



*South Gippsland
Shire Council*

Economic Development Strategy

Annual
Implementation
Update July 2024

Economic Development Strategy

Actions 2023/24

1. Attracting and retaining investment

Objective: Growing our economy, employment and attracting investment. Ensuring South Gippsland is investment ready and recognised as a positive location to do business

STRATEGY	#	ACTION	UPDATES	
1.1 Attract and grow investment to the Shire through the implementation of a targeted Investment Attraction Program.	1.1.1	Deliver a targeted investment attraction program to support, encourage and facilitate and investment attraction to the region.	Completed for 2023/24 - Ongoing – Participation in Invest Gippsland program. Focus on Offshore wind energy investment with direct engagement with a wide range of proponents.	
	1.1.2	Develop an innovative and accessible Investment Prospectus for potential investors.	Commenced – Ongoing project. New investment materials substantially developed. Project delayed to 2024/25 due to emergency response activities.	
	1.1.3	Investigate attending and conducting trade missions annually to encourage future investment in the Shire	Completed for 2023/24 Ongoing – Attended key trade events, particularly regarding new energy developments. Hosted a wide range of offshore wind proponents and Government delegations. Attended key industry trade meetings.	
1.2 Understand the opportunities and implications from development of the new energy sector.	1.2.1	Engage with the energy sector, businesses and community to achieve positive outcomes from new energy developments.	Completed for 2023/24 – Ongoing Project – Wide engagement with energy sector including briefings to Council and direct discussions with proponents. Feasibility licenses issued for up to 12 offshore wind projects. Participated in the 2023 Gippsland New Energy Conference. Conducted Stakeholder roundtable on new energy impacts Nov 2023. Commenced community briefings.	
	1.2.2	Support the development of the Gippsland Renewable Energy Zone.	Completed 2023/24 – Discussions with Vic Grid and promotion of their community information sessions. Zone not planned to be located in South Gippsland. Lodged joint submission with Wellington Shire on REZ	

1.3 Improve opportunities for investors to develop land in the Shire: Be investment ready.	1.3.1	Develop a solutions focused Industrial Land Supply Strategy (LLSS) to support new development.	Commenced – Completed comprehensive analysis of Industrial Land Supply. Strategy progressed and consultation being undertaken for future Strategy adoption.	
	1.3.2	Work with operators to enhance retention and expansion of existing businesses.	Completed 2023/24 Ongoing – Worked with businesses, RDV, AusIndustry and LVA to assist with grant applications. Referrals to Business Concierge service.	
	1.3.3	Undertake an Advocacy Plan to all levels of government to support investment enablers in the region.	Completed 2023/24 Ongoing project – Advocacy Plan adopted by Council. Implemented Advocacy program including visit to Canberra and Spring Street. Participated in advocacy projects of other regional agencies such as One Gippsland.	
1.4 Streamline Council's regulatory processes, and facilitate external processes making it easier for businesses to invest in the Shire.	1.4.1	Continue and enhance the Better Approvals Program.	Completed 2023/24 – Ongoing project – 239 business enquiries received through the Better Approvals program to the end of May 2024.	
	1.4.2	Continue to provide the 'Business Concierge' service within Council.	Completed 2023/24 Ongoing – Ongoing positive feedback from businesses that have received assistance through the program. Business Concierge now a continuing permanent service. Review of program commenced,	
1.5 Seek innovation in Circular Economy Development that assists us to respond to climate change.	1.5.1	Undertake an initiative to develop the Circular economy with partners, consistent with Council's Sustainability Strategy.	Completed for 2023/24 – Member of the working group for the development of a Gippsland Circular Economy Hub. Circular economy session on dairy sector undertaken with LVA in June 2024.	

2. Supporting enabling infrastructure

Objective: Building our digital connectivity, freight and supporting infrastructure and business and community linkages.

