Southern and Hills Region

Regional Trails Planning Framework

A practical guide for identifying, assessing and progressing regionally significant trail opportunities across Southern and Hills.



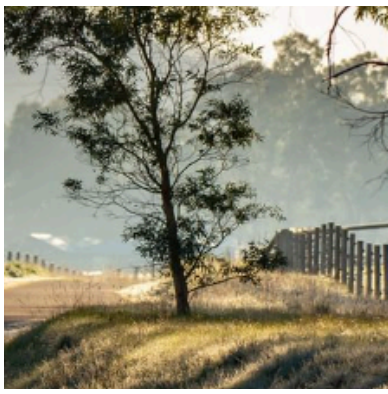
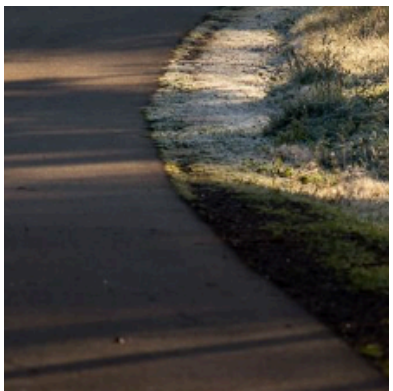





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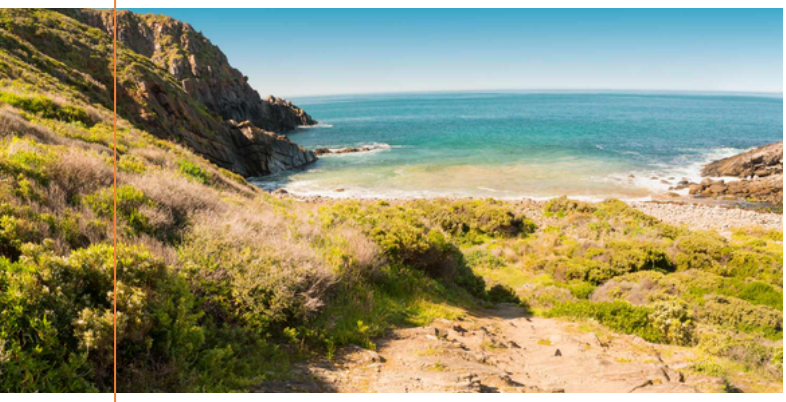
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Disclaimer

This Framework provides general guidance to support regional trail planning and does not replace professional advice, technical standards or statutory requirements. Councils and project partners are responsible for undertaking appropriate investigations, obtaining necessary approvals and considering relevant policies, environmental and cultural values, safety requirements and long-term management responsibilities before progressing individual trail opportunities.



About this Framework

The Southern and Hills Regional Trails Planning Framework provides a practical and consistent approach for identifying, assessing and progressing walking, running and cycling trail opportunities of regional significance.

The Framework has been developed by the Southern and Hills Local Government Association (SHLGA) as a resource for its six constituent councils: Adelaide Hills Council, Alexandrina Council, Kangaroo Island Council, Mount Barker District Council, City of Victor Harbor and District Council of Yankalilla.

It responds to an action in the Southern and Hills Regional Public Health and Wellbeing Plan to investigate a regional approach to the long-term planning of accessible trails that connect council areas and significant places of interest across the region.

Who is it for?

The Framework is primarily a practical resource for council officers involved in recreation, open space, transport, infrastructure, tourism, economic development, public health, community development and strategic planning.

It can be used when a new trail idea emerges, when an existing trail could form part of a wider connection, or when councils and other organisations are considering opportunities that extend beyond an individual locality or council area.

What does the Framework do?

The Framework helps councils to:

- consider when a trail opportunity may have regional significance
- identify opportunities to strengthen connections between communities, trails and significant destinations
- consider how trail opportunities could contribute to important regional outcomes
- consider potential benefits, constraints, partnerships and feasibility early
- determine an appropriate pathway for further investigation and planning
- identify when collaboration between councils, SHLGA and other partners may add value.





This is not a regional trails strategy or infrastructure and investment plan. It does not identify, rank or establish funding priorities for individual trail projects.

Existing trail planning and design guidance already provides detailed advice on trail classification, design, construction, signage, risk, maintenance and management. This Framework sits before and alongside those processes, providing a regional lens to help councils determine which opportunities warrant further investigation and where collaboration may create additional value.

The focus of this Framework is not “Which trails should we build?” but “How can we build on our existing network and identify, assess and progress trail opportunities that matter to our region?”



Our regional trails

Building on a strong foundation

Our region encompasses the Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island and includes rapidly growing urban areas, established regional centres, smaller townships and rural communities. Its landscapes range from hills, forests and agricultural areas to coastlines, conservation areas and internationally recognised visitor destinations.

Communities and visitors already have access to a diverse network of walking, running and cycling trails. These range from local paths and township connections to long-distance walking and cycling experiences of State and national significance.

Many established trails already demonstrate the regional connections this Framework seeks to strengthen.

The Heysen Trail provides a major north–south walking spine. Beginning at Cape Jervis, it traverses the Fleurieu Peninsula and Mount Lofty Ranges before continuing north towards the Flinders Ranges.

