIES, AND INDICATORS

Goal: The council area is recognised for its quality education and training opportunities that support the local community across all ages	
Strategies to achieve goal	Indicators of progress
Participate in the development of new educational/vocational training programs	Number of new programs commenced and number of students participating
Identify lands to allocate for educational purposes in new suburbs	New lands released for educational purposes and construction commences
Continue to develop the Youth Outreach Project.	Number of activities offered per school term.
Goal: We value the good health of our natural environment and we live and work in ways that are sensitive to its preservation	
Strategies to achieve goal	Indicators of progress
Provide support to landholders in undertaking measures towards responsible land management	An increase in stabilisation and/or rehabilitation of eroded, fragile or severely degraded land
Facilitate increased community awareness, knowledge and skills in relation to natural resource management	An increase in the number of individuals and groups engaged in sustainable natural resource management practices
Promote and support the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices.	Productivity levels across local agricultural enterprises is maintained or increased.

Goal: Our quality of life is enhanced by the strong spirit that defines our communities

Strategies to achieve goal	Indicators of progress
Provide support for local events that encourage social interaction and inclusion	Number of community events held and level of community participation in events
Expand opportunities for community participation in diverse lifestyle, sporting and passive recreational pursuits	Community satisfaction with available choices in sports and recreation and associated facilities
Advocate for the provision of relevant resources to reduce the incidence of crime and increase community safety.	An increase in local police staffing and a decrease in local crime rates.

1.8.3 Performance measurement and senior staff contracts

For many councils the introduction of an ILTP framework brings with it new ways of working and will change relationships and accountabilities both within the council, and between the council, its communities, and other agencies. ILTP creates an imperative to constantly assess the work, directions and performance of the council in light of the ‘big picture’ context established by the community plan.

It should also be considered that there is a fair degree of community cynicism regarding the capacity and resolve of public agencies, including councils, to successfully manage and implement long-term projects. For many councils, the importance of working towards long-term goals can easily be forgotten in the face of the multitude of immediate priorities and demands that consistently arise. These issues are often compounded by a scarcity of resources, staff shortages and a lack of organisational knowledge and experience. Nevertheless, the council is responsible for the oversight and implementation of many aspects of the community plan, and for liaison with communities, local business and industry, and other agencies to ensure that long-term goals are continuously observed.

Together with councillors, the organisation’s senior staff carry the responsibility for ensuring that the organisation is continuously attentive to, and working towards the community plan’s long-term goals. Establishing contractual agreements with senior staff in this regard, and linking staff performance measurement with the ILTP framework are effective means of ensuring that senior staff acknowledge their leadership roles in implementing the ILTP framework, and in driving progress towards the community plan’s long-term goals.

Section 2:

A national inventory of ILTP resources

TABLE 3: KEY ILTP RESOURCES

ILTP resources developed by state / territory governments to support councils				
<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>Community planning resources</i>	<i>Asset management planning resources</i>	<i>Long-term financial planning resources</i>	<i>Workforce planning resources</i>
QLD	<p>Local Government Association of Queensland's <i>Community Engagement Policy Development Guide</i> [Link]</p> <p>Local Government Association of Queensland's Community Development Engagement Initiative [Link]</p> <p>Local Government Association of Queensland's <i>Councillor Handbook</i> [Link]</p>	–	Queensland Department of Local Government's <i>Financial Management (Sustainability) 2013 Guideline</i> [Link]	<p>Local Government Association of Queensland's <i>Councillor Handbook</i> [Link]</p> <p>Local Government Association of Queensland's Workforce Census – an annual data collection exercise across Association members to identify employment trends and themes</p>
NSW	<p>Department of Local Government Integrated planning and reporting manual and guidelines [Link]</p> <p>Department of Local Government FAQs [Link]</p> <p>Local Government NSW resources on planning for an ageing population [Link]</p> <p>Local Government NSW resources on integrating natural resource management into local government operations [Link]</p> <p>Local Government Managers Australia (NSW) eConnect_online learning portal that provides information to staff about integrated planning and reporting legislation and its framework components [Link]</p>	<p>Department of Local Government Integrated planning and reporting manual and guidelines [Link]</p> <p>Department of Local Government FAQs [Link]</p> <p>Local Government Association of South Australia's <i>Business Partner Program</i> offering assistance to all regional councils in updating and improving long-term financial plans [Link]</p> <p>Local Government Managers Australia (NSW) eConnect_online learning portal that provides information to staff about integrated planning and reporting legislation and its framework components [Link]</p>	<p>Department of Local Government Integrated planning and reporting manual and guidelines [Link]</p> <p>Dept. Local Government FAQs [Link]</p> <p>Local Government NSW eLearning resources [Link]</p> <p>Local Government Association of South Australia's <i>Business Partner Program</i> offering assistance to all regional councils in updating and improving long-term financial plans [Link]</p> <p>Local Government Managers Australia (NSW) eConnect_online learning portal that provides information to staff about integrated planning and reporting legislation and its framework components [Link]</p>	<p>Department of Local Government Integrated planning and reporting manual and guidelines [Link]</p> <p>Department of Local Government FAQs [Link]</p> <p>Local Government Managers Australia (NSW) eConnect_online learning portal that provides information to staff about integrated planning and reporting legislation and its framework components [Link]</p>

ILTP resources developed by state / territory governments to support councils				
Jurisdiction	Community planning resources	Asset management planning resources	Long-term financial planning resources	Workforce planning resources
SA	<p>Local Government Association South Australia's <i>Guide to Preparing a Strategic Management Plan</i> [Link]</p>	<p>Local Government Association South Australia's <i>Managing for the Future in South Australian Councils</i> [Link]</p> <p>Local Government Association South Australia's Financial Sustainability Program involving the development of information papers on asset management [Link]</p>	<p>Local Government Association South Australia's <i>Managing for the Future in South Australian Councils</i> [Link]</p> <p>Local Government Association South Australia's Financial Sustainability Program involving the development of information papers on asset management [Link]</p>	<p>Local Government Association South Australia's <i>South Australian Workforce Planning Manual</i>, a sector report summarising data collected from the pilot program, and a library of job profiles for use as a training needs analysis tool for all councils [Link]</p> <p>Local Government Association South Australia's pilot program to establish a workforce planning service that will be available to all South Australian councils [Link]</p>
WA	<p>Department of Local Government's <i>Getting Started – Strategic Community Plan</i> guide [Link]</p> <p>Department of Local Government's IPR framework and guidelines – including: Community engagement resources [Link] Integrated risk management resources [Link] Integrated planning and reporting advisory standard [Link] Local Government Managers Australia (WA) eConnect eBook outlining ILTP legislative requirements for councils [Link]</p>	<p>Department of Local Government resources on delivering asset management [Link]</p> <p>Department of Local Government IPR Advisory Standard [Link] Local Government Managers Australia (WA) eConnect online learning portal [Link]</p>	<p>Department of Local Government's financial planning framework and guidelines, and rate setting guide for local government [Link]</p> <p>Department of Local Government's <i>Model Long Term Financial Plan</i> [Link]</p> <p>Department of Local Government's <i>Rate Setting, Asset Management and Financial Sustainability Guide</i> [Link]</p> <p>Department of Local Government IPR Advisory Standard [Link]</p> <p>Department of Local Government integrated planning master classes provided for CEOs and CFOs in conjunction with Local Government Managers Australia (WA) [Link] Local Government Managers</p>	<p>Department of Local Government workforce planning toolkit [Link]</p> <p>Example workforce planning guides and reference material from other sectors [Link]</p> <p>Presentations from the Department of Local Government's 'Workforce Planning Information Forum' held in August 2012 [Link]</p> <p>Department of Local Government IPR Advisory Standard [Link] Local Government Managers Australia (WA) eConnect online learning portal [Link]</p>

