



**Regional
Development**
Australia

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA – WHAT IS IT? ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This document outlines the roles of Regional Development Australia (RDA). RDA is a national initiative based on building partnerships and ensuring that all governments and stakeholders are responsive to local priorities and needs. It is a conduit between government and local communities, and a provider of information. RDA committees will be strong advocates for their region and drivers of change. RDA will have a pivotal role in ensuring the long term sustainability of regional Australia.

These key responsibilities underpin the roles of RDA committees.

What is RDA?

RDA committees are non profit community-based organisations. Committee members are committed volunteers drawn from the region and represent the community, business and local government. Each RDA committee has a broad and diverse skills base and demonstrated networks and alliances. Each RDA committee includes members from local government.

RDA reduces duplication and overlap in regional activities. Committees are encouraged to work together on projects and other activities where they have common interests and common boundaries.

What will RDA do?

RDA brings together the three levels of government to enhance the growth and development of regional Australia. RDA is based on building partnerships between governments, regional development organisations, the private sector and other key regional stakeholders to provide a strategic and targeted response to issues in each region and to facilitate community leadership and resilience. RDA will work with all stakeholders to develop and strengthen local communities.

Drawing on their engagement with the community, RDA committees will be important contributors to business growth plans and investment strategies, environmental solutions, social inclusion strategies and the integration of broadband into the community. RDA committees will also develop a Regional Plan and take a leadership role in its implementation.

The priorities of RDA will differ between committees, regions and states or territories. Each RDA committee fills its own niche within its local community, and responds to the individual needs of its region. While some RDA committees may, for example, emphasise business development and seek to stimulate the local economy, others may focus on social inclusion and work closely with non profit and charity groups.

RDA committees will report to governments on their activities according to the reporting framework set out in the *Outcomes, Key Performance Indicators and Reporting Framework* document. Committees can also provide advice to governments on issues, solutions and priorities, as they arise or as needed.

Roles and Responsibilities of RDA – the detail

RDA committees will have 5 key roles which, collectively, ensure that they achieve the outcomes required by governments.

1. Consultation and Engagement with the Community

A core role for RDA is to be a conduit between government and regional communities, facilitated through effective consultation and community engagement. RDA committees will have extensive networks within their regions, including strong linkages with government and regional organisations. They are expected to draw and build upon their regional networks, local knowledge and expertise.

RDA committees should work with local communities to identify issues and opportunities, develop solutions and articulate priorities. They are expected to initiate and participate in regional consultations and strategic planning on a range of issues, such as infrastructure, telecommunications, housing, health and ageing, education, skills development and high speed broadband.

Effective engagement also requires providing communities with feedback about the outcomes of consultations to which they have contributed. As a conduit of information, RDA committees will provide input to government on key issues, priorities and gaps in support. Committees will also identify and advise on opportunities to reduce duplication and streamline the delivery of programs, particularly those offered by the three levels of government to address a single issue or community group. They are a mechanism for governments to tap into diverse perspectives and potential solutions, which will improve the quality of decisions.

RDA committees should engage within the region including, for example, with local government, business, non profit organisations, Local Employment Co-ordinators, agriculture, health and education institutions, women, young people and students, Indigenous Australians, and people from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

When engaging regional communities, RDAs should organise events that are easy for the target audience to attend and recognise the different preferences for engagement and communication across the community.

2. Informed Regional planning

Regional plans describe the region, its strengths and weaknesses, and a long-term vision for development. They will be informed by an understanding of government policies and initiatives, and the ways in which communities can engage with them. They are a contributor to the identification of regional goals and initiatives.

RDA committees are expected to be actively involved in regional planning. Many government and non-government organisations in regional Australia have their own regional plan, which can be an area of duplication. RDA can facilitate a closer alignment between all levels of government, as well as between government and stakeholders, minimising this duplication and developing a consistent and comprehensive regional plan.

RDA committees are expected to work closely with stakeholders to facilitate a coordinated approach to regional planning and development activities in their region. RDA committees are also expected to foster a coordinated and inclusive approach to regional development.

3. Whole-of-Government Activities

Whole-of-government refers to the Australian Government, state and territory governments and local government. The whole-of-government policy approach is based on collaboration, regional needs, flexibility, accountability and leadership. RDA committees have a critical role in supporting this.

RDA committees can be a first point of contact for information about Australian Government programs, services and initiatives and the source of consistent, reliable information from governments. They will refer individuals or businesses to an appropriate source of information or advice, such as an agency or website.

As a first point of contact for Australian Government agencies wanting to consult in a region, RDA committees will draw on their local knowledge to provide advice about stakeholders, issues and opportunities, recent consultations held and the outcomes, and other relevant government issues, initiatives and activities.

RDA committees are encouraged to deliver initiatives under third party contracts for other agencies, however such contracts:

- must not compromise the RDA committee's ability to meet its obligations in the Operational Funding Contracts;
- must be fully costed to the third party, including all administrative and staff costs; and
- do not, in the event of its non-renewal or early termination, require the support or use of RDA funding from Australian, state or territory and local government partners.

4. Promotion of Government Programs

RDA committees are expected to promote Australian, state or territory and local government programs and initiatives to regional stakeholders using a range of activities, such as information forums, emails and newsletters. This role will also involve RDAs providing input to governments on the regional impact of their policy agenda. RDA committees should provide information and advice to their communities about ways in which they can engage with government programs, policies and initiatives.

RDA committees may work closely with stakeholders to develop applications for programs. This may include:

- bringing stakeholders with the same interests together; and
- conducting grant-writing workshops.

5. Community and Economic Development

RDA committees will participate in community development activities to increase the capacity of the region to meet the needs of its members. Community development also improves the capacity of the region to identify priorities, develop resilience and access the resources needed for sustainable social and economic development and environmental management.

RDA committees are expected to promote economic and employment growth and contribute to business development and investment attraction. They should also assist the region to broaden its industry base and develop new products or markets, including export markets. Job creation and economic sustainability will be outcomes of this work. A prosperous region is more able to support its community through the provision of jobs and services.

Social issues should also be a focus of RDA committees. Social inclusion activities focus on programs for disadvantaged groups and facilitate social interaction, provide financial support, improve housing conditions, improve access to services, improve access to education and help unemployed people find jobs. Many RDA committees should have a particular focus on "closing the gap" for Indigenous Australians.

Another focus in relation to economic development should be sustainability. This may include identifying environmental and climate change issues, identifying linkages between existing Australian and state and territory government programs and initiatives, and developing strategies to bring together competing interests in the context of scarce resources.