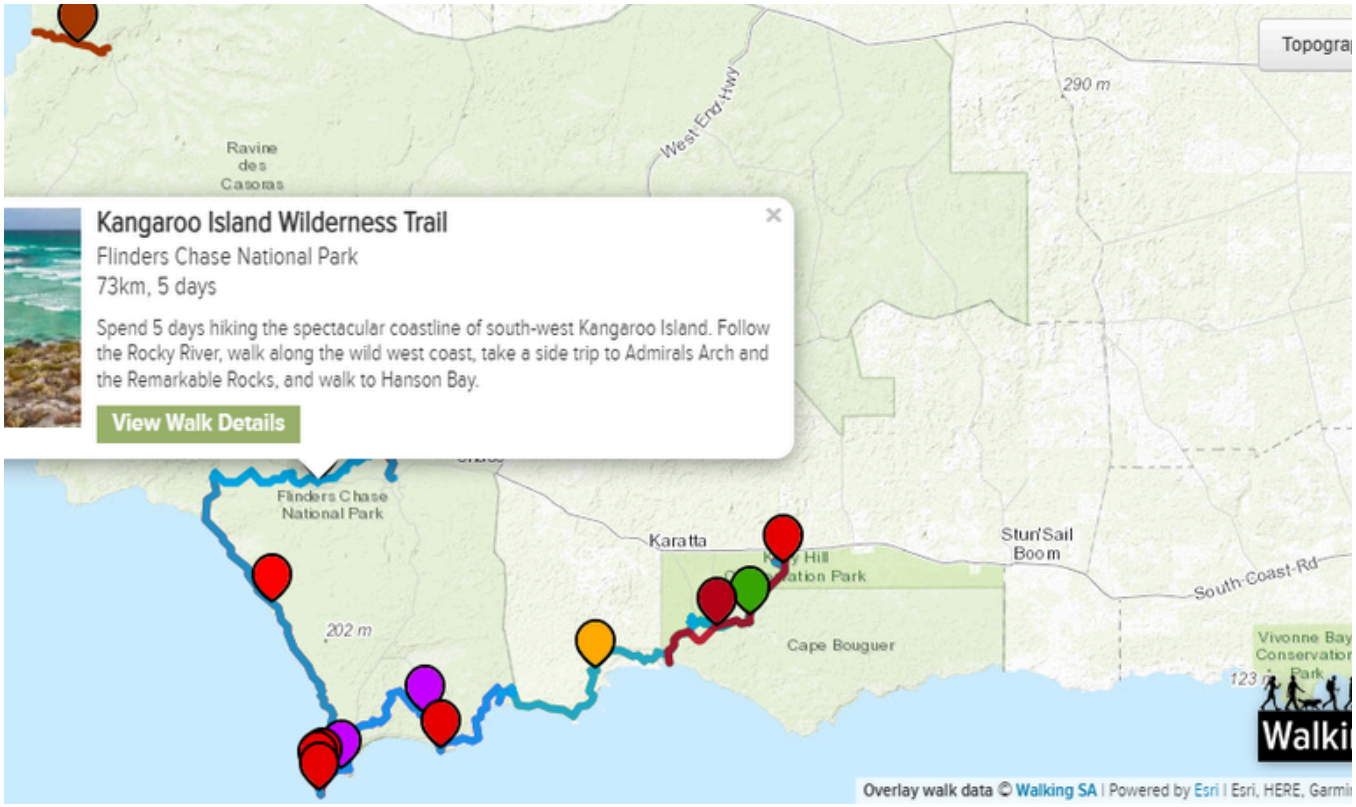
The Wild South Coast Way on the Heysen Trail creates a significant multi-day walking experience along approximately 74 kilometres of the southern Fleurieu coast between Cape Jervis and Victor Harbor, connecting townships, conservation areas, Deep Creek National Park and coastal landscapes.

The Encounter Bikeway provides an established walking and cycling connection along the coast between Victor Harbor and Goolwa, linking communities, beaches, recreation areas and visitor destinations.

Through the Adelaide Hills, the Amy Gillett Bikeway connects a series of townships, including Oakbank, Woodside, Charleston, Mount Torrens and Birdwood. The Kidman Trail provides a longer-distance connection through the Fleurieu Peninsula and Adelaide Hills and onwards towards the Murraylands and Barossa.

On Kangaroo Island, the 66-kilometre Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail provides a nationally significant multi-day walking experience through Flinders Chase National Park and the Island's remote south-west coast. More recent town walking trails at Kingscote, Penneshaw and American River add a different type of experience, using trails to connect people with local coastlines, communities, heritage and visitor attractions.

Together, these and other significant trails provide an important foundation for future regional planning.



Maps and details of established regional trails can be found online on sites such as Walking SA.

The KI Wilderness Trail is shown here as an example.



The regional opportunity

Trails are more than recreational infrastructure. They can connect communities and destinations, create opportunities for people to be active, provide access to nature and distinctive landscapes, and contribute to attractive places to live and visit.

A well-planned regional trail network can contribute to six important outcomes.

Outcome 1: Healthy and active communities

Trails make it easier for people to walk, run, cycle, spend time outdoors and connect with nature. A strong regional network should provide opportunities for both everyday activity and recreation - from trails close to where people live to longer-distance experiences and destination trails.

Planning should consider how trail opportunities can encourage more people to participate more often and contribute to physical, mental and social wellbeing.

