

# Local Government Research & Development Scheme

**2024-25 Annual Business Plan**

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# Introduction

The LGA Board of Directors approved the Local Government Research and Development Schemes Annual Business Plan 2024-25 on 19 January 2024.

The Annual Business Plan is designed to focus the attention of potential applicants to the Local Government Research & Development Scheme (LGR&DS/the Scheme) on matters that will contribute to the advancement of local government in South Australia.

The research priorities are designed based on direct consultation with LGA's member councils and a broad-ranging environmental scan to identify strategic directions for the local government sector.

## 2024-25 Research & Development Priorities

In 2024-25, the LGR&DS will focus on projects that deliver clear long-term outcomes and address future and emerging needs of the South Australian local government sector in the following priority areas:

- Climate and Environment
- Community Wellbeing and Inclusion
- Planning and Infrastructure
- Financial Sustainability
- Building Sector Capacity

Within each of these priority areas, projects must address an issue of significant importance to local government and not duplicate existing research or resources that are available through the LGR&DS or other sources, including different levels of government. All projects must outline a plan of how the outcome and resources generated by the project will be shared and used by the local government.

## 1. Climate and Environment

Projects and collaborations that assist the sector in managing risks associated with and provide practical solutions to climate change and environmental issues, including:

- Initiatives that build on current research to support councils in dealing with the impact of climate change and natural disasters.
- Innovative solutions and collaboration relating to waste, recycling, and circular economy.
- Stormwater and wastewater management.
- Research and initiatives that lead to greener, sustainable, and more liveable cities and regions, including the retention and promotion of tree canopies.

## 2. Community Wellbeing and Inclusion

Resources and collaborative initiatives that will assist councils to strengthen well-being and resilience within local government's defined areas of responsibility, including.

- Initiatives that build capacity and increase the awareness and participation of underrepresented groups in local government services and decision-making process design.
- Projects promoting learning, collaboration and connection between local government sector and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Public Health Planning to improve SA communities' wellbeing and mental health outcomes.

## 3. Planning and Infrastructure

Projects that support local government by providing long-term solutions to ensure that the sector meets the future needs of its communities, including:

- Evidence-based research to support local government in advocating for the delivery of quality urban and regional planning outcomes, improving the liveability and sustainability of communities. Including projects linked to:
  - The review of the Greater Adelaide 30-Year Plan.
  - Changes to the Planning, Development, and Infrastructure Act.
- Strategic initiatives, resources, and partnerships that build on current research and address housing supply and affordability issues.
- Advocacy to ensure regional and rural communities in South Australia have access to safe and high-quality roads.
- Collaborations and initiatives to support local government in improving road safety..

## 4. Financial Sustainability

Projects that enhance the financial sustainability of the sector and support councils to place downward pressure on rates and achieve more for their communities through:

- The strengthening of long-term financial and asset management planning and addressing current and future cost pressures.
- Supporting councils with benchmarking and performance measurement to support innovation and improvement in the local government sector.

## 5. Building Sector Capacity

Strategic initiatives, research, and collaborations that build the capacity of the local government sector and provide long-term innovative solutions the skill shortages, including:

- Innovative solutions and collaborations that improve the efficiencies and address the skills gap of the local government workforce.
- Projects that develop, attract and retain the local government workforce.
- Initiatives that encourage people to gain skills, confidence, and experiences to pursue a career locally.
- Initiatives that expand inclusion and diversity in the workforce.
- Initiatives that provide innovative solutions to enable people to live and work in rural and regional South Australia

## Background

The Local Government Research and Development Scheme is unique to South Australia. The Scheme allocates up to \$2 million annually for innovative projects that benefit South Australian councils and tackle sector-wide challenges.

Funding is delivered through two competitive grant rounds, a regional capacity building program and strategic initiatives from the LGA.

The Scheme is pursuant to section 31A of the Local Government Finance Authority Act 1983 (the LGFA Act), which identifies funding to be applied for local development purposes recommended by the LGA and agreed by the Treasurer<sup>1</sup>. Based on this, the Local Government Finance Authority (LGFA) makes quarterly payments to the Local Government Taxation Equivalents Fund.

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<sup>1</sup> As the Minister currently responsible for the LGFA Act.

These funds are used for the purposes of the Scheme to fund projects that are strategically beneficial to local government as a whole and are managed by the LGA through the LGA Board of Directors.