ILTP resources developed by state / territory governments to support councils				
<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>Community planning resources</i>	<i>Asset management planning resources</i>	<i>Long-term financial planning resources</i>	<i>Workforce planning resources</i>
			Australia (WA) eConnect online learning portal [Link]	
NT	–	The Local Government Association of the Northern Territory’s provision of assistance to councils in utilising the Institute of Public Works Engineers Australasia’s NAMS PLUS initiative [Link]	The Local Government Association of the Northern Territory’s provision of assistance to councils in utilising the Institute of Public Works Engineers Australasia’s NAMS PLUS initiative [Link]	–

Section 3: ILTP case studies

3.1 Integrated long-term planning case study: Roper Gulf Shire Council, Northern Territory



3.1.1 Development of the Council's ILTP framework

Roper Gulf Shire Council has developed a planning framework comprising a strategic plan with a three-year outlook, a shire plan with a one-year outlook, and a series of Business Unit operational plans, also with one-year outlooks. All plans in the framework observe the financial year timetable.

The strategic plan, titled 'Sustainable, Viable and Vibrant', was first developed in 2010. The impetus for its development was the recognition amongst councillors and staff that good strategic planning needed to provide a bigger picture than one year into the future. The organisation needed to be guided by a broader set of rules, and equally Council's decision-making needed the added support and guidance of a strategic plan with a longer outlook.

The shire plan and Business Unit operational plans were developed after the strategic plan was completed to outline the activities and priorities of the Council in working to fulfil the strategic plan.

With the changes that were occurring in the Northern Territory, the Council determined that until the legislative foundations had settled, it was difficult to extend the outlook of the plan beyond 3–4 years. Three years was deemed to be an appropriate outlook for the plan and a manageable timeframe for review.

The timetable for revision of the plan sees the review process commencing six months prior to the end of its three-year term. The review entails collation and analysis of all comments received regarding the plan during its term, and the scheduling of consultations with Council managers, directors and community members, and the Council to review and revise the long-term goals, strategies and performance indicators.

3.1.2 Project management

Primary responsibility for determining Roper Gulf's long-term planning approach was shared by the Council's CEO and the executive management team. The manager of governance, corporate planning and compliance is responsible for overseeing the ongoing management and review of plans in the frameworks, and the corporate planning and compliance officer is responsible for initiating, facilitating and coordinating all planning and review processes.

With all plans in the framework in place, the Council's executive management team retains responsibility for strategic and organisational planning. Review and renewal processes are undertaken by staff within the corporate governance business unit. The director of that unit is responsible for ensuring that the executive management team and the elected Council are aware of all activities and initiatives that are occurring in relation to the planning framework.

3.1.3 Key steps in developing the Council's ILTP approach

Roper Gulf Shire developed its planning framework following a sequence of important steps. The first was the identification process in which the staff and councillors determined the range of plans that would comprise the framework. This was followed by a series of planning workshops

involving managers and directors to decide on the content of each plan, determine the overall process to complete all plans in the framework, and assign responsibilities for the tasks involved. Similar workshops were then conducted with councillors to introduce them to the suggested planning approach and provide some detail on all plans in the framework.

Following these workshops, consultations were organised with all local boards, communities and other stakeholders within the shire. A series of community forums and smaller meetings were organised for this purpose. These consultations enabled a broad range of local stakeholders to work with the Council to develop long-term goals for the shire and to identify associated strategies and indicators for these goals.

Following collation and analysis of the data obtained in these consultations, staff in the corporate governance unit developed a draft strategic plan. The draft plan was then presented to all those involved in the consultation process and was made broadly available for public comment. With all comments received and appropriate changes made, the draft plan was then presented to the executive management team for approval before being put to Council for endorsement.

From the outset, the process to develop the Council's strategic plan took around 12 months.

3.1.4 Objectives in establishing an ILTP approach

Roper Gulf Shire identified a range of objectives in developing its planning framework. These were:

- to provide a forum to enable community members and stakeholders to have a say in the future direction of the Council
- to inform the community regarding the Council's long-term direction and priorities
- to reflect to communities and governments beyond the shire the sentiments of the local community regarding future directions and priorities
- to provide Council staff with guidance on the future direction of the organisation, and to hear from them regarding priorities on which they would like the organisation to place a greater emphasis
- to give written confirmation of the agreement reached by councillors regarding future directions and priorities for the shire.

3.1.5 Have these objectives been achieved?

Roper Gulf's staff and councillors are in agreement that their objectives in developing their ILTP framework have been achieved. On this basis they will maintain their current approach to long-term planning and will continue to look for opportunities for refinement of their processes.

3.1.6 Benefits of long-term planning processes for the Council and its communities

For Roper Gulf Shire, tangible benefits of long-term planning are becoming evident in the form of better roads, properly scheduled asset repairs and maintenance, and an increased asset and infrastructure base.

These benefits stem from the increased clarity for staff as they plan their operations according to the long-term goals and priorities outlined in the strategic plan and other documents in the

ILTP framework. They are also able to draw on predetermined strategies that have been developed specifically to achieve the long-term goals outlined in the strategic plan.

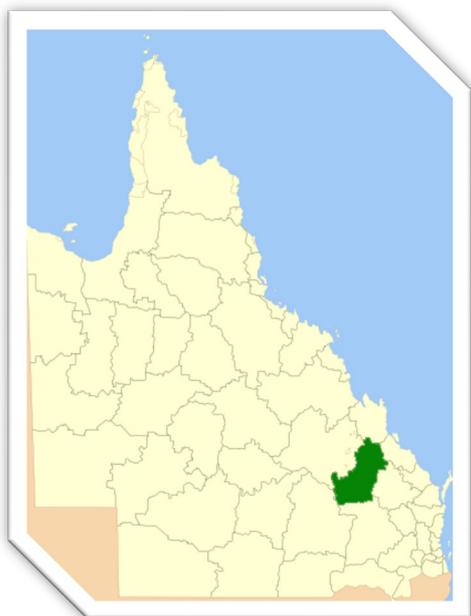
3.1.7 The challenges of ILTP

In developing and implementing the ILTP framework there have been two primary challenges for the staff of Roper Gulf Shire. The first has been the frequent changes to the legislative requirements applying to long-term planning for Northern Territory councils. The second challenge has been the extreme difficulties created by the short duration of most funding agreements, typically only one year. With Northern Territory councils so heavily dependent on funding from higher levels of government, planning three years ahead is difficult when the funding required to realise many of the long-term goals is not guaranteed from one year to the next.

