



An Australian Government Initiative



Regional
Development
Australia

Better Practice Guide

This guide provides information for Regional Development Australia (RDA) Committee members and employees

This guide is to be used in conjunction with the 2021-2025 Funding Agreement, and sets out the obligations which accompany RDA program funding, administered by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.

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The RDA Better Practice Guide (the Guide) is available on the online portal [RDA Connect](#).

RDA Committees should access the portal to obtain the attachments and reporting templates referred to in the Guide: [RDA Connect - 01. RDA Operational - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Definitions

This Guide uses the following definitions:

RDA means Regional Development Australia Committees.

Committee means an RDA which is party to a Funding Agreement with the Commonwealth of Australia under the RDA program, and includes the:

- Indian Ocean Territories Regional Development Organisation (IOT RDO); and
- Victorian Regional Development Australia RDAs.

Funding Agreement means a 2021 – 2025 RDA Funding Agreement unless otherwise specified.

Australian Government Minister means the Commonwealth Minister with responsibility for the RDA program.

State Minister or Territory Minister means the minister who has the responsibility for the RDA program in the relevant State or Territory.

In addition to the definitions above, the Guide uses terms which are defined in the Interpretations Clause of the Funding Agreement.

For noting:

1. The October 2023 version of the Guide applies to the RDAs from 31 October 2023 and does not apply retrospectively.
2. In South Australia and New South Wales, RDA Committees are referred to as RDA Boards. All references to 'RDA Committees' and 'Committees' include these RDA Boards.
3. Definitions of 'regions' vary for regional and state RDAs:
 - for the standalone capital city RDA Committees of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide Metropolitan, 'region' refers to the areas of their state outside of their metropolitan area; and
 - for all other RDA Committees, 'region' means the region covered by the local government and Territory areas within each RDA Committee's boundary, as defined at item A.8.1 of each RDA Committee's Funding Agreement (Schedule B in the Victorian Funding Agreement).

Introduction to the Regional Development Australia Program Better Practice Guide

Application

The Guide assists Chairs, Deputy Chairs, members of Committee governing bodies and Committee Personnel to manage their Committee and its business.

Purpose

The purpose of the Guide is to provide information and guidance, and outline certain requirements, in relation to governance, administration and operational matters.

The Guide promotes principles of good governance. As Committees receive Australian Government funding, they must operate in an open and transparent manner that reflects their accountability for the expenditure of government funds.

The Guide is incorporated into the RDA Funding Agreements. Where sections of the Guide are referenced in the Funding Agreements, those sections are legally binding on Committees. If there is any inconsistency between the Guide and the Funding Agreements, the Funding Agreement will prevail to the extent of the inconsistency.

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, or equivalent, (the Department), encourages RDA Committees to build on the information in this Guide and to make use of the suggested references. This Guide supports Committees to meet conformance and performance expectations, however it is not an exhaustive resource. The Guide may be updated by the Department to reflect changes in Australian Government policies and programs or variations to the Funding Agreement.

Questions about the Guide or the Funding Agreement can be directed to rda@infrastructure.gov.au.

The Department provide written notification of changes to the Guide to all Committees. This notification should normally provide 10 working days' advance notice of changes, to give Committees an opportunity to provide comment.

Section 1 – the Regional Development Australia Program network

1.1 Overview

The Regional Development Australia (RDA) program is a national network of Committees which are critical to the delivery of the Australian Government’s vision for regional Australia of regions that are strong, connected and resilient.

Committees play a role in helping to drive economic growth, innovation and entrepreneurship in regions through facilitating investment in community, industry and the environment. Committees assist to bridge the regional development gaps in regions by working with a broad range of stakeholders across sectors and supporting the delivery of identified Australian Government strategic priorities.

The capital city Committees of Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney work with city-based stakeholders and the regional Committees in their states to identify and facilitate economic development opportunities in those regions. Capital city Committees are advocates, influencers and promoters of the regional areas of their state.

Committees are incorporated, not-for-profit community-based organisations (with the exception of the Victorian-based Committees, which are not incorporated). Members of Committee governing bodies are volunteers drawn from the region who bring leadership, skills and experience from the community, business, industry, local government and not-for-profit organisations. Each Committee has a broad and diverse skills base, with demonstrated networks and connections.

1.2 RDA Charter

The RDA Charter (the Charter) sets out the Australian Government’s priorities for the activities of Committees and supports the long-term priorities of government to grow Australia’s regions.

The Charter was released in July 2023, and states that Committees will:

1. Focus their activities and strategy on delivery of the Regional Investment Framework (RIF) in their region, including investment in people, places, services, and industries and local economies.
2. Support regional stakeholders, including local government and the not-for-profit-sector, to seek grant opportunities that advance strategic regional priorities.
3. Support decarbonisation efforts and the transformation to a net zero economy and enable regional linkages between sectors to achieve these aims.
4. Build the evidence for economic development, including innovation and diversification strategies.
5. Facilitate meaningful engagement across the three levels of government to ensure investments deliver better outcomes for regions.
6. Contribute relevant data and local intelligence to support the evidence base to inform regional development strategies, program design and policy responses.

