

Economic Development Strategy

Mid-Western Region

A 10 Year Plan



About this Report

Mid-Western Regional Council has prepared an Economic Development Strategy to outline a shared vision and future economic direction for the region in the next 10 years. The strategy will provide a broad framework for the various lead agencies and stakeholders involved in economic development to identify their roles and meaningfully engage in economic development initiatives for the region.

The Economic Development Strategy is not a Council strategy but a strategy prepared by Council for all of the region's stakeholders (including businesses, business and industry associations, government agencies).

The Economic Development Strategy is structured as follows:

1. **Key Principles and Strategies for Economic Development** – it identifies the key principles or focus areas that are necessary in supporting economic development in the region. It also identifies the lead agencies who operate within these focus areas and are responsible for delivering economic development outcomes.
2. **Council's Role in Economic Development** – it identifies the role and types of activities that Council can engage in under each of the key principles to assist and support the lead agencies in achieving their objectives.
3. **Implementation** – it provides details regarding the implementation of the Economic Development Strategy and the process of review on a regular basis.

This is a live document which means that the various strategies and activities may need to be modified from time to time to adapt to a constantly changing economic and business environment.



Vision and Mission

Vision

Council's vision for the region is a progressive and prosperous community we proudly call home.

Economic Development Mission

Council's Economic Development mission is to encourage a strong and diversified economy that delivers lifestyle benefits to the community through supporting business and investment activities that in turn generate opportunities for employment, income and sustainable economic growth.

Commitment

Council will be a leader in driving a strong economy that provides economic and employment benefits for its residents. Council's priority areas are providing infrastructure, promoting the region, attracting investment and fostering strategic alliances – with the central focus the creation of jobs.

Council places a high priority on developing proactive policies and actions to improve the employment, business and economic performance of the region and has prepared this economic development plan to focus the region's economic development initiatives.



Economic Development

Approaches to economic development fall into two broad categories: business development or business recruitment. The first approach involves working with existing businesses to encourage diversification, innovation and productivity improvements to achieve growth; the second approach involves attracting external businesses to relocate or establish in the region.

Whilst both approaches may deliver jobs growth and development opportunities, evidence suggests that at least 80 percent of economic growth in regional areas is achieved using the first approach, which is working with existing businesses to achieve organic and sustainable development outcomes.

Council recognises the importance of working with and nurturing the existing businesses in the region, as they already have a high stake in the local economy through their ongoing business activities and the employment of local people.

Council acknowledges the contribution that the various industry sectors (including agriculture, mining, retail, services, tourism, wine) make to this region and will continue to work with industry stakeholders and business groups to achieve our vision and mission in the future. As part of the Economic Development Strategy, Council will endeavour to support existing businesses who will be the major contributors to net new job growth in our region.



Working Together

Economic development and growth is an area of activity which goes well beyond Council's direct responsibilities. It must be tackled on a co-operative basis with a wide range of partners including both state and federal governments, neighbouring councils, industry associations, business organisations and most importantly the private sector.

The Economic Development Strategy can only be implemented by Council through strong relationships and alliances between all of the partners involved in economic development. These relationships and alliances will maximise the overall economic returns for the region.

In recognising the value of working together, Council will facilitate a co-ordinated approach between relevant partner organisations engaged or involved in economic development and encourage the sharing of knowledge that will deliver benefits to the region. Council will encourage partnership agreements between community and private sector organisations, government agencies and other local councils to improve regional cooperation and effectiveness in implementing economic development initiatives.