3.1.8 The influence of long-term planning on day-to-day activities and decision-making

For the staff of Roper Gulf Shire, there is no question that the organisation's ILTP framework has had a strong and continuing influence on day-to-day activities and decision-making. Primarily, it has created unity across all business units regarding the Council's long-term direction and priorities, it has enabled the organisation to engage with its communities in shaping the future of the Council area, and it has enabled the use of vastly improved methods for long-term asset planning and management.

3.2 Integrated long-term planning case study: Banana Shire Council, Queensland



3.2.1 Development of the Council's ILTP framework

As a large rural council, Banana Shire comprises twelve distinct communities. With this in mind the organisation has developed a community plan for the council area as a whole and an individual place-based plan for each community. In line with Queensland's current legislation, the Council has also developed a ten-year financial plan and is enhancing its capital works and asset management plans to provide a five-to-ten-year outlook. Banana Shire had developed its community and place-based plans some years before the introduction of the legislative requirements.

The staff driver for these plans was the economic development officer who had assisted Banana Shire to gain funding for a pilot project. On this basis the

Council needed only to modify its existing plans rather than recommence the entire process.

Despite the Queensland Government no longer requiring councils to develop community plans, Banana Shire continues to find its planning framework invaluable in providing councillors, staff, and local communities with direction and guidance. This framework, combined with the state government's regional infrastructure plan, provides both the Council and its local communities with a comprehensive 'top-to-bottom' picture regarding goals and priorities for the future of the area.

On this basis the Council as a whole is intending to continue its periodic review and renewal processes for the community and place-based plans, and is likely to continue to maintain all components of the framework's 'live documents' for the foreseeable future.

3.2.2 Project management

From the earliest days of its long-term planning initiatives, Banana Shire's elected Council has been pivotal in providing support and guidance for the organisation's long-term and community planning initiatives. Councillors have continued to maintain an active involvement in these planning processes and in engaging with local communities to identify goals and priorities for the future.

When Queensland's community planning legislation was introduced, responsibility for the renewal of the Council's community and place-based plans was assigned to the economic development officer on the basis that the incumbent in that position had significant experience in developing such plans.

With the original community and place-based plans already operating, the task for the Council was one of revision rather than renewal. To achieve this, the economic development officer conducted a range of engagement activities with all communities across the shire to assess the

currency of the existing plan and to update it to reflect the views of our communities and the elected Council.

Once these changes were made, the plan was taken back to the community to confirm the long-term goals and priorities described for the local area. With this plan complete, the Council was then able to proceed with the development of all other plans in the framework. Overall the process took 12–18 months.

With the departure of the economic development officer from Council, carriage of all review and renewal processes with regards to the long-term planning framework has become the responsibility of the manager of planning. However, all aspects of the process are ultimately overseen by the executive management team and the elected Council.

3.2.3 Objectives in establishing an ILTP approach

From the outset, the CEO and staff at Banana Shire recognised that developing a long-term planning framework would provide a range of valuable opportunities for the Council.

In this regard, one of the primary objectives of the process was to foster closer collaboration between the Council and its communities to define and work towards common goals. This would enable the Council to move away from the combative public meetings that often define the relationships between councils and their communities. Instead, the community planning process enabled the Council to responsibly manage community expectations and align them with the organisation's capacity to plan for, and prioritise its service provision in the long-term.

Another primary objective of the long-term planning process was to provide Council staff and elected councillors with a long-term outlook and the necessary structures to enable them to undertake their planning and decision-making with consistency and the underpinning of a 'big picture'.

3.2.4 Have these objectives been achieved?

Thus far Banana Shire has witnessed a 'calming' of community attitudes towards the Council with the adoption of a more collaborative approach to long-term planning and resource allocation. The planning framework is also proving to be an invaluable tool to assist councillors and staff in their activities and decision-making.

3.2.5 Benefits of long-term planning processes for the Council and its communities

Realisation of the objectives previously described provides insights into the benefits of long-term planning processes to Banana Shire. However, the Council has also prospered financially, having been able to draw on the long-term goals and priorities documented in its planning documents in a range of funding and grant applications.

As a result, the Council has been successful in obtaining capital works grants, regional development funding, and grants emanating from the Royalties for Regions program. Equally, communities within the Shire have been able to use the community plan to secure funding from a range of sources for community projects.

3.2.6 The challenges of ILTP

Banana Shire encountered a range of challenges in developing its long-term planning framework. Most notably, working through the difficulties of vague legislation and new planning concepts meant that staff and councillors had to feel their way through many aspects of the

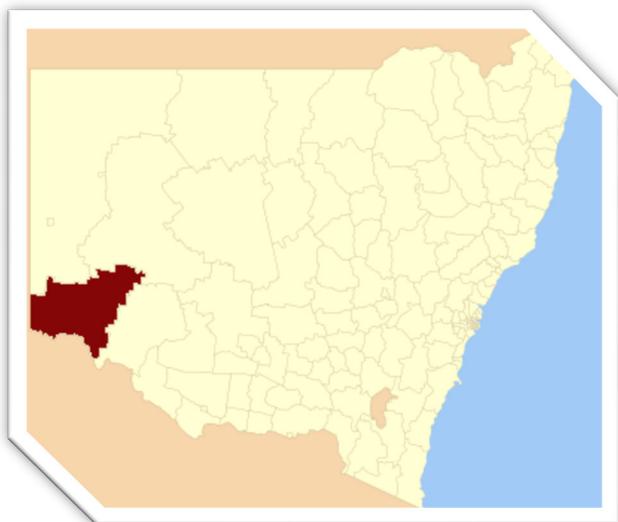
process, struggling at times to find an approach to the planning process that suited the organisation and that met all the requirements of the legislation.

In addition, with no additional funding provided for implementation of long-term planning legislation, resourcing the planning process at times stretched the council to its limit.

3.2.7 The influence of long-term planning on day-to-day activities and decision-making

Banana Shire staff readily acknowledge that the organisation's long-term planning framework has a fair degree of influence over its day-to-day activities. In particular, the plans that have been developed provide councillors and staff with valuable support in operational and budget planning, prioritising of infrastructure projects, and applications for grants and funding.

3.3 Integrated long-term planning case study: Wentworth Shire Council, NSW



3.3.1 Development of the Council's ILTP framework

Wentworth Shire developed its ILTP approach and documentation in accordance with NSW Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) legislation. The Council managed all tasks in-house and took two years to complete the process, commencing in June 2010 and finishing in June 2012. The process commenced with the development of a community engagement strategy which was an important first step in the development of the 10-year community strategic plan.