1.3 Outcomes and performance indicators

The Funding Agreement details the Outcomes that Committees are required to work towards for their region. These Outcomes stem from the Charter items outlined in Section 1.2 above:

- facilitation of regional economic development outcomes through investment in:
 - i. skills and local leadership
 - ii. opportunities for First Nations people
 - iii. infrastructure
 - iv. connectivity
 - v. decarbonisation
 - vi. industry growth
- support of regional stakeholders, including local government and the not-for-profit-sector, to seek grant opportunities that advance strategic regional priorities. (Regional RDAs only)
- contribution to, and where appropriate, drive local economic development planning and strategy development.
- contribution to relevant data and local intelligence to support the evidence base to inform regional development strategies, program design and policy responses.

Committees must address the following performance indicators when reporting on their performance and delivery of Outcomes:

- for regional Committees:
 - provide details of initiatives which will (for planning purposes) or have (for reporting purposes) contributed to investment in:
 - skills and local leadership
 - opportunities for First Nations people
 - infrastructure
 - connectivity
 - decarbonisation
 - industry growth and/or
 - provide details of where the Committee has:
 - supported awareness raising and/or engagement with grant opportunities
 - supported the preparation of grant applications.
 - Provide details of where the Committee has:
 - contributed to the development of local plans and strategies, and specify the lead stakeholders
 - provided evidence to support regional economic development
 - facilitated or been a member of local leadership groups/forums, and/or
 - provided other assistance
 - outline instances where the Committee has provided evidence-based data and local intelligence to the Australian Government.
- for capital city Committees:
 - provide details of the activities that the Committee will undertake (for planning purposes) or has undertaken (for reporting purposes) to facilitate economic development outcomes for regional Committees, during the financial year e.g. activities which facilitate investment in:
 - Skills and local leadership
 - Opportunities for First Nations people
 - Infrastructure
 - Connectivity
 - Decarbonisation, and/or
 - Industry growth
 - provide details of where the Committee has:
 - contributed to the development of local plans and strategies, and specify the lead stakeholders
 - provided evidence to support regional economic development

- facilitated or been a member of regional leadership groups/forums, and/or development
 - provided other assistance
- outline instances where the Committee has contributed to relevant data and regional intelligence to support the evidence base to inform regional development strategies, program design and policy responses.

Section 3 of this Guide explains the performance indicators Committees are required to report against in providing evidence of achievement against each of the Outcomes. Committees can include additional relevant performance indicators in their Annual Business Plan and Budget and report against these in their Annual Report on Outcomes.

1.4 The Australian Government's role in the management of Committees

The Australian Government Minister with responsibility for the RDA program is jointly responsible for government support of the RDA network with state and territory counterparts where applicable. Chair appointments are made by the Australian Government Minister¹. Detailed information on appointments processes is contained in Section 2, Committee governance and appointments.

The Department assists the RDA network and monitors both the expenditure of Australian Government funding and Committee performance. It does this to help Committees achieve their goals within the Australian Government's announced policy intentions and in accordance with the obligations set out in the Charter and in the Funding Agreement. The Department strategically develops and reviews the national governance framework for the RDA network, promotes the RDA network to other government agencies, assesses Committee outcomes and strategies, and distributes key messages.

The Department also provides some administrative and operational support to Committees, including providing advice about sound governance practices, and managing the Funding Agreement. A summary of the Australian Government's and RDA Committees' key responsibilities is outlined in [Attachment 1.A](#).

All information provided to the Department by Committees is treated in accordance with the [Privacy Act 1988](#) and the [Australian Privacy Principles](#), and held securely within the Department's records management system.

A key part of the Department's support is communication, both within the RDA network and about the RDA network. It maintains the national RDA national website (www.rda.gov.au) and the online portal <https://govteams.sharepoint.com/sites/rdaconnect> [RDA Connect](#) which both provide communications resources, materials and information about the RDA network and partner programs.

The RDA national website and online portal enhance communication and the dissemination of information between Committees, regional communities, stakeholders and the Department. The website contains interactive maps of each RDA jurisdiction and the national RDA network, plus links to news and events, program partners and landing pages to each RDA.

¹ Appointments of Chairs in Victoria are joint decisions of the Australian Government minister and the Victorian minister. In South Australia, they are joint decisions of the Australian Government minister, the South Australian minister, and the President of the Local Government Association of South Australia.

Both platforms contain links to the RDA Charter, Priority Matrix, the Guide and case studies. The portal features an 24/7 online chat, grant funding, and operational information such as RDA Brand and Logo Packs and templates.