Council will also:

1. Provide leadership on economic development initiatives and identify necessary resources to drive the future growth in the region
2. Provide opportunities for local community engagement to help determine economic development priorities
3. Lobby state and federal representatives to help realise economic development opportunities
4. Consider establishing an economic development advisory group made up of key leaders, business owners and government stakeholders that provide regular feedback to Council on economic development issues and initiatives



Key Principles

The following key principles will influence economic development in the region in the future:

1. **Employment** – the number of jobs and the level of participation in employment
2. **Education** – the quality and availability of education and supporting infrastructure and services
3. **Workforce Skills** – access to a skilled and flexible workforce with the competencies and capabilities to satisfy industry and business needs
4. **Business Development** – the attraction and retention of a diverse range of businesses who actively participate in business development initiatives and embrace creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship
5. **Investment** – a business and economic environment which attracts investment and targets new investment opportunities
6. **Infrastructure** – infrastructure that accommodates economic growth and meets the commercial, industrial and retail needs of the region
7. **Tourism** – diverse tourism offerings to attract visitors
8. **Marketing** – promoting the region as a great place to live, work and conduct business

Council is not the lead agency or principal organisation responsible for delivering the majority of the outcomes associated with these key principles. However, Council will support lead agencies and use its influence in prioritising and delivering projects which maximise local opportunities and economic benefits around these key principles.

This plan provides a framework that guides policy and strategy evaluation for economic development initiatives in the region in the next 10 years.



1. Employment

Jobs for everyone

Desired Outcomes

- ➔ Higher levels of employment participation
- ➔ A range of rewarding and fulfilling careers to retain and attract population
- ➔ More employment opportunities for local youth

Strategies

- Prioritise and support projects that can demonstrate the creation of new jobs in the region and will help to build a diverse multi-skilled workforce
- Pursue programs that increase local employment opportunities for young people (such as apprenticeships and traineeships)
- Promoting education, training and employment pathways in the region that focus on careers in growth industries
- Develop alliances between relevant employment agencies and employer groups to boost local employment prospects

Lead Agencies

Local Employment Agencies



1. Employment - Council Role

Jobs for everyone

Council will support lead agencies to achieve employment outcomes and objectives which provide employment in the region.

Examples of the activities that Council will undertake in the next 12-18 months include:

- Identify lead agencies for employment in the region and understand their roles and responsibilities in economic development
- Participate in regular meetings with local employment agencies to identify employment trends and discuss issues impacting employment in the region

In the long term period covered by this plan, Council will consider the following activities:

- Work with employment agencies, high schools and business organisations to hold an annual jobs/careers expo to provide information regarding careers in local businesses and industries
- Work with business groups to facilitate information session for businesses regarding the employment of trainees and apprentices and the structure of support programs available as a way of encouraging more businesses to employ trainees/apprentices
- Map career pathways focused on key local industries as a way of illustrating the link between education and long term career opportunities in the region
- Investigate programs which could be implemented through the local business community and provide meaningful work experience and employment opportunities
- Design industry trails which allow students and/or jobseekers to visit a number of businesses/sites in the same industry to enhance the overall understanding of the employment opportunities that exist in the local region



2. Education

Lifelong learning opportunities

Desired Outcomes

- ➔ Meaningful lifelong learning opportunities which educate, train and re-train people throughout their working lives
- ➔ More people participating in education and training and achieving higher levels of educational attainment

Strategies

- Encourage educational institutions to improve the alignment of courses and skills to business and industry needs
- Increase community awareness of the benefits of education, research and knowledge
- Encourage businesses to become involved in school based programs and other activities which strengthen school/industry links
- Develop strong links between governments, educational agencies and employers to achieve principles of lifelong learning

Lead Agencies

Local Education Institutions



2. Education – Council Role

Lifelong learning opportunities

Council will support lead agencies to achieve education outcomes and objectives which create education opportunities in the region.

Examples of the activities that Council will undertake in the next 12-18 months include:

- Identify lead agencies for education in the region and understand their roles and responsibilities in economic development
- Initiate discussions with universities to develop a university outreach campus or centre offering subjects aligned with local industries

In the long term period covered by this plan, Council will consider the following activities:

- Consult education, training and research institutions on their needs in relation to supporting infrastructure and services required to expand learning opportunities
- Investigate the potential to increase adult education and re-training opportunities within the region which will lead to higher levels of participation in employment in conjunction with adult education providers (such as TAFE, community college and U3A)
- Develop support programs and/or financial initiatives (such as scholarships) to encourage and enable greater access to higher educational opportunities for local youth
- Pursue funding for the establishment of a university outreach campus or centre in the region

