REGIONAL PLANS GUIDELINES
Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act, 2016
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INTRODUCTION

These Guidelines have been developed to assist Joint Planning Boards to prepare a Regional Plan with a particular focus on land use planning around themes of environment, population, economy and infrastructure (each with numerous sub-themes). The Guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Regional Plans template, available at the SA Planning Portal.

A Regional Plan is a ‘designated instrument’ under section 73 of the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016 (PDI Act) and a proposal to prepare one may be initiated by the State Planning Commission or a Joint Planning Board. Commission approval is required for some aspects of the process of preparing a Regional Plan – these are specified in a separate Practice Direction available on the SA Planning Portal. The Regional Plan must be approved by the Minister prior to it having a statutory role in the planning system.

Section 64 of the PDI Act sets out specific legal requirements for Regional Plans.

The Act requires a Regional Plan to be prepared for each region. These are prepared by a Joint Planning Board in partnership with the councils included on the Board. Where there is no Board, the Commission will prepare the Regional Plan in consultation with councils.

A Regional Plan must be consistent with relevant State Planning Policies and include:

- a long-term vision (over a 15 to 30 year period) for the region or area, including provisions about the integration of land use, transport infrastructure and the public realm
- maps and plans that relate to the long-term vision
- contextual information about the region or area, including forward projections and statistical data and analysis as determined by the Commission or required by a Practice Direction
- recommendations about the application and operation of the Planning and Design Code
- a framework for the public realm or infrastructure within the region or area.

Regional Plans may be divided into parts relating to sub-regions and may include structure plans, master plans, concept plans or other similar documents.

Regional Plans will be used to help guide consideration of any proposed changes for the Planning and Design Code, a single rulebook for the whole state.

DEFINITION

A Regional Plan is a long-term vision for a region to guide land use and associated planning, and potentially other planning, over a 15 to 30 year period, expressing what the region wishes to achieve in the context of State Planning Policies.

Importantly, this definition states that the plan should reflect what the people of the region wish to achieve which must be in the context of State Planning Policies identified by the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act, 2016.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In preparing these guidelines and the Regional Plans template, a number of guiding principles were considered appropriate:

1. Regional Plans should be fit for purpose for the region for which they are developed

There are numerous other plans prepared on a regional basis (such as Public Health or Natural Resource Management plans) and Regional Plans under the PDI Act do not need to repeat their content. Other plans can be referenced in the Regional Plan (see part 2 of the Regional Plans template) but, other than in exceptional circumstances, not repeated.

The primary (and mandated) focus of a Regional Plan is on land use planning (proposing potential changes to the Planning and Design Code for councils in the region, and guiding land use policy) and infrastructure and transport requirements (proposing investment in infrastructure and changes to services). These two components form the inner and middle rings of the ‘spider web’ diagram in part 2 of the Regional Plan template, which is used to determine the scope the Regional Plan.
A secondary potential (discretionary) focus is on other areas to meet regional circumstances and these form the outer ring of the ‘spiderweb’ diagram. Examples include where there might be a gap in other regional plans or reinforcing key regional priorities.

2. Existing Plans are the foundation of future Regional Plans

There should be a degree of continuity in regional planning, while also taking a fresh look and responding to changing circumstances. Regional volumes of the State Planning Strategy have previously been prepared for the regional areas across the State - starting with the directions proposed in these existing plans where there has already been a significant investment, this makes financial sense and also provides for continuity.

Changes will, of course, be required and that is where the focus should be. If particular aspects of current plans are still relevant and up to date they may be able to be carried through without change. If there has been change, the effort to update the directions proposed should be proportional to the extent of the change.

Judgement will be required in the extent to which material from an existing regional volume of the State Planning Strategy is carried forward to a fit for purpose Regional Plan, given that they will have individual scopes based on the needs of the region.

3. Create the material once, use for multiple purposes

In drafting a Regional Plan consideration should be given as to how the Plan and the work undertaken to prepare it can be used for other purposes as well. Examples include:

- Preparatory work for developing Code Amendments and master plans, concept plans, structure plans, infrastructure agreements, planning new infrastructure or services
- Informing (and possibly being further integrated with) Councils’ Strategic Management Plans
- Funding submissions
- Advocacy for projects and services
- Regional promotion.

4. Consistency between regions in relation to format and use of templates and other tools

There are efficiencies to be gained in the development and processing of Regional Plans from following similar formats while also allowing for regional differences. These Guidelines and the Regional Plans template have been provided as tools to assist Joint Planning Boards in developing their Regional Plans.