STRATEGY	#	ACTION	UPDATES	
2.1 Advocate for the continuous development of infrastructure improvements to support business growth in the Shire.	2.1.1	Work with key partners to develop an integrated Infrastructure Strategy for the Shire.	Not yet commenced – Planned for future years.	
	2.1.2	Develop and implement an Annual program of Priority Projects for Advocacy to State and Federal Governments.	Completed 2023/24 – Ongoing. Priority projects developed and adopted by Council Advocacy program undertaken State and Federal Governments.	
	2.1.3	Conduct a digital connectivity audit to determine telecommunications needs/wants across the Shire.	Completed for 2023/24 – Ongoing. Conducted connectivity planning with Telstra and NBN.	
	2.1.4	Advocate for better digital connectivity across the Shire.	Completed for 2023/24 – Ongoing project –. Works commenced on NBN upgrades in Leongatha. Upgrades continuing on fixed wireless across the Shire.	
	2.1.5	In partnership with key stakeholders, investigate developing a business and community telecommunications education program.	Commenced – Discussions with NBN and Telstra on telecommunications education and information program.	
	2.1.6	Advocate for improved public transport across the Shire	Completed for 2023/24 – Department of Transport and Planning funded two new electric community buses. One for Sandy Point and the other for Venus Bay. Additional bus services for South Gippsland announced in Victorian budget.	
	2.1.7	Undertake an investigation into potential solutions for sewerage issues in Fish Creek.	Completed – RMIT study completed. Briefing to Council on report.	

3. Developing key industry sectors

Objective: Strengthening and growing key industry sectors will equip our economy for the future. Building innovation, value adding and economic capacity

STRATEGY	#	ACTION	UPDATES	
3.1 Provide industry with sector specific and specialised information to maintain viability and an edge in a competitive environment.	3.1.1	Connecting industry to sector experts and relevant support in fields to support future growth.	Completed 2023/24 – Ongoing project – Connected businesses with industry specialists at RDV and AusIndustry, Industry Capability Network, Mentoring Services and Small Business Victoria and Industry Capability Network.	
	3.1.2	Support industry to leverage off research institutes and published statistical data/information to apply for grants and other funding opportunities.	Completed 2023/24 – Ongoing project – Provided statistical information, reports and economic impact statements for a range of grant applicants.	
	3.1.3	Investigate conducting an industry cluster development/Smart specialisation program in identified sectors.	Commenced Ongoing– Participated in Gippsland Smart Specialisation Program Council in conjunction with Latrobe Valley Authority.	
	3.1.4	Support Industry Trade events that support industry development such as the South Gippsland Dairy Expo.	Completed for 2023/24 – Supported South Gippsland Dairy Expo – September 2023.	
3.2 Provide our businesses with the capability, capacity and information required to successfully do their jobs.	3.2.1	Continue to offer targeted training and skills programs to local businesses.	Completed 2023/24 – Ongoing project – Two in person workshops delivered. Conducted Startup Gippsland Program.	
	3.2.2	Continue to deliver business communication tools and resources such as the Business e-newsletter and associated business web pages.	Completed for 2023-24 Ongoing project – 13 business newsletters circulated. Council business website pages revised and updated.	
	3.2.3	In conjunction with the Victorian Government, continue to roll out business support services such as the Small Business Bus and Small Business Mentoring Service (SBMS).	Completed for 2023/24 – Ongoing service. Provided monthly free SBMS sessions and hosted visits of the Small Business bus.	
3.3 Support the expansion of the speciality food sector.	3.3.1	Implement program to support the Specialty Food Sector, particularly for enhancing local Food hubs.	Completed 2022/23 program– funding provided for local food hubs	
3.4 Continue to invest in and further develop the visitor economy.	3.4.1	Implementation of the Visitor Economy Strategy.	Completed 2023/24 – Information reported separately.	

3.5 Ensure Film Friendly Support	3.5.1	Grow and promote Council's readiness for Film Friendly Approvals.	Completed 2023/24 – Ongoing project. Refined film application process in partnership with Screen Victoria. Ten film permits issued	
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4. Building partnerships

Objective: Collaborative partnerships with stakeholders to support business development. Developing our unique economic identity in the broader Gippsland and Victorian framework.