The Scheme is subject to a *Memorandum of Understanding* (MOU) between the Local Government Association of South Australia (LGA) and the Treasurer. The MOU is available on the Scheme's [website](#)<sup>2</sup>.

## Advisory Committee

The LGA Board established the Local Government Research and Development Schemes Advisory Committee in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between the Treasurer and the Local Government Association of South Australia.

The Committee is responsible for providing oversight of the governance and operations of the scheme and offers independent advice to the LGA Board.

The Committees' key functions include:

- consult with councils
- establish funding priorities
- assess applications for funding
- oversee the management of projects and activities funded by the Scheme
- monitor the requirement of the Memorandum of Understanding.

The MOU specifies that the membership of the Advisory Committee includes representatives from key local government stakeholder groups. As of December 2023, membership of the Advisory Committee was:

- Mayor Claire Boan (Chair LGA Board )
- Mayor Heather Holmes- Ross (LGA Board)
- Mayor Moira Jenkins (LGA Board)
- Anne Champness (Country/Regional CEO)
- Chris Cowley (Metropolitan CEO)
- Cleofe Vinas-Wilson (Local Government Unions)
- Prof Ian Goodwin-Smith (South Australian Universities)
- CEO, Local Government Association (ex officio) – currently Clinton Jury
- Manager, Office of Local Government (ex officio) – currently Alex Hart.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/member-services/financial-sustainability/grants/research-and-publications/about-the-lg-research-and-development-scheme>

## LGR&DS Grant rounds

The Scheme holds two grant rounds per year:

- an LGA (internal) grant round
- an external grant round

Further details of the external funding call will be published on the [LGA website](#)<sup>3</sup> in early 2024.

The LGA Board of Directors makes decisions regarding the grant based on recommendations from the LGR&DS Advisory Committee.

In addition to the two funding calls, the Scheme also provides annual funding allocations to:

- Regional Local Government Associations to support regional capacity-building activities.
- South Australian Regional Organisation of Councils to support the delivery of its Annual Business Plan.
- Greater Adelaide Regional Organisation of Councils to support the delivery of its Annual Business Plan.
- The LGA will deliver the local government awareness campaigns.

## Principles and Purposes of the Scheme

The Principles and Purposes of the Local Government Research and Development Scheme are managed through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Treasurer and the LGA. All funded projects must fit in with the scheme's principle and at least one of the purposes.

### Principle of the Scheme

*The Scheme should be applied for 'local government development purposes', and the funding should be used strategically for **the benefit of local government as a whole**.*

### Purposes of the Scheme

Grants and Services that lead to one of the following outcomes:

#### Collaboration across the local government sector

- Wide research dissemination across the local government sector
- Communities of practice
- New or strengthened partnerships
- Co-delivery of projects by multiple councils and their partners

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/member-services/financial-sustainability/grants/research-and-publications/lq-research-and-development-scheme-how-to-apply>

### **Councils have the knowledge and capacity to improve services.**

- Resources and guidance on initiating, delivering, improving, reviewing, commercialising, or closing of council services
- Strong alignment of council services with community aspirations and legislation
- Performance measurement and reporting tools

### **Councils deliver more with less**

- Evidence base to identify new efficiencies
- Reduction in the duplication of effort
- Leverage government investment in programs/projects

### **Councils are thought leaders and ready for the future.**

- Evidence base for local government improvement
- Research and analysis that generates new ideas and strategic insights
- Partnerships and networks that generate new thinking

### **Communities understand the role and value of local government.**

- Resources and guidance on improving community engagement, transparency, and accountability
- Collateral and campaigns that measure and communicate the role and value of local government

### **Regional Capacity Building**

Funding to regional groupings of councils to achieve local government development purposes at a regional level that contributes to the development of the sector.

### **Annual Research Priorities**

The Annual Research Priorities are determined based on sector consultation and are highlighted strategic priority areas in the Scheme's Annual Business Plan.

## **2023-24 Research Priorities**

The 2023-24 Annual Business Plan identified the following five priorities for the Schemes competitive grant rounds:

- Homelessness and Housing
- Climate and Environment
- Financial Sustainability and Cost Pressures
- Community Wellbeing and Inclusion



- Skill Shortages

Please note that information regarding any funded project is available through the Local Government Research and Development Scheme Research Library.

## Strategic Directions and Environmental Scan

The Schemes' research priorities are determined through consultation with the LGA's member councils, regional LGA's and a broad-ranging environmental scan to identify strategic directions for the local government sector as a whole. The LGR&DS Advisory Committee reviews these priorities and makes the final recommendations to the LGA Board.