Decisions about the scope of a Regional Plan are intended to be made at the regional level (subject to approval of the State Planning Commission). The scope of the Regional Plan will determine which themes and modules in the template will be most relevant to each region.
KEEPING THE COSTS DOWN

Developing a Regional Plan should be kept at an affordable level and the way it is managed will impact on costs. Recommended practices include:

- Follow good project management processes.
- Invest time in planning the project to avoid problems later.
- Be clear about the scope of a Regional Plan and avoid being distracted from it unless circumstances require that. The scoping exercise included in the Regional Plans template is designed to set the scene for the scope of the Regional Plan which will also determine the amount of work (and therefore cost) involved. Undertaking the scoping exercise is a strategic activity, not an operational one.

- Consider how many actions should come from the Regional Plan and identify (as required by the template) who will undertake them and when. Each action has a cost.
- Take advantage of the assistance offered by DPTI for components which may include advice, access to other agencies, research, data, demographics, mapping, images, document layout and also acting as a member of a project steering committee.

How the work in preparing the Regional Plan can be used for other purposes (see examples above) and thus reduce other costs should also be factored into the planning and implementation of the project.
Six stages have been identified for developing and seeking approval for a Regional Plan:

- Prepare
- Research
- Engage
- Draft
- Test
- Finalise.

These stages and actions are also shown in the diagram in this guide on page 11.

STAGE 1: PREPARE

Work with DPTI

Engage with DPTI and confirm the latest arrangements for developing a Regional Plan and discuss the proposed scope, engagement, timing and methodology.

Work with DPTI to determine the support it can provide, both direct (such as providing access to other government agencies, research, data, demographics, mapping, images, document layout), and in-kind (such as offering advice and/or being a member of a project steering committee).

Project governance

Determine project governance arrangements and make appointments. A two-tier structure is suggested:

- Project Governance Group (PGG) – with responsibility for oversight of whole project, approvals (such as scope, project plan, budget, timing, appointment of staff/consultants, engagement plan and summary of engagement outcomes, draft plan, final plan). Membership could be a Joint Planning Board (JPB) as a whole; some of the JPB members; or a combination of JPB members and council Mayors/CEOs.

- Project Working Group – with responsibility for undertaking the project, monitoring progress and keeping the project on track, resolving problems, reporting to the PGG. Membership could include JPB Executive Officer, DPTI representative, council staff.

Regional Plan scope

Determine proposed scope of the Regional Plan for each theme (population, economy, environment, infrastructure) and sub-theme. Scope refers to the extent of planning required for the three Regional Planning purposes:

- Mandatory purpose 1 is in relation to changes required to land use planning (proposing potential changes to the Planning and Design Code for councils in the region, and guiding land use policy)
- Mandatory purpose 2 is in relation to planning for infrastructure, transport and public domain (proposing investment in infrastructure and changes to services)
- Discretionary purpose is in relation to any other matters considered to be of strategic importance.

Depending on individual circumstances, it may be possible to implement Code Amendments from a Regional Plan, provided there has been sufficient research, consultation and planning. It will be important to work with the Commission and DPTI on the extent of work required to implement a Code Amendment when scoping the Regional Plan.

Use the ‘spider web’ diagram to help determine the scope of planning by shading the areas of the three rings (the inner ring being land-use; the middle ring being infrastructure, transport and public domain; and outer ring being other matters of strategic importance to the region). For each ring, shade each sub-theme as:

- Not applicable (for example, a non-coastal region may determine that the ‘coastal areas’ sub-theme is not applicable)
- No or little change required (for example, if the directions proposed by the previous relevant regional volume of the State Planning Strategy are still valid)
- Area of focus (this will flag the areas of planning that require most attention).

The SA Planning Portal has a working example of the spider web diagram.
Project plan
Develop a project plan, which will include decisions about budget and timing.

Engagement Plan
Develop an engagement plan in accordance with Community Engagement Charter, addressing the Charter’s principles:
- Engagement is genuine
- Engagement is inclusive and respectful
- Engagement is fit for purpose
- Engagement is informed and transparent
- Engagement processes are reviewed and improved.

The engagement plan should have two rounds of engagement:
- in the early stages of the project, to seek views on key issues affecting the region; changes in planning policy required; infrastructure, transport, public domain and other needs; and
- after drafting a Regional Plan, to consult on and test its contents.

Work with the Commission
Engage with the Commission to:
- inform it of the project plan, and
- seek approval of the Regional Plan scope and engagement plan (in accordance with any Practice Directions).

Appointments
Appoint project staff/consultants as required.
STAGE 2: RESEARCH

Review existing Regional Volume of the State Planning Strategy

Consider the last similar plan. What is still relevant (against the scope)? What, if anything, needs to be repeated in the new Regional Plan? What needs to be referenced?

What changes are likely to be required? What actions will need to be taken?

State Planning Policies

Review the State Planning Policies. Which ones are relevant? Ensure the Regional Plan is consistent with them. Are any targets required?

