

Regional Economic Development Strategies

Background

Economic development strategies have historically been developed by councils for individual Local Government Areas (LGAs) using a variety of methods. This approach has not typically allowed comparison between LGAs, and does not often consider the broader region. In addition, given the cost and resources required to develop economic development strategies, smaller local governments have limited capacity to develop comprehensive plans.

Recognising these limitations, the NSW Government is offering to assist local councils to develop Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS) based on the concept of a Functional Economic Region (FER), which usually incorporates more than one LGA. The following frequently asked questions provide additional information. For further information please contact your local Office of Regional Development Regional Director (see separate contact sheet).

FAQS

Are councils required to participate in developing a REDS under this process?

No. Participating in the development of a REDS, while desirable, is voluntary. However, REDS will be produced for each FER and will be used to guide NSW Government investment decisions. Therefore, councils will best be able to influence REDS content through participation in the process.

Who will develop the REDS?

The NSW Government has engaged a panel of expert contractors to work in collaboration with councils and local stakeholders. These contractors have experience developing REDS in Australia and internationally.

What if a council has recently developed its own economic development strategy?

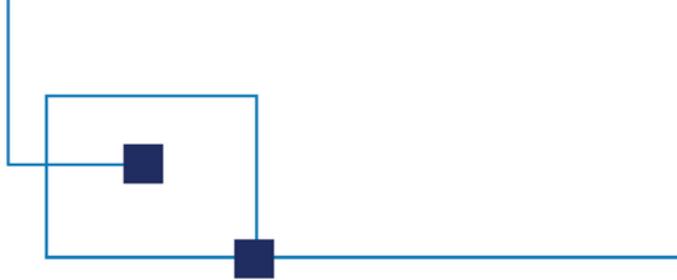
If requested, an existing strategy can be reviewed by an expert contractor. There is no obligation to amend or update any content of the existing strategy after this review, and its content can be incorporated into the overarching REDS for that FER.

How will the REDS be developed?

Regions are different across NSW and contractors will take a region-specific approach as required. However, the overall methodology will be similar to ensure consistency across regions and that the individual REDS represent best practice.

What is a Functional Economic Region (FER) and how does it relate to the REDS?

Local government boundaries are an artefact of history rather than reflecting the boundaries of regional economies and economic interaction. REDS will be based on FER boundaries, which may include multiple LGAs, to better target investments aimed at growing or establishing regional competitive advantage. The size and nature of the FER will differ across the State and will be informed by economic data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.



Can a REDS be developed for a single LGA?

Only where a FER is comprised of a single LGA, which is uncommon. However, each REDS can contain sections specific to each constituent LGA, with this information contributing to the overall strategy.

Will the NSW Government have influence or control over the REDS?

No, REDS are local government documents and ownership and control of their development will rest with participating councils. However, they must clearly identify the FER's strengths, articulate a long term economic vision and describe the key priorities and associated enablers that are required to deliver the vision so they can be used to inform NSW Government investment decisions. This minimum content is expected to be developed by stakeholders participating in the REDS process. The NSW Government's involvement will be limited to providing advice and support where it is requested.

Who can be involved in developing the REDS?

The REDS should reflect community preferences and their vision for the regional area. A comprehensive consultation process with local stakeholders would typically be undertaken during the development of the REDS. These would include, but may not be limited to, local businesses and peak bodies, community organisations, government bodies and representatives as well as other interested stakeholders.

How will the REDS benefit participating councils?

The REDS will provide a clearly articulated economic development strategy for the region which can be used to inform and guide the economic development activity of councils and business. In addition, the REDS will enable faster access to dedicated State funding, such as the Growing Local Economies Fund, while ensuring compliance with the legislation that governs the NSW Government's infrastructure investment funds. Further, the strategy may also be used to support other types of grant applications to the NSW and Commonwealth Governments.

How much will the REDS cost a participating council?

The NSW Government recognises the importance of regional planning as well as the limited resources available to some local government areas. Therefore, the cost of the contractors made available to help develop the FER-based REDS will be met by the NSW Government.

When will the REDS be completed?

Completion of the REDS will be determined by the timeline of Councils but there is a preference to complete the REDS as soon as practical and by the end of 2017 at the latest. Once commenced, it is hoped that the process can be finalised within 4 – 8 weeks.