

Summary

The *Local Government (General) Amendment (Regional Joint Organisations) Regulation 2018* (the Regulation) requires that each joint organisation prepare a statement of strategic regional priorities and the strategies and plans to achieve them.

The statement of strategic regional priorities (statement) should set out a vision for the region and an overview of the joint organisation's strategic work program to deliver this vision.

The statement is a key tool for joint organisations and must be developed by 31 December 2018 or within six months of establishment, whichever is later.

Content

Under the integrated planning and reporting framework, all NSW councils must engage with their community to prepare a community strategic plan. Community strategic plans identify community aspirations and priorities for the future of the local area. These priorities may include issues that are common across the region and are better addressed by working through the joint organisation. Local and regional priorities are also described in many NSW Government documents.

The statement should draw from community strategic plans, regional plans and other strategic documents to clearly identify the top regional priorities for the joint organisation.

It should focus on the highest priorities for the region. The statement does not need to list every activity the joint organisation may work on, or all the issues which are important to each member council. These activities and issues can be documented in other, more detailed supporting plans.

Due to the long-term nature of strategic projects, the priorities identified in the statement are likely to extend over a number of years. It is therefore suggested that the statement covers four years and is aligned to the integrated planning and reporting cycle.

At a minimum, each statement of regional priorities should include:

- **a vision**—the joint organisation's vision for the region
- **priorities**—approximately five strategic priorities the joint organisation plans to focus on
- **strategies**—a small number of strategies the joint organisation will undertake to deliver each priority
- **stakeholders**—agencies and organisations the joint organisation will work with to deliver actions and achieve priorities.

In addition to the vision, priorities, strategies and stakeholders, the statement may also describe the knowledge or evidence base used to identify the priorities and a small number of measures which the joint organisation will use to demonstrate its success.

If the statement does not include timelines, it should be supported with documentation that sets out key milestones for achieving each of the identified activities. This documentation can also be used for more detailed implementation planning and to monitor progress.

An example of a joint organisation's vision for a region is provided by Namoi Unlimited, which has a vision of, "A productive, smart and livable Namoi Region that is recognised for its strong leadership, innovation and excellence in regional collaboration".

Where existing regions have already prepared strategic plans or similar documents, these may fulfil the requirement to prepare a statement of regional priorities.

Joint organisations will need to assess that the requirements have been met, and the plan meets the needs of the board, prior to formally adopting the plan.

Audience

The audience for the statement includes member councils, regional communities, government agencies, neighbouring councils and other key stakeholders.

The statement will be an important communication tool about the joint organisation's vision and priorities, particularly in the first year or of its operation.

Format

It is up to each joint organisation to choose an appropriate format for the statement. It could take the form of a 'plan on a page' which succinctly expresses the joint organisation's vision, priorities, strategies and stakeholders on a single or double-sided page. An example of this approach is provided by the *Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation's Organisational Strategic Plan 2017-20*.

The statement could also be a longer document which sets out the roles of the joint organisation, analyses the regional challenges and opportunities and provides more context about the organisation's priorities and strategies. An example of this approach is provided by the *Hunter Joint Organisation's Strategic Plan 2018-21*.

The overarching objective is to create a succinct and practical document to guide decision making.

Process

The process for developing the statement does not need to be lengthy.

In accordance with the Regulation, the process must incorporate consultation with member councils. This consultation could take the form of interviews with mayors and general managers, workshops with senior staff and/or meetings with the executive team.

The process should include:

- a review of the community strategic plans of member councils, as well as key regional plans prepared by the NSW Government and other key stakeholders
- a small number of targeted workshops with representatives from all member councils, relevant agencies and stakeholders
- preparation of a draft statement for review and adoption by the board.

As the priorities in the statement draw on the community

strategic plans of member councils, there is no requirement for the joint organisation to carry out community consultation on the statement of regional priorities.

Once the statement is adopted by the board, it must be published on the joint organisation's website.

Timeframes

All joint organisations must prepare their first statement of regional priorities by 31 December 2018 or within six months of establishment, whichever is later.

To meet these timeframes, joint organisations should aim to have a draft statement prepared within three months of establishment. This will allow time for the statement to be reviewed by member councils and potentially by stakeholders. It will also allow time for discussion about how the joint organisation, government agencies and other stakeholders can work together on agreed priorities.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet's Regional Directors can help to facilitate inter-governmental discussion on shared priorities and actions.

As noted previously, it is suggested the statement look forward at least four years. This will mean the second and subsequent statements prepared by joint organisations will align with the terms of office of council members.

Subsequent statements must be prepared no later than 12 months after each ordinary election of councillors for all member councils.

Reviewing the statement

The statement should be reviewed annually to ensure it continues to reflect the organisation's direction, as well as progress on its priorities and strategies.

A complete review of the statement should be carried out every four years.

Office of Local Government

For more Information

Phone (02) 4428 4100
Fax (02) 4428 4199
TTY (02) 4428 4209

Email olg@olg.nsw.gov.au
Email media media@olg.nsw.gov.au
Website www.olg.nsw.gov.au