

How to develop a Regional Recreation and Sport Plan



Government of South Australia
Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing

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Purpose of this guide

Designed to supplement the South Australian Regional Level Recreation and Sport Facilities Planning Guidelines this resource has been developed to assist local government officers and others responsible for the planning, development and operation of recreation and sport facilities understand the principles in developing a Regional Recreation and Sport Plan.

Background

Sport and recreation provides a stage to connect communities, contributes to economic growth, tourism, and helps to improve overall health and well-being. Given these benefits, it is important that South Australia continues to provide quality recreation and sport facilities that encourage the community to participate.

Local Government is a major provider of recreation and sport facilities in South Australia. For the most part councils plan for and manage facilities on an individual council-by-council basis.

However, councils are facing a number of significant challenges including:

Facilities are ageing

Facilities are in need of major redevelopment, or in some cases replacement, to remain fit-for-purpose, affordable and sustainable to operate and maintain.

Inefficient provision and duplication

Traditionally councils have focused on providing facilities within their respective council areas which has been a contributing factor to the duplication of facilities and services within regions.

Increasing expectations

there is increasing pressure on councils from sporting bodies and the general community to provide higher-standard facilities

Increasing pressure on open space

There is increasing pressure on open space due to an ever-increasing demand for housing supply close to population and activity centres.

Increasing budget pressures

It is becoming increasingly more competitive and difficult for councils to raise the capital required to deliver new quality infrastructure.

To create infrastructure of the future we need to look beyond municipal boundaries and find better ways to collaboratively plan, deliver and manage a strategic spread of recreation and sport facilities. One method of achieving this is through regional recreation and sport planning.

What is a Regional Plan?

A Regional Recreation and Sport Plan identifies and prioritises facility needs across a defined region, rather than within individual council boundaries. It provides a coordinated framework for facility development, renewal, partnerships and investment over the short, medium and long term.

When developing a plan consideration should be given to alignment with the following State Government Plans:

Greater Adelaide Regional Plan (GARP)

The Greater Adelaide Regional Plan is the State Government's long term blueprint for how Greater Adelaide will grow, develop and adapt over the next 30 years. It sets out where future housing, jobs, infrastructure including recreation and sport facilities and open spaces will be located, ensuring communities remain connected, liveable and well-serviced as the population increases.

Overall, the Greater Adelaide Regional Plan aims to:

- Guide population and employment growth across Adelaide's metropolitan and peri urban councils.
- Ensure land supply keeps pace with demand.
- Coordinate long term infrastructure planning.
- Improve liveability through access to open space, recreation, and essential services.
- Protect key landscapes and productive regions.
- Support climate resilience and sustainable growth.
- Engage collectively with State and Federal Government agencies and peak bodies.

SA Government Country Regional Plans

The SA Country Regional Plans form part of the State's Regional Planning Program, which provides a framework for development across South Australia outside the Greater Adelaide region. Each plan outlines a 30+ year vision for growth, infrastructure needs, land use, economic development and regional priorities across the State's planning regions, including Eyre and Western, Far North, Limestone Coast, Kangaroo Island, Murray Mallee, Yorke Peninsula and Mid North.

The Country Regional Plans aim to:

- Set a shared planning vision for each regional area.
- Coordinate long-term infrastructure investment.
- Support regional economies and workforce attraction.
- Identify land-use opportunities to support housing, industry and recreation.
- Protect environmental, cultural and landscape values.
- Strengthen connected, resilient regional communities.

Why these Plans Matter to Recreation and Sport Planning

Together, GARP and the SA Country Regional Plans form South Australia's strategic land-use and infrastructure framework. Aligning recreation and sport planning with these plans ensures:

- Facility investment supports areas of projected population and housing growth.
- Regional-level recreation and sport needs are integrated with broader state planning outcomes.
- Councils and partners are coordinating across boundaries for shared priorities.
- Funding proposals and infrastructure planning align with state policy directions.

Other benefits include:

- Provides councils with a standardised and shared set of facility data that enables a robust basis for future decision making at the local and regional level.
- Provides councils with an opportunity to benchmark the quality and performance of their recreation and sport facilities against other similar facilities across the region.
- Provides councils with a process that identifies gaps in service provision and highlights opportunities for across council collaboration especially on major regional level projects.
- Provides councils with a medium to long term strategy that identifies and prioritises individual councils and the regions recreation and sporting facility development needs now and into the future.
- Provides councils with a strong basis for advocating to state and federal government for funding.