Outcome 2: Connected places and experiences

Trails can connect communities, townships, existing trail networks, open spaces and significant destinations. Looking beyond individual trail assets can reveal missing links and opportunities that are difficult to see when planning occurs only within individual locations or council boundaries.

Individual investments can also contribute to much larger journeys and experiences. A relatively short connection between a trail and a township, between two existing trails, or to a significant destination may strengthen the value of the wider network.

Regional planning should therefore consider connections both within Southern and Hills and beyond the region, including opportunities to form part of wider South Australian trail networks.

Outcome 3: Inclusive and accessible experiences

Different people use trails in different ways. Age, ability, confidence, fitness, available time and access to transport all influence whether people can participate.

Regional planning should consider not only how many trails are available, but the range of experiences and levels of accessibility provided across the network.

Not every trail can or should provide the same experience or level of accessibility. The aim should be a diverse regional network that provides meaningful opportunities for people of different ages, abilities, interests and confidence levels to participate.

Outcome 4: Distinctive places and a stronger visitor economy

Trails provide another way for people to experience the landscapes, communities and destinations that make Southern and Hills distinctive.

Trail experiences should respond to their setting - connecting people with the region's townships, coastlines, parks, rural landscapes, heritage, food and wine and other attractions rather than applying the same approach everywhere.

Well-planned connections can also encourage visitors to explore more of the region, spend time in local communities and connect with businesses and other visitor experiences.

The opportunity is therefore not simply to create more stand-alone trails, but to use trails to strengthen places, destinations and the overall experience of Southern and Hills.

Outcome 5: Environment, Country, and culture

Trails can help people experience, understand and value the natural and cultural landscapes of Southern and Hills.

That access needs to be planned in ways that respect Country and recognise environmental sensitivity, biodiversity, landscape values, cultural heritage, appropriate land use and the capacity of places to accommodate increased use.

Traditional Owners, land managers and relevant environmental authorities should be involved early where appropriate, so that environmental and cultural values help shape an opportunity rather than being considered only after a preferred solution has been developed.

The aim is to create opportunities for people to experience significant places while protecting the values that make those places significant.

Outcome 6: A sustainable and collaborative regional network

Successful trails require more than good infrastructure. They need realistic arrangements for land access, safety, ownership, management, maintenance, renewal and ongoing resourcing.

These issues should be considered from the outset so that opportunities are proportionate, deliverable and capable of being responsibly managed over the long term.

Regional opportunities may also require organisations to work across geographic and organisational boundaries. Councils, Traditional Owners, land managers, government agencies, communities, tourism organisations, industry and other partners each have different roles to play.

Early collaboration can help identify constraints, coordinate investment, clarify responsibilities and develop stronger opportunities before significant resources are committed.





The aim is a connected, inclusive and sustainable regional trail network that supports healthy communities, strengthens distinctive places and visitor experiences, and enables people to experience the landscapes and places of Southern and Hills responsibly.



Case Study

Langhorne Creek Discovery Trail — thinking beyond the trail

The Langhorne Creek Discovery Trail demonstrates how a relatively short trail can create benefits well beyond its physical length and how an opportunity can develop from a local connection into a broader community and visitor proposition.

The 2.8 kilometre shared walking and cycling trail will connect wineries, parks, community spaces, heritage, natural landscapes and the Langhorne Creek township, creating a safer and more accessible way for residents and visitors to experience the area.





Importantly, the value of the project comes from what it connects, rather than its length. By linking existing destinations and experiences, the trail will make it easier to move between places, strengthen connections with the township and create opportunities for visitors to experience more of Langhorne Creek without relying on individual, disconnected destinations.

The project has developed through sustained collaboration between Alexandrina Council, Langhorne Creek Grape and Wine, the Langhorne Creek Hub and the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation. This partnership has brought together local government, community, industry and Traditional Owner perspectives and helped shape the trail as a shared place-making and destination-development opportunity.





Following several years of planning, business case development and community engagement, Alexandrina Council secured $7.06 million through the Australian Government's Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program in 2025, with construction commencing in 2026.

Planning extends beyond the physical trail. It includes interpretation and storytelling, public spaces, connections with local businesses and attractions, and tourism activation designed to encourage visitors to explore more of Langhorne Creek and the surrounding region.

This broader approach recognises that the quality of the overall experience - including where people can go, what they can experience and how the trail connects with the surrounding place - is central to the value of the project.

What can we learn?

- Regional value can come from connecting existing places and experiences rather than creating a long-distance trail.
- Build the partnership early. Council, community, industry and Traditional Owner involvement helped shape a shared proposition.
- Think beyond infrastructure. Interpretation, visitor experiences, local businesses and activation are part of creating value from the trail.
- Develop the proposition before pursuing funding. Community engagement, concept planning and a business case helped establish a well-developed project capable of attracting significant external investment.

Case Study

Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail — creating a destination experience

The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail demonstrates how trails can be planned as a complete regional experience, connecting people with distinctive landscapes and destinations while supporting tourism, environmental management and local economic activity.





The Trail was developed by the South Australian Government as a major nature-based tourism initiative, designed to strengthen Kangaroo Island's reputation as an international visitor destination. The State Government committed $5.8 million to develop the trail.

The 66-kilometre, five-day walking trail traverses the south-west of Kangaroo Island through Flinders Chase National Park and other protected areas. It provides access to some of the Island's most distinctive natural attractions and landscapes, including Remarkable Rocks, Admirals Arch, Weirs Cove, Hanson Bay and Kelly Hill Caves.

