
As regions start to turn their minds to economic recovery, it is likely that the RDA Committee will be asked for advice on projects and initiatives that can support our communities. Supporting a place based approach to regional recovery will be critical. New opportunities for economic growth will emerge, the challenge for communities and government is how quick they can adapt and respond to take advantage of these opportunities.

It is clear from work undertaken that place based solutions can have immense success. Simple examples that we have been involved in include mountain bike initiatives, the projects led by SERDA, and the success of the Bell Bay Advanced Manufacturing Zone initiative. Likewise, RDA Tasmania activities such as providing secretariat for the Tasmanian Logistics Committee, instigating the Local Government Infrastructure Pipeline Report and supporting the Devonport Living City, demonstrate that a flexible and evidenced based approach can have significant economic impact. In addition, the application of “Key Principles of a Successful Economic Development Project” (<https://www.rdatasmania.org.au/client-assets/documents/tips/principles-of-successful-economic-development-project.pdf>) should also be applied.

This paper provides some direction around key principles that we consider important should various levels of government offer financial assistance to support economic recovery, and how regions should approach the design of ‘economic recovery projects’. The following principles are:

Place Based Approach: A place based approach enables a region to grow by drawing on their own resources, notably their human capital and innovative capacities. This approach aims to develop locally-owned strategies that can tap into unused economic potential within a region and are the basis for strategies that tackle questions of sustainable development and human wellbeing. <http://inform.regionalaustralia.org.au/process/regional-development-processes/item/place-based-approaches-to-regional-development-global-trends-and-australian-implications-4>

Wrap Around. Projects need not be solely focused on infrastructure. Support for more intangible asset development including retraining, reskilling and re-engaging human capital; investing in connectivity; and innovative new ways of doing business and collaborating will be just as important. An element of recovery is how well we treat and engage people who may have suffered financially and emotionally and need support to get back on their feet. Some businesspeople, particularly sole traders and partnerships, might lose their business and the savings. Wrap around support, normally used for long-term unemployed, will need to be reimagined for people who may have never been unemployed and prior to COVID-19 were successful entrepreneurs. Attitude, education and tangible support to assist businesses move to new opportunities will play a significant role in how quickly people can adapt to new opportunities.

Regional Coordination. Recovery projects should be able to demonstrate regional support. There shouldn't be competition for funds within regions, but rather demonstrable coordination for what is important.

Scale and Scope. Projects will be 'offered up' for governments to fund that come in many different forms of scale and scope. It is important that governments recognise this and don't over engineer support that will exclude some projects.

Projects of Priority. This refers to projects that can deliver long term, generational economic benefits to the regions and state. They will possibly take longer to implement, but committing to them early will provide regions with confidence. *Projects of Priority* will demonstrate benefits beyond the location where they are established

Gap Bridging Projects. As some projects will be more complex, and may take some time (possibly several years) before material work can be commenced, *Gap Bridging Projects* are also important. *Gap Bridging Projects* are smaller in scale and enable economic impact in the short term, and importantly, keep workforces engaged in the region.

Productive Capacity. This refers to projects that can clearly demonstrate or leverage ongoing regional economic benefit beyond the construction/implementation phase. Projects that are supported should be able to demonstrate productive capacity.

Local Decision Making. Central to the principle of a place based approach is that any recovery arrangement should have local input into the type and timing of the support. Proposals should be evidence based and have clear links to local strategies, including the RDA Tasmania priorities.

Timing and Flexibility. A key feature of any recovery needs to provide for flexibility in a regions capacity to respond. Relaxation of social distancing and the capacity to increase people mobility will have an impact on when some projects are able to proceed (or not). In addition, some organisations/communities/regions may be able to quickly adapt and respond to opportunities, while others may take a little longer. Likewise, it is important to recognise that project owners have different financial capacity to co-fund and capability to implement. The variances in local government is a good example. Likewise, various industries will have the capacity 'to get back to work' quicker than others, business support should be flexible enough to allow a business to use this support when it best suits their individual need.