3. Workforce Skills

A highly skilled flexible workforce

Desired Outcomes

- ➔ Employers that value training and proactively improve the skill base of the local workforce
- ➔ A workforce of sufficient size and capabilities to meet business and industry requirements and support economic growth in the region

Strategies

- Encourage businesses to participate more actively in the skilling process by providing both on the job and formal training
- Formulate strategies to attract mature aged, part-time workers and/or volunteers into the workforce as a way of developing depth of skills and capabilities in the region
- Support initiatives that focus on the attraction and retention of a talented labour force and improving the skill base of the region
- Monitor gaps and trends in the regional economy to identify potential areas of skill shortages and strategic opportunities to attract or develop new skills in the future
- Encourage workers to move to the region for employment opportunities in areas where skill shortages exist

Lead Agencies

Local Business and Industry Groups



3. Workforce Skills – Council Role

A highly skilled flexible workforce

Council will support lead agencies to improve access to a skilled and competent workforce in the region.

Examples of the activities that Council will undertake in the next 12-18 months include:

- Identify lead agencies for workforce skill development in the region and understand their roles and responsibilities in economic development
- Work with business and industry groups to identify the main skill shortages faced in the region (ie. a skills audit) and develop strategies to address these shortages

In the long term period covered by this plan, Council will consider the following activities:

- Profile the jobs in each industry as a way of informing potential employees and new businesses of the workforce capabilities and opportunities available in the region
- Maintain a central register of volunteers available to assist in community events and projects (and identify activities that could be or are planned to be conducted in association with National Volunteers Week)
- Work with business and industry groups to identify incentives or programs that could be introduced to attract critical workforce skills to the region (particularly in areas of health)
- Develop a mechanism for capturing and identifying skills in the region, such as new residents to the region registering their skills and areas of work interest and putting them in touch with potential employers

4. Business Development

A dynamic and skilled business community

Desired Outcomes

- ➔ A viable and dynamic mix of competitive businesses operating in a range of growth sectors
- ➔ A diverse and sustainable industry base which values innovation, entrepreneurship and investment in business development activities

Strategies

- Expand existing businesses or attract new businesses that complement key local industries (agriculture, mining, retail, services, tourism, wine) with a focus on growth areas that will account for jobs growth and industry prosperity
- Encourage businesses in key local industries to diversify, adopt new technologies, enhance business skills and conduct research to improve overall productivity and competitiveness
- Support creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship to build a strong economic foundation and develop niche market offerings
- Establish industry/business clusters and networking activities to encourage collaborative and co-operative efforts towards achieving common goals
- Develop local initiatives which build upon programs established by Federal and State governments

Lead Agencies

Local Business and Industry Groups



4. Business Development – Council Role

A dynamic and skilled business community

Council will support lead agencies to improve access to a skilled and competent workforce in the region.

Examples of the activities that Council will undertake in the next 12-18 months include:

- Identify lead agencies for business development in the region and understand their roles and responsibilities in economic development
- Work with business and industry groups to facilitate business development workshops for existing business in the region focused on marketing, online business, exporting and succession planning as identified through the business survey
- Establish a process of capturing and monitoring relevant economic data to identify opportunities, trends and needs of local businesses

In the long term period covered by this plan, Council will consider the following activities:

- Develop a business entrepreneurship program to provide specific business development support for targeted local businesses and/or entrepreneurs
- Establish a quarterly newsletter which provides a source of information for local businesses including available funding programs and initiatives to assist business development activities
- Develop a range of mechanisms that support small business (including start-up and home-based businesses) and identify strategies that will make it easier for these businesses to establish and grow in the region
- Identify local businesses operating in external markets and establish ways to help businesses become more active in these markets (eg. industry marketing, trade shows, export information program)
- Examine opportunities to expand and diversify agricultural activities in the region

5. Investment

Investment in future growth and prosperity

Desired Outcomes

- ➔ A destination of choice for business and investment
- ➔ Recognised as a suitable and attractive investment environment to set up and do business