The trail illustrates the value of thinking beyond the physical route. Walkers need transport to and from the trail, accommodation before and after their walk, food and supplies, and other visitor services. The experience can therefore create connections between the trail itself and the wider Kangaroo Island visitor economy. Guided walking products and supporting services also enable different ways for visitors to experience the trail and Island.





Importantly, the trail is located within a highly valued and environmentally sensitive landscape. Visitor numbers, trail infrastructure and the way people move through the landscape need to be managed alongside conservation objectives. Following significant damage during the 2019–20 bushfires, recovery and subsequent trail planning have also demonstrated the need for trail networks to adapt to environmental change and changing infrastructure. Recent planning has included realignment of parts of the trail following reconstruction of visitor facilities in Flinders Chase National Park.

For this Framework, the Wilderness Trail is a useful example of a trail whose value comes from the combination of place, experience, environmental stewardship and connections to the wider destination. It also demonstrates why long-term management and the surrounding visitor experience need to be considered alongside the trail infrastructure itself.

What can we learn?

- Start with what is distinctive about the place. The Wilderness Trail derives much of its value from providing access to landscapes, wildlife and natural attractions that are strongly associated with Kangaroo Island.
- Think about the complete journey. Access, transport, accommodation, visitor services and connections with other destinations influence the overall trail experience, particularly for multi-day and destination trails.
- Match access to the capacity of the place. Trail planning in environmentally sensitive areas needs to balance recreation and visitor access with conservation, landscape values and responsible management of use.
- Plan for change and resilience. Bushfire recovery and subsequent trail realignment show that routes, facilities and management arrangements may need to evolve as environmental conditions and surrounding infrastructure change.
- Look beyond the trail asset. A significant trail can support accommodation, transport, guiding and other visitor services and become part of a broader regional experience rather than operating as an isolated piece of recreation infrastructure.

Regional Trails Planning Framework

The Regional Trails Planning Framework provides a common approach for councils to identify, assess and progress trail opportunities where regional thinking or collaboration could create greater value.

It does not require every trail proposal to follow a regional process. Many walking, running and cycling projects will appropriately continue through individual council planning and investment processes.

This Framework is intended for opportunities where there may be a wider regional connection, experience or benefit.





How to use the Framework

The Framework has four key steps:

1 **IDENTIFY**
What is the opportunity?

2 **TEST**
Is it regionally significant?

3 **ASSESS**
What do we need to understand?

4 **PROGRESS**
What should happen next?



A shared approach helps councils recognise regional opportunities, understand their potential, and work together to turn good connections into lasting outcomes.



Step 1 - Identify

Think network first

Regional trail opportunities can emerge in many ways. A council may identify a gap in an existing network. A community may propose a new connection. An established trail may be extended. Growth or another infrastructure project may create an opportunity to establish a future link.

A useful starting point is **How could the existing network better connect people, places and experiences?** This helps identify opportunities that may be relatively modest in scale but significant in their effect.

Look for the missing connection

Consider the different types of connections an opportunity could create or strengthen, and identify which are most relevant to the trail opportunity being explored.

Connection opportunity	Key question
Connect communities	Could neighbouring communities or townships be better connected for walking, running or cycling?
Connect trails	Could a gap between existing trails be addressed? Could a local trail become part of a longer regional journey?
Connect trails with towns	Can trail users readily reach town centres, services, accommodation, hospitality, public spaces and other facilities?
Connect people with significant places	Could access be strengthened to parks, coastlines, waterways, landscapes, heritage places or other destinations?
Connect experiences	Could trails bring together nature, heritage, food and wine, townships and other recreation or visitor experiences?
Connect beyond the region	Could an opportunity strengthen connections with neighbouring regions?

Before proposing something new, check:

- existing trails and routes
- logical gaps
- available corridors
- related projects
- opportunities to improve access
- signage or integration.

Look for opportunities created by change

Regional trail opportunities can also arise through:

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Creating new demand and opportunities to establish or protect connections.

TRANSPORT INVESTMENT

Providing opportunities to integrate walking and cycling connections with road, public transport and active transport projects.

TOURISM AND DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

Creating opportunities to strengthen access to significant places and visitor experiences.

LAND MANAGEMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS

Potentially creating complementary recreation opportunities where appropriate.

COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY INITIATIVES

Bringing forward locally generated ideas that may have wider regional value.

Good regional trail planning is as much about recognising and protecting opportunities as it is about initiating new projects.



Step 2 - Test Regional Significance

Is there a regional opportunity?

Regional significance is about more than geography. A trail does not need to be long or cross a council boundary to be regionally significant.

A relatively short connection may have regional value if it closes an important network gap, connects an established trail with a township or significant destination, or enables a larger recreation or visitor experience.

Similarly, an opportunity located entirely within one council area may be regionally significant because it attracts users from across or beyond the region or contributes to an experience for which Southern and Hills is known.

Regional significance can arise through three broad dimensions.

CONNECTION: What does the opportunity connect?

This could include communities, existing trails, town centres, services, significant landscapes, parks, cultural and heritage places, visitor destinations or neighbouring regions.

EXPERIENCE: What wider experience could it enable or strengthen?

An opportunity might improve access to a significant place, strengthen an established trail or destination, contribute to a distinctive walking or cycling experience, or enable people to experience more of the region.