Characteristics of an effective Regional Plan

Effective plans generally have the following characteristics:

- Commitment from all partner councils (particularly at the elected member and senior leadership levels) to develop and implement the Plan.
- A clearly understood and agreed project scope which meets the needs of all partners.
- An agreed standardised set of data to be collected.
- An extensive and clearly articulated internal and external (community) engagement / communication plan.
- Uses a co-design approach to the planning process through early and active involvement with those impacted (users, local community etc).
- Recognises the community as the key partner “to bring life to facilities and ultimately ensure their success”.
- A clear understanding of the regions mix of recreation and sport facilities and associated assets. This includes consideration of state and privately owned facilities such as schools.
- An analysis of the demographic characteristics (profile) of current facility users, the local community and the identification of actual and potential population growth areas.
- A strategic assessment of current and future need including consideration of trends as drivers of changing needs.
- A gap analysis comparing the current provision of facilities with current and future need.
- Strategies for addressing gaps and priorities for short, medium and long term facility provision at the local and regional level.
- Identification of infrastructure priority projects for each council in the region.
- Identification of priority major regional level facility projects to be delivered in the region.
- Integration of priorities into other key Local Government strategic planning and financial documents.
- Allocation of a percentage of the project budget (e.g. 20%) to the implementation of a project/s that addresses an identified key regional issue.
- Identification of possible funding models and sources for the delivery and on-going management, maintenance of projects.
- An implementation plan with clearly identified responsibilities and timeframes.
- A partner endorsed process to progress, monitor and review the plan.

How to develop a Regional Plan

Although the stages and process you follow to develop a regional plan will depend upon the needs and wants of the project's partners; to be effective they generally include the following steps:

STEP 1: Commit to Action

It is essential from the onset that there is a commitment from all partner councils, particularly at the elected member and senior leadership levels for the plan. One way this can be promoted is through the establishment of a Regional Planning Group (for more information refer [How to Establish a Regional Planning Group Guide](#)).

Key outcomes to be achieved includes:

- Establish a Regional Planning Group.



STEP 2: Define the Scope & Context

It is important that there is a clearly understood and agreed project scope which meets the needs of all project partners. This will help focus the project to ensure that it delivers what the partners want and set the parameters for the project brief.

Key questions that need to be addressed at this step include:

What does the plan aim to deliver? -what do the project partners want delivered as end products from the project?

What do you want the plan to cover? -and what is out of scope?

Who should be consulted? -at what stage of the project and how will they be engaged?

How will the community and other stakeholders be kept up to date on the progress of the project?
-development of a project communication plan.

What is the timescale of the plan? How far into the future do you want the plan to focus on (3, 5, 10, 30 years?).

How much is to be allocated to the project? -consider allocating percentage of the project budget (e.g. 20%) to the implementation of a project/s that addresses an identified key regional issue/s.

Key outcomes to be achieved includes:

- Detailed project brief.
- Community Engagement Plan.
- Project Communication Plan.

Tips:

- ✓ Consider holding a councillor/executive officers 'vision' workshop to identify critical issues and deliverables that should be included in the scope.
- ✓ The timescale of the Plan should align with the timescale of other relevant council plans, strategies and budget processes.

STEP 3: Determine the Current State of Play - Facility Audit

It is important that there is a good understanding of the region's current facility assets through an audit process.

Although the level and type of information to be collected from the audit will depend on the scope of the project, the information to be collected should be standardised across each council and at the very least the audit should identify:

Where are the facilities physically located? –To determine current facility provision and distribution. This includes determining:

- if the facility has good links to major road networks and connections to public transport, cycling and pedestrian routes, natural corridors and other community facilities or services.
- How the facility fits into the network and hierarchy of recreation and sport facilities provided in the council area and the broader region.

The data should be recorded both visually (on a map) and in written format.

What clubs/community groups use the facilities? –Who leases/licences the site, what activities do they provide the community, how often do they provide it.

What infrastructure is provided at the facility? –What currently exists at the facility (number of fields, does it have lights (lux level), what related facilities does it provide (e.g. clubhouse, number of male/female/disability change rooms/toilets, official/umpires change/ toilet facilities)?