This was followed by a stock-take of the Council's physical and human resources which led to the development of their resourcing strategy comprising the asset management plan, the long-term financial plan, and the workforce planning strategy. Wentworth Shire then completed a four-year delivery program and a one-year operational plan and budget to fulfil the requirements of the IP&R framework. In addition to these documents, the Council developed a community engagement plan which is now used across the whole of Council.

3.3.2 Project management

The project to complete the IP&R framework was led by the Council's manager of governance and corporate planning. With the framework now in place, overall co-ordination of the IP&R framework is the responsibility of the manager of governance and corporate planning, who continues to drive the ongoing development of strategic plans for Council. However, all senior staff of Council, from the general manager to the directors and managers, have key roles in ensuring that the organisation's core activities and decision-making are clearly linked to the vision and long-term goals expressed in the community strategic plan.

Directors and managers have a reporting system that they use to monitor the operational plan activities. Reports to Council are reviewed in reference to the intent of the strategic plan and collated by the manager of governance and corporate planning for reporting to the Council.

3.3.3 Key steps in developing the Council's ILTP approach

Initial development of the community engagement strategy provided the framework for how community engagement would be undertaken during the development of the community strategic plan. All community consultation was undertaken by the Governance and Corporate Planning team, with only one or two external facilitators utilised throughout the project.

The Council then developed a project management approach to the development of the suite of associated documents with a guiding philosophy that delivery of the IP&R requirements was one total project with multiple component parts.

A project scope was developed for each of the component parts and project teams were formed for each. Whilst oversight of each component part of the project was assigned to the relevant manager, overall responsibility for the delivery of project components rested with the Council's general manager and directors.

Final collation of the documents was handled by the governance and corporate planning team in order to provide consistency across all the documentation.

3.3.4 Objectives in establishing an ILTP approach

Aside from responding to the IP&R legislation, Wentworth Shire identified a number of outcomes that it wanted to achieve through its ILTP processes.

A primary objective of the Council was to create one central reference point for all of the Council's planning activities. Therefore, to minimise the issue of managing a multitude of plans that may become overlooked or out-dated over time, the high priority goals and actions from each plan were incorporated into the community strategic plan and associated documents.

In developing the final community strategic plan the Council had an objective to provide the community with a central reference point for all the information that was obtained through the engagement process. Therefore the community strategic plan needed to be concise and easy to read. In addition, the Council wanted to apply consistency to all documents in the IP&R framework to reinforce that each is just one part of a full set rather than a series of individual documents.

As a final objective, the Council wanted to ensure that the IP&R documents were relevant and useful, not only as resources for its own councillors and staff, but also to its local communities and other organisations.

3.3.5 Have these objectives been achieved?

Thus far, feedback to the Council about the final documents has been very positive. From a usability perspective, the community strategic plan and the delivery program are a constant source of reference for Council staff, particularly those involved in grant and submission writing. These documents enable staff to easily refer back to the outcomes of community consultation, and identify community priorities.

The Council periodically sought feedback from the community, which resulted in the inclusion of key information and statistics about each of the townships within the shire. This assisted greatly in creating a document that other organisations and local communities within the shire would use.

The information provided in the resourcing strategy is proving to be a valuable tool for councillors, assisting them in reviewing the Council's financial capacity and resource requirements.

The Council's suite of IP&R documents is also proving to be valuable for setting and checking the organisation's long-term direction. All new reports and plans developed by staff refer back to the visions and objectives of the community strategic plan to ensure that any resulting actions are consistent with the long-term goals for the shire as expressed by local communities.

3.3.6 Benefits of long-term planning processes for the Council and its communities

Wentworth Shire's long-term planning activities and the resulting documentation have provided tangible benefits for the Council and its communities. As a prime example of these benefits, outputs from the planning process have been integral aspects of successful funding applications by the Council, as the planning documents contain details of the community's priorities for funding new infrastructure or programs.

In addition, the suite of documents developed in the IP&R process were provided to newly elected councillors during their induction, providing a central reference point for all actions, rather than a multitude of individual reports and documents.

Community groups are also using the community strategic plan and referencing its community objectives when making funding applications to Council and other government bodies.

3.3.7 The challenges of ILTP

One of the primary challenges for Wentworth Shire was to interpret how the individual components of the NSW IP&R framework fitted together, an exercise in bringing together each piece of the jigsaw to form a holistic and integrated approach to long-term planning. A major aspect of this challenge was the task of assisting councillors and staff to gain a complete understanding of the process and the outcomes sought by the Council. By the end of the consultative process, the community seemed to embrace the new process, and could see how Council's plans responded to the community strategic plan.

One of the most time consuming challenges was trawling through the mountain of previous documentation to ensure that relevant, ongoing actions were embedded into the new planning documents, ensuring that nothing was overlooked. Another challenge was to write the plans in such a way that, if new opportunities were presented in the future, staff would still be able to find a home for them within the community strategic plan.

The shire also discovered the challenges arising when key staff members left the organisation during the development of its ILTP processes. During this time new managers arrived and brought with them a different approach to their ILTP tasks, which on occasions resulted in delays in completion of some components. This was compounded by the in-house management of the project, which added to the existing workloads of many staff.

A further challenge faced by the Council was the confusion that arose on occasions in the organisation's interpretation of the IP&R legislation. The manual and guidelines produced by the NSW Division of Local Government proved both helpful and confusing during the development process. The Council's asset management project team, for example, were confounded by the extensive array of information provided in this area, and other staff struggled with their component parts due to the abstract nature of information provided in the manual and guidelines.

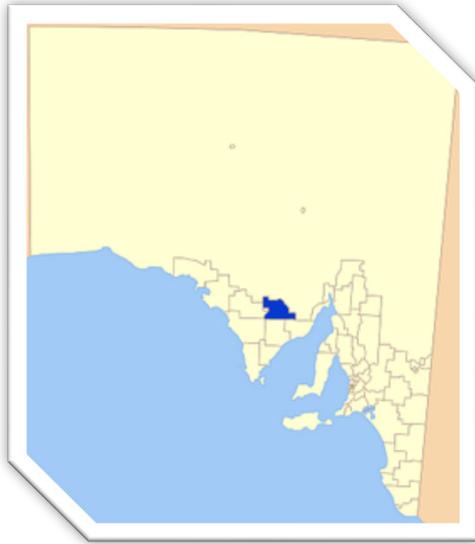
3.3.8 The influence of long-term planning on day-to-day activities and decision-making

For Wentworth Shire Council, its long-term planning instruments are gradually becoming embedded into its day-to-day activities. As managers become accustomed to reporting against the community strategic plan objectives, the big picture becomes clearer to them.