SHARED OUTCOMES: Who benefits?

Regional significance may arise where benefits extend beyond the immediate locality - through health and wellbeing, recreation, accessibility, tourism, economic activity, community connection, access to nature or a stronger regional trail network.

Regional Significance Test

The purpose of the test is to determine whether there is enough of a regional dimension to warrant further consideration through this Framework.

Regional significance consideration	Key question	Consider
1. Connection	Does it connect places of significance?	Communities, trails, townships, landscapes, parks, visitor destinations and neighbouring regions.
2. Network	Would it strengthen the wider trail network?	Could it extend an established trail, connect separate networks or make existing infrastructure more useful.
3. Reach	Who would use or benefit from it?	Could it serve visitors, or users of an existing significant trail or destination.
4. Outcomes	Could it create benefits beyond its immediate location?	Health, recreation, accessibility, tourism, economic activity, community connection, environment and regional identity.
5. Collaboration	Would working together create greater value?	Would outcomes be improved by involving other councils, Traditional Owners, community, agencies or other partners.
6. Strategic fit	Does it contribute to wider priorities?	Relevant council, regional and State priorities for recreation, active transport, public health, tourism etc.

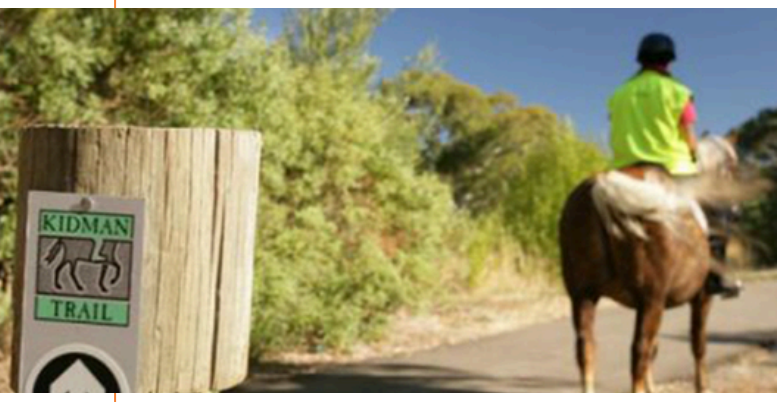
Consider the strength and combination of the regional characteristics identified to determine if your opportunity is:

Primarily local
The opportunity predominantly serves a local need - Continue through the relevant council's normal planning processes.

Potentially regional
There is evidence of wider connections, users or benefits - Proceed to Step 3 to understand the opportunity more fully.

Clearly regional
There is a strong regional connection, experience or shared outcome - Proceed to Step 3 and identify relevant partners early.

Regional significance does not establish a funding priority. It identifies opportunities that may benefit from regional thinking, coordination or collaboration.



Step 3 - Assess the Opportunity

From an idea to an informed opportunity?

The next step is to develop a rounded understanding of an opportunity's potential benefits, constraints, dependencies and unknowns before significant resources are committed.

Assessment should be proportionate to the maturity and complexity of the opportunity. An early idea may initially be considered using existing information and officer knowledge. More developed or complex opportunities will require additional evidence, engagement and investigation.

Regional Trail Opportunity Assessment

Use the following considerations to explore the opportunity and identify the matters that need to be understood before deciding how it should progress.

Assessment consideration	Key question	Consider
1. Network Value	How would the opportunity strengthen the wider network?	Connections between communities, trails and significant destinations; potential to form part of a longer journey or future network.
2. Community benefit	Who could benefit and how?	Likely users and how they may use the trail; communities currently underserved by outdoor recreation opportunities; opportunities to reduce barriers to participation.

Assessment consideration	Key question	Consider
3. Regional experience and economic value	How could it strengthen the way people experience Southern and Hills?	Connections with accommodation, hospitality, food and beverage, local businesses and other visitor experiences; opportunities to encourage exploration and longer stays.
4. Environment and culture	Does the place have the capacity to accommodate the proposed use?	Environmental sensitivity, biodiversity and landscape values; cultural heritage and Country; potential impacts and how they might be avoided or managed; opportunities for appreciation and stewardship of place.
5. User experience	Will the connection work as a complete journey?	Logical start and finish points; accessibility and the needs of intended users; whether the overall experience would be coherent, understandable and attractive.
6. Feasibility	Is there a credible pathway to progress the opportunity?	Land ownership, tenure and access; planning, environmental, engineering and other approvals or constraints; technical investigations required; scale and complexity of the likely solution.
7. Partnerships	Who needs to be involved and what is their level of interest?	Appropriate lead organisation and governance arrangements; relevant councils and regional partners; Traditional Owners and land managers; Government agencies; community, tourism, industry and trail organisations; private landholders.
8. Long-term sustainability	Can the opportunity be sustained?	Future ownership and management; monitoring, maintenance and renewal obligations; ongoing funding and resourcing; risk and responsibilities; ability to remain fit for purpose as conditions and use change; whether the scale of the solution is proportionate to its likely benefits.