STRATEGY	#	ACTION	UPDATES	
4.1 Strengthen strategic partnerships to support economic growth.	4.1.1	Maintain and nurture partnerships with key agencies at Shire, regional and state level.	Completed 2023/24– Maintained partnerships with agencies including quarterly meetings of South East Australian Transport Strategy. The May meeting was hosted by Council. Cr Rae re-elected to SEATS Executive. Other partnerships included Invest Gippsland, GippsDairy, LVA, RDV, Agriculture Victoria and One Gippsland.	
	4.1.2	Actively participate in industry specific groups, forums and expos as appropriate.	Completed 2023/24 – Ongoing – Participated in Gippsland Dairy Industry Leadership Group, LVA Business Support Network, Mainstreet Australia and with Food and Fibre Gippsland	
4.2 Enhance our business visitation and 'business intelligence' programs.	4.2.1	Undertake and increase the number of site visits (face to face) to businesses within the Shire.	Completed 2023/24 – Nearly 170 face-to-face site visits undertaken.	
	4.2.2	Maintain and expand the Customer Relationship Management System (CRMS).	Completed 2023/24 – CRMS system in place and has improved the capacity to target information to appropriate businesses.	
	4.2.3	Expand and formalise data analysis systems to support making more informed and evidence-based decisions.	Completed 2023/24 – REMPLAN and Spendmapp data systems in place and used to assist grant applications and analysis of major events for businesses and Council.	
4.3 Provide opportunities for business networking across the Shire.	4.3.1	Facilitate, support and participate in business networking programs. Act as conduit for businesses to connect in both formal and informal settings.	Completed for 2023/24 – Ongoing Project – Conducted two business workshop and two tender writing workshops. Heavily promoted other workshops conducted by other organisations.	

4.4 Support regional award programs to recognise and reward exceptional businesses.	4.4.1	Participate in regional awards programs: Gippsland Business Awards Gippsland Food and Fibre Awards Wine Gippsland Awards	Completed for 2023/24 – Sponsored Gippsland Business Awards, Wine Awards and Food and Fibre Awards. South Gippsland businesses were finalists at all awards	
	4.4.2	Encourage and support local businesses to enter regional and state-wide award programs.	Completed for 2023/24 – Encouraged businesses to apply for awards through direct contact and through newsletters. Award winners and finalists provided congratulatory letters	

5. Building capacity

Objective: Building the skills, training and knowledge of our current and future workforce, embracing lifelong learning and removing barriers to education. Strengthening resilience to economic and natural emergencies.

STRATEGY	#	ACTION	UPDATES	
5.1 Enabling/Supporting industry to access a skilled and job ready workforce.	5.1.1	Work with educational and training institutions to increase opportunities for locals to be job ready and assist retention of young people.	Completed for 2023/24 – Ongoing project. Conducted Jobs Expo in Leongatha May 2024, 35 businesses participated and about 150 attendees. Considered the most successful event held in Gippsland. Supported Careers Expo in Korumburra in June 2024	
	5.1.2	Work with businesses to understand skills requirements and plan appropriately.	Completed – Discussions held with businesses during visits and through business associations.	
	5.1.3	Continue to support access to vocational education and training through a range of targeted initiatives including student transport.	Completed – Submission made to Infrastructure Victoria in 2022/23. Funding for transport program provided by Victorian Government.	
	5.1.4	Support the continuation of the Cows Create Careers Program.	Completed for 2023/24 – Ongoing, supported the program financially.	
5.2 Facilitate Entrepreneurship initiatives.	5.2.1	Continue Startup Gippsland Program and initiatives to foster youth entrepreneurship.	Completed for 2023/24 – Ongoing, supported the program with three South Gippsland participants in the 2023/24 program. “Bootcamp” Workshop conducted in Mirboo North in June 2024.	