What is the current state of the facilities and related infrastructure? –To determine facilities maintenance and future development needs. For example, when was the facility built? When was it last upgraded? Does the facility meet the required standards for the level of play? What is the current facility maintenance practices and needs?

Who uses the facility (participant profile)? –to determine who uses the facility. Consider collecting participant data by age, gender, activity they participate in, residential postcode. Where possible consider getting data for the last 3-5 years to determine if there are any trends e.g. use is increasing or decreasing.

Key outcomes to be achieved includes:

- Spatial Analysis of facilities in the region according to an agreed hierarchy (e.g. State, Regional, District, Local level facility).
- A standardised Facility Audit Report of existing recreation and sport facilities in the region (including school assets). Audit report to include detail on what is provided at the facility and assessment of the facilities functionality (is it fit-for-purpose?), and current and future upgrade/re-development needs.
- User Profile Analysis Report of the characteristics of participants who use each facility.

Tips:

- ✓ It is important to engage and consult with the user groups (clubs and users) throughout the audit process. Consider running a workshop or user surveys to determine things such as satisfaction with the facilities, requirements for additional facilities; Experiences –safety; security, accessibility etc.
- ✓ As part of the audit process consider conducting an energy review of the facility and set sustainability objectives and energy use targets for the next 3–5-year period. Ensure you have mechanism in place to measure and report against the performance of the facility.
- ✓ Consider the sites asset management and site maintenance requirements.
- ✓ When presenting maps and data for the region provide a conclusion for each map/data presented about what this means for the region moving forward.



STEP 4: Community profile, gap analysis and strategic alignment

Understanding the current and future demographics of a facility's local community as well as the region will assist you to identify how well a facility caters for the current and future needs of the local community, as well helping to identify any gaps in facility and service provision.

Things to consider include:

- Undertake an analysis of the demographic characteristics of the local community and identification of actual and potential population growth areas.
- Determining the long-term growth potential of the recreation and sport activities using facilities.
- Identification of gaps, duplication and/or oversupply of facilities.
- Identification of possible new sites for the development of new recreation and sport facilities.
- Undertake consultation with the local community and other key stakeholders including state recreation and sport organisations and relevant state government agencies to determine current and future trends, needs, demands, issues and especially opportunities.
- When presenting maps and data, always provide a conclusion for each map/data presented about what this means for the region moving forward.

Key outcomes to be achieved includes:

- Spatial mapping.
- Analysis of the current and potential future demographic characteristics (community profile) of the local community (by council and by region).
- Provide a comparative assessment of the regions supply and demand for facilities to identify gaps, duplication and/or oversupply of facilities.
- A review of state recreation and sport organisations facility strategies to identify facility development needs and explore opportunities for collaboration.
- A review of open space areas and existing facilities to determine potential locations for the development of new major regional level facilities.

STEP 5: Strategies, opportunities and priorities

Once all the data has been collected and analysed it needs to be synthesised into a final plan which identifies, justifies and prioritises projects to be delivered in the region over the designated period (e.g. 5-10years).

It is important that the analysis and final plan align with the Greater Adelaide Regional Plan or the relevant South Australian Country Regional Plans developed by the State Government.

Things to consider include:

- Identification of infrastructure priority projects for each council in the region.
- Identification of priority regional level facility collaboration projects to be delivered in the region.
- Integration of priorities projects into other key Local Government strategic planning and financial documents.
- Align recommendations with state recreation and sport, state government and council directions and objectives.
- Identification of funding models and sources for the delivery and on-going management, maintenance of projects.
- An implementation plan with clearly identified responsibilities and timeframe.
- A partner endorsed mechanism to progress, monitor and review the plan.

Key outcomes to be achieved includes:

- Assessment methodology and criteria for prioritising projects.
- Regional Recreation and Sport Facilities Plan endorsed by all participating councils.

References

Community Planning Toolkit, Queensland Local Government Community Services Association, Queensland.

Facility Planning Guide, Sport and Recreation Facilities, Department of Sport and Recreation, Government of Western Australia.

Process for developing and implementing and Public Open Space Strategy, Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, Western Australia.

Waikato Regional Sports Facility Plan, Reference Document, Waikato Region of Councils, Sport New Zealand, Sport Waikato, New Zealand.

PlanSA ([PlanSA](#))



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