Assessing the Opportunity

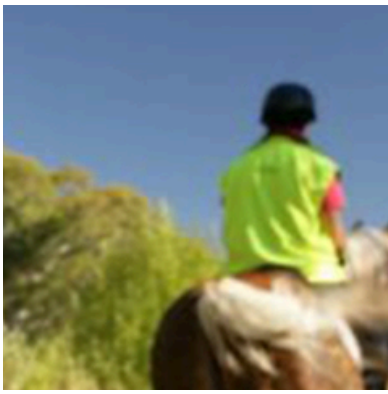
Not every question needs to be fully resolved before an opportunity can move forward, and not every regional opportunity requires an immediate feasibility study or business case.

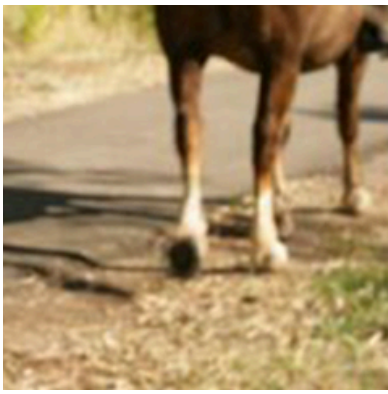
At this stage, the assessment should help establish:

- **what is known -** the evidence already available
- **what is uncertain -** the questions, constraints or dependencies requiring further investigation
- **who needs to be involved -** the organisations or stakeholders needed to resolve those issues
- **what should happen next -** the appropriate pathway under Step 4.

An assessment may identify a significant constraint or limited benefit that means further work is not justified; an opportunity worth retaining for the future; specific questions requiring further investigation; or a sufficiently developed regional proposition to progress collaboratively.

The purpose of assessment is to develop enough understanding to make a sound decision about what should happen next.







Step 4 - Progress the Opportunity

Choose the right next step

Regional opportunities will be at different stages of maturity. Some may simply need to be recognised and protected for the future. Others may be ready for further investigation, concept planning or collaborative investment.

Pathway	What this means	Next Step
Keep local	The opportunity primarily serves a local need or does not demonstrate sufficient regional value.	Progress through normal council processes.
Keep the opportunity open	There may be future regional value, but the opportunity is immature or dependent on future development, land access or another project.	Record the opportunity, protect potential connections where possible, keep on the agenda with stakeholders, and revisit as circumstances change.
Investigate further	There is potential regional value, but important questions or uncertainties remain.	Undertake targeted investigation and engagement to resolve the most important unknowns.
Progress collaboratively	There is a clear regional proposition and sufficient evidence to justify coordinated planning.	Establish the lead and partners and progress to the appropriate next stage.

Not every opportunity needs to become an immediate capital project.

Sometimes the most important action is to protect an opportunity.

A future connection between a growing township and an established trail, for example, may need to be recognised through structure planning, development assessment, land acquisition or future transport investment long before funding for a trail is available.

Similarly, an opportunity spanning council or land-management boundaries may initially require no more than agreement between partners to investigate it further.

The right next step is the one that reduces uncertainty, protects future options and moves a worthwhile opportunity forward - not necessarily the one that moves most quickly towards construction.







Working together

Regional trail opportunities will most often involve more than one organisation. A trail may cross different land tenures, connect assets managed by different organisations, contribute to tourism or economic development objectives, or require environmental, cultural, transport or recreation expertise.

The right partnership will depend on the opportunity. Partnerships should be proportionate to the scale, location and purpose of the opportunity and the issues that need to be resolved.

Involving the right organisations early can help identify constraints, coordinate related planning and investment, clarify responsibilities and build a stronger proposition before significant resources are committed.

Potential Partners	Roles they may play
Councils	Identify opportunities through local planning and community knowledge; assess regional significance; lead or participate in investigations; undertake land-use, infrastructure and asset planning; engage communities and landholders; prepare grant funding submissions; plan, deliver, own and manage council trail assets. For cross-boundary opportunities, councils may jointly investigate or deliver connections.
Southern and Hills LGA (SHLGA)	Provide the regional lens; facilitate discussions between councils and other partners; help identify cross-boundary connections and shared interests; support collaborative investigations where agreed; share information and lessons across councils; coordinate regional advocacy for sufficiently developed regional propositions.
Regional Development Australia Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island (RDA AHFKI)	Bring a regional economic development and infrastructure perspective; help connect trail opportunities with broader regional development and visitor-economy priorities; provide regional evidence and intelligence; connect councils with industry, government and investment opportunities; support development of significant regional propositions where aligned with its role.

Potential Partners	Roles they may play
Landscape Boards	Provide advice on landscape, biodiversity, water, land-management and environmental considerations; identify connections with landscape-scale projects and priorities; contribute technical knowledge and data; support approaches that protect and enhance environmental values.
Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations	Participate in planning where opportunities affect Country, cultural heritage or cultural values; provide cultural knowledge and perspectives; help identify appropriate approaches to access, interpretation and storytelling; participate as project partners where appropriate. Engagement should occur early enough to genuinely shape the opportunity.
State Government Agencies	Contribute according to portfolio and land-management responsibilities, including recreation, parks, transport, planning, environment, tourism and infrastructure; provide technical and policy advice; identify approvals and statutory requirements; participate as land managers or asset owners; contribute to planning, funding or delivery where relevant.
Australian Government	Provide policy, program and funding support where opportunities align with national priorities; potentially invest in significant regional infrastructure, tourism, active transport, community or environmental initiatives.
Neighbouring councils and regional organisations	Help investigate connections that extend beyond Southern and Hills; coordinate cross-boundary planning; protect future network connections; participate in joint projects or advocacy where a trail forms part of a wider regional journey.
Tourism organisations and visitor-economy partners	Provide insight into visitor markets, destinations and experiences; help connect trails with accommodation, hospitality, food and wine and other attractions; contribute to destination development, visitor information, promotion and activation.
Community, recreation and trail organisations	Provide local and user knowledge; identify needs and opportunities; contribute to engagement, trail-use information, stewardship and activation; help test whether proposed experiences respond to the needs of intended users.
Private landholders	Help determine whether routes involving or adjoining private land are feasible; identify access, farming, biosecurity, operational and liability considerations; participate in access or tenure arrangements where mutually agreed. Early engagement is particularly important where an opportunity may depend on private land.