Each Committee will have various liaison points within the Department. All Departmental RDA Liaison Officers are bound to behave ethically and in line with [Australian Public Service Values and Employment Principles](#) and the [Australian Public Service Code of Conduct](#).

Departmental RDA Liaison Officers undertake to:

- manage the Funding Agreement in a manner that is proactive and transparent
- provide advice on the provisions of the Guide
- make any necessary variations to the Funding Agreement, including drafting and consulting Committees
- receive feedback on the Guide and amend it as necessary
- remind Committees of their outcome and performance indicator requirements and reports as they arise, to receive and assess these reports, and advise the results of assessment in a timely manner
- pay Committees in accordance with the Funding Agreement without unnecessary delay
- monitor, support and assess the performance of Committees in relation to the outcomes and performance indicators identified in the Funding Agreement and provide constructive feedback
- provide timely responses to enquiries either verbally or in writing
- manage Chair vacancies and appointments processes, including provision of a dedicated RDA phone line 1800 505 938 (Monday to Friday, 9:00AM - 5:00PM AEST) and email address rdaapplications@infrastructure.gov.au relating to appointment processes in progress
- provide open and regular communication, including via RDA Update emails (update@infrastructure.gov.au) and the RDA national website www.rda.gov.au and the online portal [RDA Connect](#).

The Department's RDA Liaison Officers are the primary points of contact within the Department and play a facilitative role to link Committees with other sections of the Department as appropriate.

1.5 Program arrangements

The Australian Government has the following arrangements in place across Australia to support the RDA network:

- in South Australia, a tri-partite arrangement includes financial support for Committees from the South Australian Government and the Local Government Association of South Australia
- Victorian Committees are supported by Victorian Government funding and employees, with Committees operating as part of the Victorian Government's regional and economic development structures. Further information on the arrangements for Victorian Committees is in Section 1.6
- the Northern Territory Government provides in-kind support for RDA Northern Territory in the form of rent-free accommodation for the Alice Springs office and works closely with that Committee on development issues
- RDA Tasmania receives in-kind accommodation and administrative support from the Tasmanian Government and is collocated with the Department of State Growth.

There are no formal arrangements currently in place with the jurisdictional governments in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia or the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

1.6 Arrangements in Victoria

Administration

The Funding Agreement for the 6 Committees in Victoria is between the Australian Government and Regional Development Victoria (RDV). RDV is part of the Victorian Government's Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR).

RDV is responsible for the overall administration of the Funding Agreement on behalf of the Victorian Government, coordination of activity and information across the 6 Victorian Committees, and employment of the Directors of Regional Development and support staff for the 5 regional Victoria Committees (Barwon South West, Gippsland, Grampians, Hume and Loddon Mallee) and the Melbourne Committee.

Victorian Committees should liaise with the Department's Liaison Officers when assistance is required. The submission of each Committee's Annual Business Plan and Budget and Annual Report on Outcomes will be directly to the Department. Financial reporting should be submitted by RDV directly to the Department.

Regional Partnerships

An alignment between the Victorian Government's Regional Partnerships (RP) regional consultative forums and the Committees is encouraged by cross-membership where 2-3 RDA Committee governing body members sit on each RP. This integration enables comprehensive advice on the priorities for regional Victoria to both levels of government on the socio-economic remit of the RPs and the economic development focus of the RDA program.

Committee funding

Australian Government funding to the Victorian Government assists the Committees to perform their activities. The funding contributes towards:

- engagement of a Director of Regional Development and support staff, employed by the Victorian Government and based within Victorian Government offices in each Committee's region, to support the operation of Committees and delivery of outcomes
- operation of the Committees
- implementation of the Charter and Australian Government priorities within the Annual Business Plans. Annual Business Plans and Annual Reports on Outcomes should demonstrate that Australian Government funding has been expended in line with the Charter and Australian Government priorities.

The Victorian Government provides additional funding to the Committees for the purposes outlined above. In addition to contributing direct funding of the Committees, DJSIR and RDV provide additional support including, but not limited to:

- operational and policy support to Committees from regional and Melbourne-based RDV staff
- alignment and coordination between the Committees and the RPs
- access to RDV and DJSIR meeting spaces, video conferencing and associated equipment and resources across numerous sites
- shared presence and branding across numerous sites

- facilitated access to other relevant areas of the Victorian Government
- communications and media support
- place-based business and project intelligence
- coordination, on behalf of the Committees, Directors of Regional Development and the Australian and Victorian Governments, of investment, information and reporting across all Victorian Committees.

Reporting in the Annual Business Plans and Annual Report on Outcomes should outline the allocation and expenditure of the additional funding provided by the Victorian Government and identify where an activity has been funded by both the Australian and Victorian Governments.