Strategies

- Strengthen the communication networks required to attract and secure additional business investment into the region
- Encourage a suitable and attractive investment environment through infrastructure availability, competitive industries and a skilled workforce
- Facilitate investment by providing information to potential investors seeking to expand, relocate or establish business operations in the region which assists in the decision making processes and provides increased certainty for investors
- Provide clarity for businesses in dealing with Council and all levels of government to create a positive regulatory and business climate for investment
- Monitor investment activity, business trends and industry infrastructure requirements to assist in investment targeting, attraction and support initiatives

Lead Agencies

Mid-Western Regional Council



5. Investment – Council Role

Investment in future growth and prosperity

Council will be the lead agency to facilitate and attract investment in the region.

Examples of the activities that Council will undertake in the next 12-18 months include:

- Prepare an investor information booklet which provides information regarding major projects, economic and industry trends and provides a guide to conducting business in the Mid-Western region
- Develop a step-by-step guide to assist potential investors work through the regulatory framework and include with investor information booklet
- Facilitate the production of a report/study on the investment opportunities in the local property market to attract more investors to the region to invest in property and increase the supply of rental accommodation

In the long term period covered by this plan, Council will consider the following activities:

- Conducting priority industry research to identify investment opportunities and supporting infrastructure requirements for key industries
- Undertaking a comparative analysis of other regional economies to identify competitive strengths and how the region can be positioned as the preferred destination for regional investment
- Identifying target markets for investment opportunities in the region and the best way to market the lifestyle, employment, business and investment opportunities available in the region to this audience
- Undertaking research and industry analysis to identify potential growth sectors/areas in the local economy and supporting businesses required to pursue these opportunities

6. Infrastructure

Adequate infrastructure to support economic activity

Desired Outcomes

- ➔ Infrastructure that accommodates economic growth and meets the commercial, industrial and retail needs of the region
- ➔ An attractive business environment which provides adequate local infrastructure to ensure competitiveness of the region's economic activity

Strategies

- Monitor the infrastructure needs of local industries and business sectors and encourage the private sector and other levels of government to prioritise and align infrastructure implementation programs to key economic and employment projects for the region
- Foster opportunities for joint infrastructure projects in cooperation with business and industry groups, government agencies and other councils
- Ensure adequate supply of available land for industrial and commercial purposes that supports a diverse local economy and promotes economic growth
- Encourage sustainable development and environmentally friendly business practices which protect and maintain the local natural environment and existing infrastructure and facilities
- Monitor the availability of infrastructure and facilities which may influence the ability to attract and retain businesses and population across the region

Lead Agencies

Mid-Western Regional Council



6. Infrastructure – Council Role

Adequate infrastructure to support economic activity

Council will be the lead agency to facilitate the development and availability of adequate infrastructure to support economic activity in the region.

Examples of the activities that Council will undertake in the next 12-18 months include:

- Continue to provide access to water, sewer, waste and roads infrastructure necessary for ongoing economic activity
- Promote the development of airport infrastructure at Mudgee airport as an opportunity for business expansion in the aviation related industry
- Monitor trends in the supply and demand for land, commercial premises and floor space
- Lobby State and Federal governments and agencies on infrastructure needs of local businesses and for future investment in infrastructure (such as transport links, roads, better broadband access and phone coverage)

In the long term period covered by this plan, Council will consider the following activities:

- Research critical infrastructure needs for key growth industries in the region and prioritise immediate infrastructure deficiencies
- Develop criteria for determining the priority projects for infrastructure spending in the region giving consideration to those which will boost economic activity (such as jobs growth, developing external markets and productivity improvements)
- Pursue improvements and application of communication technology in the region and encourage all new developments to have adequate communications infrastructure available

7. Tourism Development

Attracting more visitors to the region

Desired Outcomes

- ➔ Diverse tourism offerings that bring increased numbers of visitors to the region and provide positive benefits for the local community
- ➔ Tourism development which provides quality visitor experiences