Potential Partners	Roles they may play
Industry and local businesses	Provide insight into local economic and visitor opportunities; participate in destination development and activation; support connections between trails, townships and businesses; contribute to partnerships, sponsorship or investment where appropriate.
Funding bodies and philanthropic organisations	Support investigation, planning, delivery or activation where an opportunity aligns with relevant funding objectives. Funding partners may become involved at different stages, but funding availability should not substitute for establishing a clear and supported trail proposition.

Start with the opportunity, then build the partnership around what is needed to progress it. Not every regional trail opportunity needs the same partners, governance arrangements or lead organisation.

Who should lead?

The organisation that identifies a trail opportunity will not always be the organisation best placed to lead it. Leadership should reflect land ownership and management responsibilities, statutory roles, project capability and the nature of the opportunity.

For cross-boundary or multi-partner opportunities, the lead organisation and respective partner roles should be agreed as the opportunity develops. These arrangements may change as an opportunity moves from investigation through to planning, delivery and ongoing management.

Things to consider:

- **Land ownership and management:** Who owns or manages the land, and what approvals or agreements may be required?
- **Roles and responsibilities:** Which organisations have statutory responsibilities or an established role in trail planning, delivery or management?
- **Capability and resources:** Who has the expertise, capacity and resources to lead the next stage?
- **Partnerships:** Where could shared leadership, joint planning or coordinated delivery add value?
- **Long-term management:** Who will be responsible for maintenance, renewal, monitoring and ongoing costs?

Regional Trails Planning Framework Worksheets

Use these worksheets to work through a potential regional trail opportunity. They can be completed using the information currently available and updated as the opportunity develops.

The purpose is not to prepare a business case or detailed project assessment. It is to help clarify the opportunity, determine whether it has regional significance, identify what needs to be understood and agree the most appropriate next step.





1 **IDENTIFY**
What is the opportunity?

2 **TEST**
Is it regionally significant?

3 **ASSESS**
What do we need to understand?

4 **PROGRESS**
What should happen next?

Step 1 - Identify

Opportunity
Briefly describe the trail, connection or improvement being considered.

What could it connect?
Identify the communities, trails, townships, significant places, experiences or wider networks that could be connected.

What already exists?
Note existing trails, paths, corridors, infrastructure or related projects that the opportunity could build upon.

Why has the opportunity emerged?
For example: an identified network gap, community proposal, growth, transport investment, tourism initiative, land-management project or other change.

Step 2 - Test

Use the Regional Significance Test in Step 2. Record the main reasons the opportunity may, or may not, have regional significance.

Considerations	What is the regional dimension
1. Connection	
2. Network	
3. Reach	
4. Outcomes	
5. Collaboration	
6. Strategic fit	

Overall assessment:

□ Primarily local □ Potentially regional □ Clearly regional

In one or two sentences, why?

Step 3 - Assess

You don't need to answer every question in detail. Use the assessment in Step 3 to identify the most important information, issues and unknowns.

Potential benefits
What could the opportunity contribute to the wider trail network, communities, regional experience, environment or economy?

Users and experience
Who could use or benefit from it? What would make the connection useful and attractive to those users?

Key constraints or dependencies
Are there known issues relating to land, tenure, environment, culture, approvals, infrastructure, access, cost, management or other matters?

What do we already know?
What evidence, previous planning, community input or other information is already available?

What don't we know yet?
What are the most important questions that need to be resolved before deciding whether or how to proceed?

Who needs to be involved?
Which councils, Traditional Owners, land managers, government agencies, regional organisations, communities, industry or other partners should be involved?

Long-term considerations
Who might ultimately own, manage and maintain the trail or connection? Are there significant ongoing resource implications?

Step 4 - Progress

Recommended pathway:

□ Keep local — progress through normal council processes

□ Keep the opportunity open — record and protect the opportunity and revisit it as circumstances change

□ Investigate further — undertake targeted work to resolve important questions or uncertainties

□ Progress collaboratively — establish the lead and partners and move into the appropriate next stage

Next action
What specifically needs to happen next?

Lead
Who is best placed to coordinate the next step?

Partners
Who else needs to be involved?

Next decision
What agreement, information, resources or approval will be needed to move forward?

Opportunity Summary

Use this summary to capture the key outcome of the assessment and provide a concise basis for discussion with councils, SHLGA and other potential partners.

The opportunity
What are we trying to connect, improve or enable?

The regional value
Why does it matter beyond the immediate locality?

The next step
What should happen next, and who should lead it?