### LGA Strategic Plan<sup>4</sup>

The objective of the LGA is to provide leadership, support, representation and advocacy on behalf of South Australian councils.

The LGA Strategic Plan 2021-2025 sets out four key initiatives for the LGA:

1. Advocate – Achieve greater influence for local government.
2. Assist – Build the capacity of the member councils.
3. Advance – Facilitate continuous improvement in local government.
4. Achieve – Embedded best practice governance and operations to enable the LGA to provide value to members.

The objectives of the LGA are closely aligned with the principles and purposes of the scheme, as the scheme aims to advance the ongoing development of local government for the benefit of their communities.

### LGA Annual Business Plan

The LGA sets its annual objectives and KPIs each year in an Annual Business Plan. It is anticipated that the Annual Business Plan for 2024-25 will be informed by the Strategic Plan, the 2023-member survey and Notices of Motion presented to Annual General and Ordinary General Meetings.

A copy of the LGA's current Annual Business Plan for 2023-24 is available on the LGA's website. This Plan identifies five objectives linked to the key strategies of Advocate, Assist, Advance and Achieve. The LGA's objectives for 2023-24:

1. Effective as a peak body

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/473301/2021-25\\_StrategicPlan\\_F.pdf](https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0018/473301/2021-25_StrategicPlan_F.pdf)

The LGA will strive for the highest levels of responsibility as the peak body for local government in South Australia, identifying opportunities for best practices across our business.

2. Exel in communication

The LGA will enhance our communication and progress opportunities for targeted marketing campaigns.

3. Lead Advocacy

We will enhance our communications and progress opportunities for targeted marketing campaigns

4. Build Sector Capacity

We aim to build greater capability in the local government sector through the delivery of member services

5. Outcome focuses LGA administered grant programs

We will strive to ensure grant programs managed by the LGA deliver tangible outcomes for the sector.

## LGA member survey

Each year, the LGA conducts a member survey to gather feedback from its members on the services that the LGA provides and its performance in key strategy areas. This survey also includes a scan to understand the issues of relevance to our member councils.

The 2022 member survey identified a number of strategic support services that councils wanted the LGA to focus on. The following priorities scored particularly high amongst members:

- waste management and recycling
- LG advice and support (governance, templates and policies)
- planning reform and urban development
- infrastructure funding, management and grants
- efficiency and financial sustainability
- shared services and council collaboration.

## Consultation with members and stakeholders in November 2023

The LGA asked its member councils to identify priority areas for research and development in the coming financial year through a Latest News item on its [website](#).

In response, councils identified the following areas as research and development priorities:

- Climate – Drought / Resilience - carbon offsets / greening regional SA / Metro – Regional collaborations.
- Regional Roads – Equity in funding / Socio-Economic Impacts to SA of Road Deficiencies/ Unsealed Road Maintenance and Monitoring.
- Road Safety.
- Waste – Regional Local Compost.
- Emergency Services - Volunteering – Impacts / Solutions Community Preparedness.
- Challenging traditional electricity procurement models by acquiring renewable energy generation facilities.
- Planning for change in rural landscapes.
- Developing information covering all functional and financial areas of local government.

In addition, member councils express their priorities through Notices of Motion presented to LGAs Annual General and Ordinary General Meetings. Some items of business carried out at LGA general meetings may require further research and be subject to applications to the LGR&DS in 2024-25. A review of resolutions carried at the LGA's 2023 Ordinary General Meeting and the 2023 Annual General Meeting identified the following actions that may require further research to be supported through the Scheme:

- Environmentally Sustainable Development
- Responding to a State of Climate Emergency
- Supporting regional youth undertaking post-secondary education
- Tree management strategy in areas with powerlines
- Planning for change in rural landscapes
- Animal re-homing feasibility study
- Reducing Heath Island's impact on road infrastructure

## Further information

For information about the Local Government and Research and Development Scheme please view:

- [Local Government Research and Development Scheme website](#)<sup>5</sup>
  - Includes information about the scheme including policies and grant guidelines.
- The [LGA Research Library](#)<sup>6</sup>
  - Includes details and reports related to previously funded projects.

Potential applicants are encouraged to contact the LGA grants team to discuss ideas and obtain preliminary advice before submitting projects.

For further information, please contact:

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<sup>5</sup> [Local Government Research & Development Scheme | LGA South Australia](#)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/member-services/financial-sustainability/grants/research-and-publications>.