With a newly elected, and significantly changed Council following the 2012 local government elections, it is apparent that staff are greatly reassured by the positive influence that the

resourcing strategy, delivery program and operational plan have in providing consistency, direction and guidance for everyday operations.

3.4 Integrated long-term planning case study: District Council of Kimba, South Australia



3.4.1 Development of the Council's ILTP framework

Council commenced the development of its corporate plan in 2001 and its community vision document, with a 10-year outlook, in 2005. Today the main long-term planning processes document is the strategic management plan which extends for a four-year period. The first version of this document, with its 2009–12 outlook, was adopted by Council in August 2008.

To develop the strategic management plan in 2008, the Council held regular meetings and planning workshops with staff and elected members to determine an appropriate approach and the necessary steps and timeframes for completion of

the document. In addition, suggestion forms were distributed amongst staff and elected members. Ongoing consultation was also undertaken with the community throughout the planning process in line with Council's public consultation policy.

The strategic management plan is reviewed on a regular basis along with the long-term financial plan and asset management plan. The most recent review commenced in September 2011, and this led to the adoption of the second strategic management plan for 2012–16 in June 2012.

3.4.2 Project management

At the outset, the Council's elected body was the driving force behind the plan, with assistance from the senior management team and staff. In addition, Council used the professional services of a consultant to help with the process. Today the elected members, supported by the CEO and Council staff, remain the driving force behind the Council's long-term planning processes. The CEO ensures that reviews are conducted regularly and adopts a leadership role in all review and implementation processes.

Council staff drive the financial aspects of the plan, ensuring that goals and strategies identified in the strategic management plan flow through into the budgeting and financial planning processes and are also reflected in the Council's long-term financial plan. Council staff also oversee the asset planning aspects of the process. All managers are involved in the implementation of the objectives outlined in the strategic management plan.

3.4.3 Key steps in developing the Council's ILTP approach

Following the appointment of the consultant to assist with the development of the strategic management plan, elected members were engaged in a one-day strategic management planning seminar. Prior to this they were provided with comprehensive briefings and information to provide them with an understanding of the direction that the Council needed to take and the issues and priorities it needed to address. This was accompanied by discussions with community groups, public meetings and staff consultation.

At the conclusion of this broad information and discussion process, the consultant developed a draft strategic management plan. The document was released for public review and comment and was also provided to elected members and staff for feedback. All comments received were then considered and the plan finalised and adopted.

In all, the planning process took nine months to complete, from the initial workshop in September 2011 to the adoption of the plan in June 2012.

3.4.4 Objectives in establishing an ILTP approach

The District Council of Kimba had a number of objectives in establishing its long-term planning processes, including:

- to maintain the long-term viability of the Council
- to ensure appropriate ongoing asset management
- to improve the infrastructure of Council with the limited funds available
- to ensure optimum provision of services to best meet the needs of rate payers.

Whilst the plan is clear in stating the Council's directions and priorities, the organisation has ensured that the document is flexible in its outlook in order to account for unforeseen events that are likely to affect the local road network and other vital infrastructure in the years ahead.

3.4.5 Have these objectives been achieved?

Council's senior staff and elected members are in agreement that the organisation's objectives in establishing a long-term planning framework are being achieved. With a unifying vision and clear goals for the local area, the Council has been able to clearly identify strategies and projects that work to fulfil them. These goals have been developed in consultation with the local community and go well beyond infrastructure maintenance and renewal. Each planning cycle looks ahead four years and progress is reviewed annually prior to the preparation of the budget for the year ahead.

The Council's planning documents are also flexible enough to accommodate new projects, allowing the organisation to be responsive to community needs and to the ever-changing environment in which councils operate.

Whilst the Council remains committed to achieving the goals identified in the strategic management plan, the organisation has, on occasion, reviewed and modified these goals in response to community interests and feedback.

3.4.6 Benefits of long-term planning processes for the Council and its communities

For Kimba's councillors, staff and the local community, the benefits of good long-term planning processes are apparent. They provide a structured, planned mechanism to enable community input into setting the long-term directions of their Council. These mechanisms also ensure that elected members are making decisions that are well informed. Overall, the Council's long-term planning initiatives encourage the organisation to adopt a structured, proactive approach to long-term planning and service delivery as opposed to an ad hoc, reactive approach, thereby generating practical, realistic and achievable improvements for the local community.

3.4.7 The challenges of ILTP

For Kimba Council staff, the development of the long-term planning framework has not been without its challenges. Amongst them, funding has arguably been the greatest. For small councils with limited revenue generating capabilities, funding new projects and services is frequently a challenge, and at the outset long-term planning activities proved to be resource intensive for the Council.

With the organisation's long-term planning framework in place, the challenge is now the achievement of the vision and long-term goals. Kimba staff and elected members have been able to achieve a lot through extra funding from road grants, from mining companies, and from the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure.

Another challenge for the Council has been generating and maintaining public interest in long-term planning activities. Public involvement in these processes is vital and the Council has found it to be a challenge to keep the momentum going at times when public interest and feedback is needed.

The third challenge for the District of Kimba Council is to undertake the continual provision of community information and education to ensure that community expectations do not exceed the capacity of the Council to meet them.

3.4.8 The influence of long-term on day-to-day activities and decision-making

With its long-term planning framework now an entrenched aspect of the Council's operations, the elected members and staff of the District Council of Kimba are extremely focused on achieving the vision and goals of the strategic management plan.

The presence of the strategic management plan means that resourcing priorities are well understood and, importantly, all activities and initiatives of the Council, from day-to-day operations up to high-level long-term projects, are able to be assessed for their validity against the vision and goals of the strategic management plan and prioritised accordingly.

3.5 Integrated long-term planning case study: Shire of Exmouth, Western Australia



3.5.1 Development of the Council's ILTP framework

The Shire of Exmouth's planning framework is guided by the integrated planning legislation as prescribed by the Western Australian Government. In observing the planning framework the Council has developed a strategic community plan, a corporate business plan, a long-term financial plan, an asset management plan, and a workforce plan.

The Western Australian Government provided grant funding to councils to assist with the development of their planning frameworks, and Exmouth acted with two neighbouring councils as a collaborative group to appoint external consultants to assist in the development of its integrated long-term plans. The consultants have assisted with the development of all of the Council's plans excepting the corporate business plan which was developed internally.

3.5.2 Project management

The Shire of Exmouth had previously developed a community plan, however the council realised that dealing with the complexities of the new framework was beyond the capacity of its staff. Therefore, the first step in developing the new plan was to work with other councils in the three-party collaborative group to select an external consultant to assist in managing the tasks involved. The process commenced late in 2010 when the CEOs of the three councils worked together to select an appropriate consultant. That consultant worked with all three councils to develop an approach to integrated planning that met the legislative requirements.

Once the strategic community plan was complete, the CEO and all executive managers at the Shire of Exmouth worked together to develop the corporate business plan. This plan documents the Council's activities and the priorities that it will address in each Council term in response to the goals outlined in the strategic community plan.