References and resources

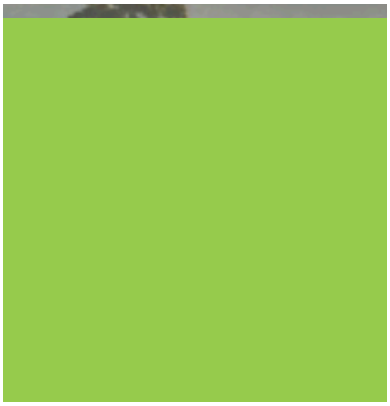
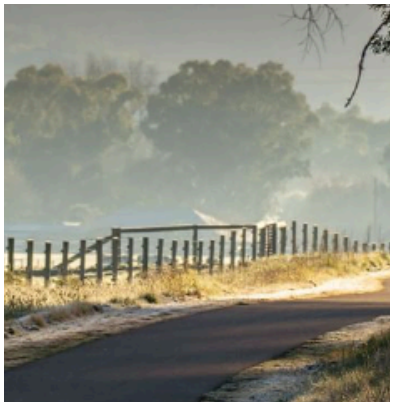
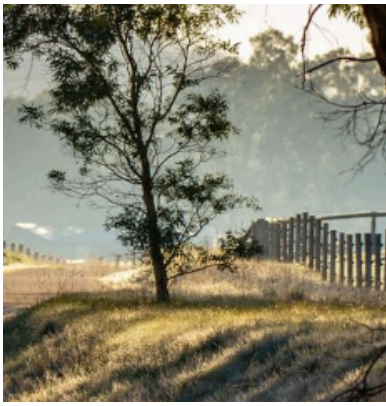
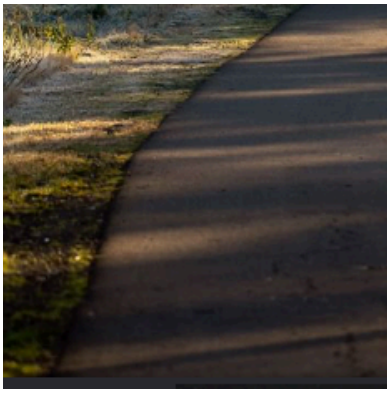
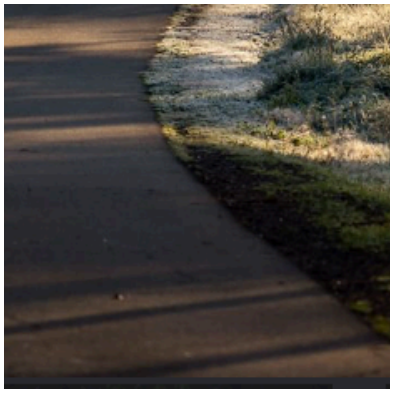
The Southern and Hills Regional Trails Planning Framework draws on established trail strategies, planning guidance and regional examples. The following resources provide further guidance for councils and project partners when identifying, assessing and progressing trail opportunities.

Resource	Relevance to the framework
South Australian Statewide Trails Strategy 2023–2033 - Government of South Australia	Provides the overarching State policy context, including strategic priorities, trail classifications and principles for sustainable trail development and management.
Guidelines for the Planning, Design, Construction and Maintenance of Recreational Trails in South Australia - Recreation SA, 2016	Practical guidance across the trail development lifecycle, including feasibility, consultation, design, construction, maintenance and management. Particularly useful as opportunities progress beyond this Framework.
Eyre Peninsula Regional Trails Strategy - 2021 - RDA EP	Provides an example of a regional approach to identifying trail opportunities, strengthening networks and coordinating investment and collaboration.
Northern Areas Council Trails Strategy - 2025	Demonstrates a local government approach to reviewing existing trails, identifying network gaps and planning future trail opportunities.
Kangaroo Island Parks Trails Strategy - Draft 2026 - Government of South Australia	Provides a regional example of planning for connected trail experiences across different land tenures, with an emphasis on environmental protection, partnerships and sustainable management. Subject to consultation and finalisation.
Australian Walking Track Grading System	Provides a nationally consistent approach to classifying walking trail difficulty and communicating trail characteristics to users.
Walking SA – Trail Directory — www.walkingsa.org.au	An accessible source of information about existing walking trails across South Australia. Useful for understanding established networks, destinations and potential connections.
Healthy Active by Design - Australian Heart Foundation	Provides evidence and practical guidance on creating environments that encourage walking, cycling, physical activity and inclusive access. Particularly relevant to community health and wellbeing outcomes.

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1 & 2	Wild South Coast Way on the Heysen Trail, Trailhiking Australia
3	Wild South Coast Way on the Heysen Trail, Tourism South Australia
4	Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail Map, Walking SA
5 & 7	Kidman Trail in the Adelaide Hills, Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing
8	Wild South Coast Way on the Heysen Trail, Department for Environment and Water
9	Langhorne Creek Discover Trail Artist Render Images, Alexandrina Council
10	KI Wilderness Trail, Department for Environment and Water
10	KI Wilderness Trail, Tourism Kangaroo Island
13	Encouter Bikeway, City of Victor Harbor
14	Mount Barker Summit Walking Trail, Walking SA
15	Lapwing Loop at Myponga Reservoir, Walking SA
17	Encounter Bikeway Signage, Visit Victor Harbor
19 & 21	Kidman Trail in the Adelaide Hills, Office for Sport and Recreation
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Contact Us

If you would like more information about the Southern and Hills Regional Trails Planning Framework, please contact us.

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