Other regional plans

What other plans are relevant? What, if anything, needs to be repeated in the Regional Plan? What needs to be referenced?

Other research

What additional research (against the scope) is required? Who will do it? Consider what is happening external to the region that will impact on it, emerging trends affecting the region, transport and infrastructure, public domain, demographic trends, financial constraints, supply (including availability) and demand for land.

Consider potential sources of relevant research, data and information such as other regional bodies, government agencies, research bodies, private sector providers.

Structure Plans

Are structure or other plans are required? How, and by whom, will they be prepared?

Structure Plans are defined in the Greater Adelaide 30 Year Plan as:

A Structure Plan provides a vision and gives a broad spatial expression of the desired development outcomes for an area of change. This can include areas such as a transit corridor, centre, renewal area or greenfield site. Structure Plans can also be used to identify the regional distribution of targets, policies or actions relevant to an area.

Structure Plans may also identify infrastructure and governance issues that will require resolution to facilitate the desired development outcomes of a broad spatial area.

If it is proposed to achieve a Code Amendments from the Regional Plan, it will be necessary to develop relevant Structure Plans. Other plans, such as Concept Plans, may also be required.

Concept Plans are defined in the Greater Adelaide 30 Year Plan as:

A Concept Plan is an early spatial expression of the desired land use and design aspirations for a defined project area, and are usually limited in scope to the planning of a discrete development or infrastructure project. Master Plans or Structure Plans may provide guidance and context to the preparation of Concept Plans, which allow for a more detailed analysis of land use, built form, infrastructure and design, informed by the broad direction of higher level plans.

Preliminary discussions

Have preliminary discussions with agencies, councils etc.
STAGE 3: ENGAGE
Activate
Activate the first stage of the engagement plan.
Report
Prepare a ‘What We Have Heard’ report to provide transparency around the matters raised through consultation.

STAGE 4: DRAFT
Vision
Develop a long-term vision for the Region – and for each of the four themes.
Focus
Determine, against scope, which matters need to be included in the RP, referred elsewhere, excluded.
Drafting
Keep it tight – brevity rather than wordy. Use appendices where more detailed information is required.
Ensure there is a focus on outcomes when writing policies and actions (see example of policy and action component from the Regional Plan template below) and that the actions can be implemented. The actions should indicate who is to undertake them and over what timeframe (short, medium, or longer terms) and fit pre-determined categories that align with the purposes of the Regional Plan, such as:

- Primary purpose: land use planning – code amendments, structure plans
- Primary purpose: infrastructure, public realm and transport – invest (in infrastructure and public domain), advocate (for infrastructure, transport, public domain)

1. Policy: **

1.1 Action: Code amendment/invest or advocate for infrastructure, public realm and transport/advocate, facilitate or engage on other strategic priorities

1.2 Action: Code amendment/invest or advocate for infrastructure, public realm and transport/advocate, facilitate or engage on other strategic priorities
STAGE 5: TEST
Test draft through consultation as per engagement plan. Include summary of outcomes of first round of engagement.

STAGE 6: FINALISE

Review
Revise after feedback from testing.

Report
Submit a report (prepared in accordance with any practice direction that may be in place) to the Minister for approval in accordance with s73 (7) in the PDI Act. Then arrange for DPTI to publish it on the SA Planning Portal (s73 (8)).

Upon receipt of the report the Minister may consult with the State Planning Commission.

The Minister may then approve the Regional Plan, with or without alteration, or refuse it.

If the Minister approves the Regional Plan, it does not come into effect until it is published on the SA Planning Portal.

Within 28 days of it coming into effect, the Minister must also refer the Regional Plan to the Environment Resources and Development (ERD) Committee of Parliament, where it is subject to further scrutiny. The Committee may resolve to not object to it, or resolve to suggest amendments, or resolve to object to it. If the ERD Committee resolves to suggest amendments or to object to the Regional Plan, further Parliamentary processes are involved until the matter is resolved.
REGIONAL PLAN - PROCESS

Existing Plans as the foundation for Regional Plans

**PREPARE**
- Work with DPTI to confirm arrangements, set up project governance, agree on scope, prepare project plan and engagement plan and appoint project staff/consultants

**RESEARCH**
- Review existing Framework and other plans and identify and undertake additional research requirements. Identify structure plan requirements and hold preliminary discussions with key stakeholders

**ENGAGE**
- Activate first stage of engagement plan and prepare a ‘What We Heard’ report

**DRAFT**
- Draft vision, identify focus of draft plan and draft policies and actions with a focus on outcome

**TEST**
- Test draft through consultation as per engagement plan and include summary of outcomes of first stage of engagement

**FINALISE**
- Review update draft plan after feedback from testing stage and prepare a report on outcomes

**SUBMIT REGIONAL PLAN TO THE MINISTER FOR MINISTERIAL SIGNOFF**