Strategies

- Encourage diversification and tourism development based on the natural and built assets of the region, through alliances between local tourism operators, the indigenous community, industry associations and government organisations
- Preserve the region's natural environment as tourist attractions in collaboration with tourism industry stakeholders
- Maintain quality infrastructure and amenities which support tourism offerings (such as accommodation, signage and tourist trails)
- Attract business tourism and major events to the region focused on high quality and high yield events
- Encourage cooperative marketing initiatives which pool local knowledge and limited resources
- Provide quality information to enhance visitor experiences and meet visitor expectations

Lead Agencies

Mudgee Regional Tourism Inc



7. Tourism Development – Council Role

Attracting more visitors to the region

Mudgee Region Tourism Inc will be the lead agency for tourism development in the region.

Examples of the activities that Council will undertake in the next 12-18 months include:

- In co-operation with industry stakeholders and local business groups, assess the interest of local businesses in establishing an industry cluster focused on the development of conference packages for the conference market
- Work with MRTI and industry operators to identify target markets and promote region as a high quality conference destination
- Work with MRTI to identify gaps in existing event calendar and assess opportunities to attract new events that will provide economic benefits to the region
- Explore all opportunities to develop the region's existing events and to attract new event proponents to hold major events and festivals in the region

In the long term period covered by this plan, Council will consider the following activities:

- Prepare a guide to all of the conference facilities and support services required to hold a conference in the region and promote to “target” audiences
- Conduct a marketing campaign to promote the facilities in the region capable of hosting regional, state and national events
- Facilitating opportunities for the local indigenous community to expand tourism offerings in the region
- Developing a suitable program to increase accommodation availability during peak periods
- Evaluating opportunities for tourism diversification which will develop new markets for the region
- In co-operation with MRTI identify tourism data sources and establish meaningful methods of collecting and reporting tourism data on an ongoing basis

8. Marketing

Promote the region as a great place for business

Desired Outcomes

- ➔ A destination of choice and a place for business

Strategies

- Promote a positive image of the region as a place to work, live and invest and increase awareness of the opportunities the region has to offer – its achievements, opportunities, experiences and lifestyle
- Provide brand leadership and positive and consistent messages in all marketing and communications activities that promote the whole region
- Build the region's reputation as a destination for business, leisure, conventions, events and talented residents
- Attracting new investment to region through promoting the region's competitive advantages, raising brand awareness and targeted marketing of investment opportunities

Lead Agencies

Mid-western Regional Council



8. Marketing – Council Role

Promote the region as a great place for business

Council will be the lead agency in promoting the region as a great place to live, work, invest and do business.

Examples of the activities that Council will undertake in the next 12-18 months include:

- Identify and evaluate the current marketing activities that are focused externally and promote the region “wholistically” to identify the consistency and reach of current communications and promotional activities

In the long term period covered by this plan, Council will consider the following activities:

- Develop a program to brand all regional produce (ie. a process that identifies a product as being produced locally). For example stickers attached to produce could be used to identify the product as being locally made etc.
- Create a common marketing and branding strategy for the region
- Develop a promotional campaign to attract investment and new population members utilising the media and/or information sessions in major cities



Implementation

- The economic development strategy provides a 10 year plan (covering July 2010 through to June 2020) which will be implemented by Council
- The success of implementing the economic development strategy depends upon the level of community capacity and community willingness and ability to improve social, economic and environmental conditions
- Active relationships and alliances with the various stakeholders involved in economic development will further reinforce the successful delivery of this strategy
- An annual implementation plan will report on Council's progress in working towards its priority projects in the prior 12 month period and provide an update of new projects that will be undertaken during the following 12 month period of the plan
- As the future of the region will be influenced by unpredictable events and occurrences in the physical and economic environment, review of the economic development strategy at 5 yearly intervals will provide an opportunity to comprehensively review the plan and engage the community in this process

Contact and Feedback

- If you have any feedback or would like to know more information about economic development activities at Mid-Western Regional Council, please contact Council's Economic Development Officer.
- Telephone: 02 6378 2850
- Email: council@midwestern.nsw.gov.au