The senior staff worked together to document these activities and priorities, and to provide details regarding staff responsibilities and accountabilities and performance measures that link to the strategic community plan.

Ongoing maintenance and review of the Council's integrated planning framework is the responsibility of the Corporate Services Department. However, all executive managers have an ongoing role in ensuring that their areas of accountability are accurate and up-to-date.

3.5.3 Key steps in developing the Council's ILTP approach

The first step in developing a comprehensive approach to integrated planning was for the Council to engage a consultant. Once this was done the consultant worked with staff to develop the Council's overall approach to the tasks ahead and to create a project plan.

Following this the Council undertook a range of activities to engage its communities in identifying goals and priorities for the future of the Shire. This provided the team with the community input it required to develop the strategic community plan, the corporate business plan, and the workforce plan. At the same time, the Council also developed its asset management plan and long-term financial plan to complete all components of the integrated planning framework. Overall, the process to complete the framework took around two-and-a-half years, commencing in late 2010 and finishing in mid-2013.

3.5.4 Objectives in establishing an ILTP approach

The Shire of Exmouth has been guided by a number of objectives in working to complete the integrated planning framework. Whilst the Council had an active community plan, the document had been produced some years earlier, and the integrated planning process provided an opportunity for the Council to work with its communities to renew its long-term goals for the Shire.

In developing its long-term financial plan, the Council also had an objective to determine the long-term resourcing requirements and options to realise the goals expressed in the strategic community plan.

The third major objective of the Council was to use the whole integrated planning process to provide community education regarding revenue requirements and limitations in funding its operations, and in responding to identified long-term goals and priorities.

3.5.5 Have these objectives been achieved?

For Exmouth Shire, the process has only recently been completed and insufficient time has passed to assess the effectiveness of its new planning framework in meeting these objectives. However, the Council is confident that its long-term planning processes for developing the framework have been both transparent and inclusive, and that its local communities have been supportive throughout.

The long-term financial plan will also enable the Council provide its communities with factually based responses to questions surrounding funding priorities and resourcing of activities and projects. In addition, the planning framework will enable the Council to plan its activities and priorities with longer-term guidance provided by goals identified in the strategic community plan.

3.5.6 Benefits of long-term planning processes for the Council and its communities

For the Shire of Exmouth, the main benefit of introducing the integrated planning framework is the certainty it will bring to the Council and its communities in planning for the future and in working towards identified and mutually agreed goals.

3.5.7 The challenges of ILTP

The main challenge in introducing the integrated planning framework has been the resourcing of the project. Whilst funding was provided by the state government to assist with implementation,

the amount was limited and the Council had to be prudent in its expenditure to ensure the whole project was managed efficiently and remained within budget.

In addition, the challenge of carrying the project forward is one of which the Council is very conscious. Whilst the Corporate Services Department has overall carriage of integrated planning, the ongoing effectiveness of the project will require commitment from the organisation as a whole.

3.5.8 The influence of long-term planning on day-to-day activities and decision-making

With the establishment phase of integrated planning complete, the Council has tailored each component of the framework to ensure that it will continue to have a significant effect on the Council's day-to-day operations. This has been achieved through the creation of clear linkages between the strategic community plan and the Council's agendas, reports and budgets. The Council has also ensured that the core elements of its strategic plan provide strong and clear guidance in its corporate business plan and its performance measurement systems at all levels.

Section 4:

Practical tools and templates for ILTP

4.1 The community plan

Contents:

- 4.1.1 Developing the community plan
- 4.1.2 Considerations in preparing a community plan
- 4.1.3 The structure of the community plan
- 4.1.4 Community plan structural template

4.1.1 Developing the community plan

In the ILTP context, the community plan can be defined as the peak document that synthesises ideas and opinions of local communities and other stakeholders to provide insights and guidance about future directions and priorities in a structured, categorised form.

Whilst the document is developed by the council, it will ideally be broad in its outlook and should be seen as a valuable planning resource for government and non-government agencies at all levels.

The content of the community plan is drawn primarily from data obtained through engagement with a broad range of stakeholder groups including local communities, business and government representatives, NGOs, community groups and associations, and key demographic groups within local communities such as elderly and young people, people with a disability, tourists and visitors, and others. In this light, it is important to consider that the validity and strength of the plan as a guiding document for council and other agencies is highly dependent on the robustness, integrity and reach of the engagement process.

Determining the structure of the community plan at the outset will identify the data that need to be gathered through community engagement and will therefore guide the design of engagement processes. This will ensure that the right questions are posed in the engagement activities and that appropriate data may be captured.

Considerations in preparing a community plan

In order to develop an effective, well written long-term community plan, there are important issues to consider and decisions to make at the outset. This initial planning phase is important as decisions made in the earliest stages of the process will strongly influence the eventual development of the plan and its content.

The most important considerations are as follows:

- 1. Establish an overall timetable and project plan for completion** – Developing a long-term community plan is a major commitment that can take some time. Establishing a timetable and project plan is the first fundamental step in determining how it will proceed. These will enable staff to build in the necessary steps, allocate the required time, and undertake all aspects of the project in a measured way. A predetermined timetable with milestones will also enable the council to meet any public commitments regarding the development of the plan.

- 2. Identify staff and councillor roles and responsibilities** – The development of a community plan requires many different tasks to be addressed in a logical order, and determining the roles and responsibilities of staff and councillors in the process is most important.

Councillors need to be fully aware of, and closely involved in, the development of the community plan for several reasons:

- I. as elected representatives, councillors are ultimately accountable for the development of the plan and its content
- II. councillors have a very influential role in engendering public support for, and involvement in, the community planning process
- III. the community plan, when developed, will be a primary point of reference in their future decision-making.

Assigning project roles to staff will enable the selection of appropriate people for the tasks that need to be undertaken. It will also ensure that staff time and effort is well directed and that there is minimal duplication of activities.

Specific roles may include:

- community engagement design
- event coordination and logistics
- meeting facilitation
- research and writing
- publicity and communications
- document design, preparation, and publication.

Most important in the assigning of roles is the nomination of project leaders. Effective leaders will motivate and direct staff during the course of the project and will ensure that predetermined timetables are observed.

As the community plan has the potential for significant long-term influence over the future directions of the organisation, the overall leadership of the process should ideally be the role of the council's CEO / general manager, with members of senior management also having central roles in the process.

- 3. Determine a structure for the community plan** – It is important to recognise that a structure for the community plan needs to be developed early in the planning phase. Determining a structure for the plan will require consideration of what data need to be collected during community engagement, and this will in turn provide guidance on the design of engagement activities.

Community plans often contain a range of background and supporting information which provides valuable context for the actual planning provisions. Such information may include: demographic data; local historical information; maps; and descriptive

information covering local environmental, community, economic and other features. Making early decisions about the overall structure of the plan will inform how such contextual information will be utilised.

