

Local Area Planning Support Program Progress and Final Reports

Below are some suggested focus areas for Progress and Final Reports:

- ***How the project has made a difference and changed the way council does business***

- *Outcomes (social, environmental, economic)*

Providing timely access to relevant, update and consistent community profile and population forecast data through Council's external website enhances CoGG's internal capacity to use demographic data to ensure that services and infrastructure are relevant, meeting both current community priorities and future growth and development needs.

- *Key learning's*

Collaboration between five local government areas has enabled the project to deliver greater value than a stand alone system with regional information more accessible than ever before. Aggregating of local area and municipal datasets to provide a 'whole of region' view enables a shared perspective for local and state government and their agencies on regional demographic profiles and forecast data.

Given that the current site is based on 2001 data which has been available for some time, it is anticipated that the community profile site will be of considerably more interest when it is updated to 2006 Census data, planned for mid 2008.

- *Process*

Timely access to consistent, accurate and up-to-date information will enhance CoGG's internal capacity to use demographic data in strategic and operational planning, preparation of grant submissions and any lobbying or advocacy activities.

Additional functionality, previously unavailable to many staff, now provides all CoGG staff with access to the Internet with the ability to run customised queries create customised tables and generate comparison data from the profile and forecasting data provided.

The downloadable PDF reports, available for the whole municipality and for each of the small areas, are ideal for printing and /or emailing,

The provision of information through the new websites provides the opportunity to ensure consistency in the data used in Council service and infrastructure planning and quoted within CoGG documentation/publications.

- *How the project has worked across Council eg involving different departments and levels of council. Indirectly or through collaboration*

A small cross-divisional internal team CoGG team to represent CoGG on the G21 Project Team and subsequently liaise with the consultants (.id consulting) was formed to finalise agreed geography and provide assumptions on land use planning for the community profile and population forecasting respectively. During this process, the team interacted with other individual officers, departments and groups (such as an existing internal Research and Consultation group) across Council to access relevant information.

- *How the project has contributed to capacity development of council*

By avoiding the repetition of developing of community profiles and commissioning population forecasting data, presents more opportunity for staff to engage in and focus on areas of 'higher value' such as data analysis, strategic planning and implementation.

The data provided will facilitate local area planning projects and decision making through the provision of small area population forecast data which takes into account local assumptions and information on factors such as residential development and fertility rates.

Small area population projections will enable CoGG to accurately target resources to the relevant communities within the LGA.

Staff now also have the added benefit of accessing online comparisons and benchmarking with 40 other Victorian Local Governments Areas as well as 120 local government areas nationally.

- *Critical decision points in the progress of the project*

Choosing the geography with which to construct the small areas was a critical decision point in the progress of this project.

Historically CoGG, through its Economic Development Unit, is a significant user and disseminator of ABS data, making information available to the community through many publications (including the annual Economic Indicators Bulletin) as well as Council's website. CoGG has created suburb data by aggregating ABS Collection Districts (CD) to most closely approximate the gazetted suburb boundaries, with time series information available back to the 1970's. A suggested move to create suburbs by splitting CD's to exactly fit the gazetted suburb boundaries by the consultant, .id, meant the loss of the ability to create time series data comparisons, the inconsistency when compared with 2001 Census information already reported as well as impacting on the ability to deliver a number of information services across Council (being unable to replicate data sets). Following considerable discussion, CoGG decided to stay with its existing methodology.

Another critical decision point was the aggregation of suburbs together, which was required due to funding limitations.

- *How has the project enabled the council to better engage with the community*

Given the important role CoGG has in supplying relevant demographic information to the wider community, provision of online comprehensive community profiles and forecast data has vastly improved the capacity of CoGG to deliver timely, consistent and cohesive data to external stakeholders.

- *Case studies/stories, Photos, promotion and newspaper articles etc*

Both the community profiling and population forecasting sites can be accessed by internal staff through CoGG's staff intranet, City Web.

Promotion of the websites to staff has been by way of email, promotion through existing cross-divisional groups and by conducting information sessions for both staff and members of the G21 Pillar Groups. The sessions provided a demonstration of the profile and forecast sites (give by .id consulting) which were interactive to ensure that staff understood the functionality of the site (including the staff access area), how the demographic information is best interpreted and how it is contextualised and, finally, how to use it to understand the community.

- ***How has the project made a difference to the community and other stakeholders***

- *Outcomes (social, environmental, economic)*

Delivery of relevant, update and consistent community profile and population forecast data online provides information to anyone in the wider community with access to the Internet, free of charge.

- *Key learning's*

Delivery of information online provides greater access to information, free of charge, to community members with access to the Internet, increasing the ability of the wider community to use the information for purposes including informing, planning, prioritising and influencing.

Given that the current site is based on 2001 data which has been available for some time, it is anticipated that the community profile site will be of considerably more interest when it is updated to 2006 Census data, planned for mid 2008.

- *Process*

The interactive website, requiring little technical knowledge and designed to be easy to use and understand, provides the wider community greater access to demographic data about the Geelong and the region than ever before.

- *Case studies/stories, Photos, promotion and newspaper articles etc*

The availability of the community profile and population forecast sites has been published in Council's monthly page 'Community Update' (see attached) which appears in all local newspapers. The project will also be the subject of an upcoming media release.

Both the community profiling and population forecasting sites can be accessed by the community through Council's website; www.geelongaustralia.com.au.

Queries on the availability of demographic data through the Customer Service Centres can also be directed to the new sites.

- *Quotes and stories from people who have benefited from the project eg community members*

While we have had some very positive feedback from external users in the wider community, given that the websites have only been live for a relatively short time it is difficult to ascertain the full extent of how has the project made a difference to the community.

- *How the project has contributed to capacity development of the community or other stakeholders*

Giving instant access to essential data about their communities will increase the ability of the wider community including community groups, investors, businesses, students, grant seekers, service providers and businesses to use information for purposes including informing, planning, prioritising and influencing.

As technical knowledge is not required to use the product, it is accessible to all members of the community who have access to an Internet connection.

- *How has the project enabled the community to better engage with Council*

Given that the most current data on the website is 2001 Census data which has been available for some time, it is anticipated the site will be of considerable interest to the wider community when it is updated post March 2008.

- *Recommendations to other councils who may be undertaking similar projects*

It is important to consider the geography used when constructing small areas (see above *Critical decision points in the progress of the project*)

Where possible leverage established networks already in place to help facilitate the completion and implementation of the project.

Identify the ongoing funding source that will be required to periodically review the assumptions and upgrade the site following a new Census period.

- *How the project could have a sector wide implementation*

The G21 system is ready to further aggregate data from the South West Region LAPSP project to enable a whole South West region. This could facilitate the development of a state-wide approach.

- *How State departments are involved in the project*

The process facilitated a 'joined-up' government approach to the development and use of key demographic data required for informed decision making, planning, policy development and service delivery by bringing together local and state government planning departments, strengthening regional partnerships between local and state governments.

In future, it will also enable focused, collaborative and co-ordinated action on regional funding applications for projects of strategic importance.

Completed Final Report to be sent to:

Dr Elsie Alcordo
Senior Policy Officer
Local Government Victoria
Department for Victorian Communities
GPO Box 2392
Melbourne Vic 3001

Telephone: (03) 9208 3622
Fax: (03) 9208 3577

E-mail: Elsie.Alcordo@dpcd.vic.gov.au