<p>5.3 Develop Business Resilience and Recovery.</p>	5.3.1	Continue and enhance Council's Business Resilience and Recovery Programs.	<p>Completed 2023/24 – Significant emergency events during the year. This required significant diversion of resources. Emergencies included flood in Welshpool/Toora district on Boxing Day and major storm event in February with particular impact in Mirboo North. This is the most significant natural disaster in South Gippsland history. These events have involved a significant recovery process and substantial requirements. This included assistance such as Small Business Mentoring Service, business visits, small business bus, RFCS. Successful with Tiny Towns grant from the Victorian Government to support energy and community resilience. Assisted with operation of Blaze Aid. Planning also conducted on exotic animal diseases with other agencies. Participated in the implementation plan for the Gippsland Drought Resilience Plan.</p>	
<p>5.4 Develop local capacity to build and retain Community Wealth.</p>	5.4.1	Continue and enhance Council's Business Resilience and Recovery Programs.	See above	
	5.4.2	Establish a working group to support and develop the implementation of community wealth building initiatives.	Planning undertaken with participation in workshops on conducting Community Wealth Building initiatives for future years implementation as program developed.	
	5.4.2	Undertake initiatives to support and build local community enterprises.	Not yet commenced – Planned for future years implementation.	
	5.4.3	Support local procurement initiatives to build capacity.	<p>Completed for 2022/23 – Ongoing - Conducted workshops Industry Capability Network (ICN) on writing tenders, to boost local procurement. Promoted ICN portal for local business to register for offshore wind projects</p>	

5.5 Create systems to support accessing grant funding opportunities for local businesses and community enterprises.	5.5.1	Maintain a website of relevant grant funding opportunities.	Completed – Continued Grant Finder website which is available from Council website and promoted in newsletter.	
	5.5.2	Develop a clear and usable process for businesses to seek and obtain support from Council for grant funding from other levels of Government.	Completed – Letter of support process developed and implemented during 2023/24. Range of letters of support provided.	

6. Enhancing towns and main streets

Objective: Building our capacity through infrastructure development and enhancing our unique towns and villages. Making South Gippsland a great place to live and move to, where population change is well managed and communities are prosperous.

STRATEGY	#	ACTION	UPDATES	
6.1 Support our towns, villages and main streets to grow and thrive well into the future.	6.1.1	Support infrastructure developments to enhance our main streets.	Completed for 2023/24 – Korumburra Mainstreet Revitalisation consultation completed in conjunction with Infrastructure team. Venus Bay Mainstreet redevelopment completed. Ongoing liaison during the construction period.	
	6.1.2	Work with local business associations to market main streets and town/shopping hubs e.g. Shop Local Projects.	Completed 2023/24 Ongoing– Maintained Visit South Gippsland website with free listing and promotion of businesses. Promoted grant assistance program for business associations.	
	6.1.3	Work in partnership with business associations to develop coordinated marketing and management programs.	Completed 2023/24 Ongoing Business Development Officer working with business associations. Assisted Toora with implementation of Victoria Government grant. Assisted Leongatha Business Association, Korumburra and Loch.	
	6.1.4	Investigate options to provide grass roots training and innovative initiatives for businesses and towns.	Commenced – Discussions with business associations on potential workshops and networking.	

	6.1.5	Facilitate grant funding opportunities for trader and main street improvements.	Completed for 2023/24– Provided information on grant funding for main streets. Acted as auspice for Toora for Mental Health program.	
	6.1.6	Promote new business opportunities from the expansion of the Great Southern Rail Trail and increased visitation.	Completed 2023/24– Ongoing project - Marketing Plan developed with input from local businesses.	
6.2 Target new residents and sustainable increased population to support our future economic viability.	6.2.1	Seek a partnership with Regional Australia Institute (RAI) to enhance liveability and attract future residents.	Completed for 2023/24 Participated in RAI – Regional Activators program including attending the Geelong meeting.	
	6.2.2	Participate in a targeted and collaborative marketing campaign to attract new residents to the Shire.	Commenced – New branding developed and included in investment attraction material.	
	6.2.3	Support development and implementation of the Social Housing Project.	Renewable Energy Impact and Readiness study identified housing as a key issue. Seeking funding from Federal Government to assist with planning. Discussions with housing providers.	
6.3 Leverage off the arts, cultural and heritage sectors for economic benefits	6.3.1	Continue to collaborate with the arts, culture and heritage sectors to enhance liveability and marketability of the Shire	Completed 2023/24– Worked to maximise economic impacts of festivals and events. 2024 Mirboo North Italian Festa was the largest spending day in the town.	