- 4. Assessing your current position** – as part of initial ILTP development, and in preparation for community engagement, it is advantageous to assess and understand the council's current position in relation to asset management, financial sustainability and the workforce.

Resourcing is the key to the achievement of the community plan's long-term goals, and an understanding of the council's current and anticipated resourcing strengths and weaknesses will ensure that the engagement process is well directed and that community expectations can be managed.

It is likely that the adoption of this approach will require work in the lead-up to engagement. This preparation will also ensure that the resulting community plan is a realistic and well-targeted document.

- 5. Develop a plan for community engagement, including methods and target groups** – The content of the community plan is a crystallisation of the views and ideas obtained through community engagement processes. Therefore it stands to reason that the validity of the plan and its derivative documents including the council plan and workforce plan is largely dependent on the integrity of the data captured through community engagement.

It is therefore essential that engagement processes are well planned and are based on a strong understanding of, and agreement on both the outcomes that are required from the process, and the techniques that are to be used.

It is also essential that engagement activities attract the broadest possible community involvement. This will ensure that the resulting data reflect the broadest possible range of community views and ideas. Whilst it is often appropriate to attract voluntary community participation through open invitations to engagement events, it is also essential to identify target groups that need to be represented in the range of views and ideas captured.

Once these target groups are identified, decisions can be made regarding the most appropriate ways to ensure their involvement. Groups such as children and young people, the elderly, and people with disabilities are often less inclined or able to become involved without specific targeting and encouragement. Therefore, consideration should be given to 'going to them' rather than expecting their involvement in larger group events.

- 6. Decide how data will be collated, analysed and condensed to develop the community plan** – An important consideration in community engagement planning is how data will be captured and managed. Engagement events inevitably involve lively discussion and the presentation of many different views and ideas, so the main focus should be on ensuring that the complexities of the discussion are captured in some way.

Whilst for some participants it may be appropriate to use electronic methods such as laptops and recording devices, others may benefit from more conventional tools such as

butchers paper and easels. Decisions about what tools to use should be based on some understanding of what participants will feel most comfortable with.

Once the data have been gathered, consideration will need to be given as to methods of management and analysis. Often, the best means of managing such data is through the development of a database. Many database programs are easy to use and enable large volumes of data to be well organised and easily accessible for purposes well beyond the community plan.

Once a database has been developed and information properly organised and referenced, data analysis can be conducted to enable the plan to be developed based on the emergence of predominant themes relating to prevailing community values, current issues and challenges, long-term goals for the local area, and indicators of their achievement.

7. **Teamwork** – Developing a community plan involves many challenging tasks. A successful outcome is dependent upon sound preparation and planning, thorough research, and good decision-making and leadership, and this is more than one person alone can accomplish. Inevitably, an approach that emphasises the importance of teamwork will be the strongest basis for success in developing an effective community plan.
8. **Broad staff involvement** – The development of the community plan presents many opportunities for councils, and one of the main opportunities is organisational capacity building. Broad staff involvement in developing the plan is an effective way to build organisational capacities in teamwork, project planning, community engagement, meeting facilitation, research, leadership, and a host of other areas.
9. **The community's plan** – There are a number of approaches that can be taken in developing the community plan, and these approaches will, in many ways, determine the effectiveness of the plan in guiding decision-making and affecting change over time.

If the plan is developed as 'the council's plan', it will inevitably be confined to the local government context in its goals and aspirations. However, if it is developed as 'the community's plan', then it has the capacity to address local goals and aspirations well beyond the council. It then has the potential to become a powerful tool for obtaining the involvement of other levels of government in addressing community needs.

10. **The importance of plain English: writing the community plan for the reader** – When the time comes to develop the community plan and crystallise the many ideas and opinions gathered during community engagement processes, it is most important to maintain a strong awareness of who will be reading it.

The intent of the plan is to provide clarity about future priorities and directions for the local area for a broad range of stakeholders. In this light, one of the main objectives is to ensure that it is accessible to readers who may have no background in local government and no understanding of bureaucratic processes. Therefore, the plan needs to be written in plain English, with care taken to avoid the use of jargon and overly bureaucratic terminology.

11. **Ongoing management and maintenance** – It is important to recognise that the completion of the community plan marks the beginning of a number of ongoing processes that the council must undertake:

- periodic review and updating of the plan
- assessment and reporting of progress towards the long-term goals
- ongoing communication and collaboration with local communities regarding strategies to achieve the long-term goals.

The process to develop the community plan is very public, underpinned by broad publicity and community engagement. With the creation of such strong public awareness about the plan and its development, local communities will develop expectations with regards to the actions of the council and other agencies in achieving the long-term goals, and their own participation in projects and activities that work towards these goals.

Councils therefore need to develop very clear approaches to the management of ongoing processes surrounding the community plan to ensure that all stakeholders, including local communities and other government and non-government agencies, have a common understanding about ongoing roles, responsibilities, and progress along the road to achieving the long-term goals.

4.1.2 The structure of the plan

Community plans are typically developed in several sections that, together, provide general and specific information that is relevant in the planning context.

Section 1. Setting the scene

This section typically opens with a foreword from the mayor and/or CEO, and provides background information about the local area and the region that provides some context to the plan and generally sets the scene. Whilst the specific content of this section is subject to the discretion of the council, the following headings and information commonly appear in the opening section of a plan of this nature:

- a vision for the local area
- regional and local maps
- demographic data
- historical information
- local features, for example significant environmental, social, cultural, and other features that define the local area
- relevant regional / state / national trends – outline any significant state, regional or national policies that impact on the vision or delivery of the plan
- council's current and anticipated future resourcing capacities.

Section 2. Describing the process

In any plan of this type it is important to provide readers with detail regarding the purpose of the community plan and how it has been developed. Therefore this section may include the following information:

- an account of the legislation addressing ILTP processes
- a description and/or diagram of the planning framework adopted by the council
- information on how the components of the framework work together
- an account of community engagement processes that were undertaken to develop the community plan
- an account of how the plan will be reviewed and updated to ensure its ongoing validity.

Section 3. The plan

The previous sections of the document provide the necessary background information to enable readers to understand the plan. Once this information has been addressed, the community plan itself can be presented.

4.1.3 Using the community plan template

The following community plan template is built around six thematic headings called ‘focus areas’. These focus areas provide categories within which every aspect of a council’s functions, operations, and decision-making may be logically addressed. They are:

- natural environment
- local economy
- community and culture
- rural and urban development
- infrastructure and services
- local governance and finance.

Within each focus area are a number of standard subheadings that form the structure of the plan. These subheadings provide a basis for the community plan to ‘*tell a story*’ about the present and the future within each focus area. These subheadings, along with an outline of the content of each, are:

- *Community perceptions of [council name] area* – focuses on characteristics of the local area in the ‘here and now’, under two headings:
 - *What we value* – identifies those features of the council area that are most valued by local communities and other stakeholders, and should be used as building blocks for the future
 - *Priorities for the future* – identifies prevailing issues and challenges that require addressing in order to improve the local area.
- *Our goal for our [focus area]* – presents a statement (or something more detailed if desired) that clearly describes an overarching outcome for each focus area to work towards through the life of the community plan.

- *Strategies to achieve this goal* – suggests high-level, long-term activities and courses of action that may be enacted to achieve the long-term goals listed in the plan.
- *Indicators of success* – provides tangible indicators that will be evident in each focus area when long-term goals have been achieved.

4.1.4 The community plan template

The community plan template is available as a separate document to enable its adaption for use. It can be downloaded at: www.acelg.org.au/node/2887

4.2 The council plan

Contents

- 4.2.1 Developing the council plan / corporate plan
- 4.2.2 Addressing integration
- 4.2.3 Using the council plan template
- 4.2.4 Council plan structural template

4.2.1 Developing the council plan

Reviewing the work of councils in developing their council plans, it is evident that almost every council has its own individual approach to the development of this document.

Regardless of the structure and content of the council plan, it is important to acknowledge its role as the core document in the ILTP framework. There are two main reasons for the council plan occupying this central role:

1. It is typically the single point where all other plans meet and therefore it provides a primary mechanism for integration. A comprehensive council / corporate plan will list the key elements of other plans in the ILTP framework and demonstrate their interrelationships.
2. The council / corporate plan describes real actions and intentions of council in relation to the long-term goals and priorities listed in other plans, providing clear accountability regarding how these goals and priorities will be addressed in the years ahead, who will be involved, and how progress will be measured.

Where legislation requires the development of a community plan, it is important to adopt a structure for the community and council plans that is, as far as possible, uniform across the two documents.

4.2.2 Addressing integration

There are a number of ways to demonstrate the interrelationships between documents in any ILTP framework. Arguably the most logical and visible method of integration is structural alignment between plans.

In the preceding community plan template, there are common headings within each focus area and these headings, along with the focus areas themselves, may be used across both the community plan and the council plan to integrate the two documents.

The following steps describe how the following council plan template is presented in a way that closely links the council plan with the community plan:

- I. The council plan adopts the same focus area structure as the community plan.
- II. The long-term goal for each focus area, as expressed in the community plan, also appears at the head of each focus area section of the council plan, not only as a means of integration of the two plans but also as a constant point of reference during the development of the council plan.

- III. The strategies listed in the community plan to achieve each long-term goal become the 'launch points' for the details of the council plan, with actions, timelines, indicators, and other information being developed in the council plan according to each of these strategies.

Using the structure developed for the community plan as the basis for development of the council plan creates a commonality between the plans that will make it easy for readers to understand the origins of the council's actions and decision-making, with this integration setting the 'big picture' context.

This structural alignment approach (drawing on the peak document to guide the structure of other plans) can be used to varying degrees as a methodology for integration of all ILTP documents, regardless of the jurisdiction or the framework.

4.2.3 Using the council plan template

A detailed council plan can be a long and complex document, particularly for readers not versed in the business of local government. Therefore, it is important to develop a sound, easily understandable structure for the plan.

The attached template adopts the community plan's focus areas as its major headings and presents all information in a categorised table format. The template uses the community plan's 'strategies to achieve long-term goals' as the launching point to provide details of existing activities and new initiatives to be undertaken by the council in fulfilling each strategy.

The bulk of information under each strategy in the template is categorised in three tables as follows:

Table 1: *Ongoing council programs and activities that respond to the strategy.*

This table provides an account of council's ongoing programs and activities, perhaps defined as 'recurrent expenditure items', which respond to each strategy. The table lists specific council actions, responsibility for continuing implementation, and performance measures for each program or activity.

Table 2: *New initiatives to be implemented that respond to the strategy.*

This table provides an account of new council initiatives and non-recurrent expenditure items that respond to each of the community plan's strategies that are to be implemented within the timeframe of the council plan. The table also lists the responsibility and planned timeline for implementation, and performance measures for each initiative.

Table 3: *Other council programs and activities supporting each focus area*

This is a single table placed at the end of each focus area. It is designed to accommodate any existing council programs and activities that belong generally within the focus area, but do not respond specifically to strategies identified in the community plan. This table is important as it will identify programs and activities that may need to be reviewed for their validity and resource allocation in the context of the goals of the community plan.

Resourcing:

The pie charts that appear at the end of each focus area in the following template are a simple but effective way to provide a snapshot of council's income and expenditure. They depict each

source of income and expenditure as a percentage of the whole for each focus area, and may be accompanied by an actual dollar figure for each.

The alignment of financial information with focus areas may require the council's financial system to be redesigned. This may be a long and difficult task for some councils and may need to be a staged process based on financial estimates until the new structure is fully evolved. However, this is an important step towards the integration of documents and information within the ILTP framework.

Commentary:

Inclusion of this information is entirely optional but may provide valuable context for readers to enable them to understand the underlying current and anticipated priorities and constraints that prevail within each focus area.

4.2.4 Council plan template

The community plan template is available as a separate document to enable its adaption for use. This document can be downloaded at: www.acelg.org.au/node/2887

4.3 The community engagement plan

Contents:

4.3.1 Developing the community engagement plan

4.3.2 Example community engagement plan

4.3.1 Developing the community engagement plan

The purpose of the community engagement plan is to provide council staff and councillors with a 'running sheet' for the conduct of all engagement activities for the development of the community plan. It also provides a detailed account of engagement activities conducted by council – any associated activities – and the underlying principles that guide engagement processes.

The main benefit of having a community engagement plan is that, in developing it, staff are required to consider, agree on, and plan for the fundamental aspects of community engagement, including:

- application of social justice principles that guide engagement processes
- determination of appropriate engagement techniques
- identification of target groups for engagement
- acknowledgement of preferred engagement outcomes for communities and council
- consideration of practical aspects of preparation for engagement activities
- identification of publicity and information distribution methods supporting community engagement activities.

Preparation of a community engagement plan is a fundamental aspect of sound planning for community engagement activities. It is important to undertake engagement activities effectively and efficiently for a number of reasons:

- Engagement activities present the public face of the council to communities and the organisation will be judged on its performance in organising and managing engagement activities.
- Engagement processes can be costly and time consuming, so it is important to get them right first time.
- The integrity of the community plan is highly dependent on the quality and utility of information gathered during engagement activities.
- Involvement in planning and managing successful engagement processes can be a valuable capacity-building exercise for staff, providing them with skills and confidence in facilitation, communication, leadership, and event planning.

For these reasons the proper planning of community engagement processes is essential, thus a community engagement plan is a valuable tool to guide and document the process.

4.3.2 Example community engagement plan

The example community engagement plan is available as a separate document to enable its adaption for use. This document can be downloaded at: www.ancelg.org.au/node/2887

ACELG has also published an online toolkit for community engagement in rural-remote and Indigenous councils. Visit the ACELG website to view the toolkit: www.ancelg.org.au/node/2808



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