For reporting to the Australian Government on Committee funding see Financial reporting by Victorian Committees (Section 3.4.1).

1.7 Legal framework

Note this section does not apply to Victorian Committees as they are not incorporated and they receive funding from the Australian Government via Regional Development Victoria.

1.7.1 Incorporation and Australian Business Number

Incorporation

To receive funding, each Committee must be a not-for-profit association incorporated under the relevant state or territory incorporated association legislation.

This Better Practice Guide and the Funding Agreement are subject to applicable State, Territory and Commonwealth legislation, including the relevant state or territory incorporated association legislation. It is the responsibility of Committees and their Personnel to remain informed of their obligations and responsibilities under the relevant legislation and the Committee's constitution. Such responsibilities may cover governance requirements, conflict of interest arrangements, record and account keeping, auditing obligations, and taxation arrangements.

Australian Business Number

All Committees must:

- hold an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- notify the Department within 14 days if they cease to hold an ABN
- correctly quote their ABN on all documentation to the Department and any other Australian Government agency.

1.7.2 Committee constitutions and rules of association

Legislation requires incorporated associations to develop a *constitution* or *rules of association* (depending on the jurisdiction). The constitutions² of incorporated Committees include the rules for running an incorporated legal entity.

Committees must periodically review their constitution or rules of association and make any necessary amendments to ensure that it conforms to:

- applicable federal, state or territory legislation
- the Funding Agreement, including any variations made from time to time
- the requirements of the Guide, which also are subject to amendment.

² Called Rules of Incorporation or Rules of Association in some jurisdictions.

Prior to making any amendment to their constitutions (or rules of association), Committees should:

- consult the Department (and state or territory and local governments, if appropriate) on any proposed significant changes to their constitution. In doing this, the Committee should write to the Department's Contract Manager (Director of RDA Program Management), as prescribed in the Funding Agreement
- only alter their constitution (including an alteration to the association's name) by special resolution of the governing body members.

Committees must include a reference to the Charter in their constitution.

Committees must provide a revised copy of their amended constitution or rules of association to the Department within 30 days of the amendments being registered with the relevant state or territory government authority.

1.7.3 RDA name changes

Where a Committee is considering changing its name it must consider the following:

- 'Regional Development Australia (RDA)' must be retained in the name
- the proposed new name must reflect the geography and characteristics of the region. Generic names or names which do not reflect the nature and location of the Committee are not appropriate
- the proposed re-naming must be discussed with, and supported by, key stakeholders including the Department and state, territory and local government partners.

The Department does not encourage the standalone capital city Committees changing their names to be that of their state. In many cases this will result in names that are similar to the names of state government regional development agencies, leading to confusion amongst stakeholders. If a capital city Committee wishes to pursue such a name change, and has the consensus support of the regional Committees within its jurisdiction, it should notify the Department, who will then seek views from the relevant state government in considering the request.

Once the name change has been discussed with all parties, Committees must undertake the necessary legal processes to formally change their incorporated name with the relevant state or territory bodies and advise the Department in writing within 30 days of the formal name change being implemented. The Department will then update the content and maps on the [RDA national website](#) and [RDA Connect](#), and will engage with other program areas to amend their content, as appropriate.

1.7.4 Funding Agreement

The Funding Agreement for each Committee sets out the funding that the Australian Government provides, the terms and conditions attached to the provision of funding, and agreed outcomes, performance indicators and reports. The Funding Agreement also sets out standard obligations for Committees.

If a Committee breaches its obligations under the Funding Agreement, the Australian Government may terminate the Funding Agreement and cease providing funding to the Committee. Grounds for termination are set out in the Funding Agreement.

Arrangements with state and territory governments vary. In most jurisdictions, the Funding Agreement is between the Commonwealth of Australia (as represented by the Department)

and each individual Committee. In Victoria, a single Funding Agreement with the State of Victoria (as represented by RDV) covers all Victorian Committees.

The Funding Agreement sets out the commitments and obligations of all parties to that Funding Agreement.

Variations to the Funding Agreement

The Department, from time-to-time, may propose to vary the Funding Agreement pursuant to the terms of the Funding Agreement. It will endeavour to give Committees adequate prior notice of all proposed variations.

Copies of a formal deed of variation document will be sent to the Committees concerned, with a request that they be signed by a delegated officer of the Committee and then returned to the Department for signature by a representative of the Commonwealth. Pursuant to the Funding Agreement the variation will come into effect once both parties have signed. A copy of the fully signed version will be returned to the Committee.

Deeds of variation will be accompanied by covering correspondence from the Department clearly explaining the aims of the proposed variation.

Applicable laws and jurisdiction

ACT laws apply to the Funding Agreement. This means that the Funding Agreement will be interpreted with reference to ACT laws and any disputes regarding the Funding Agreements will be heard in the ACT courts. This should not be taken to mean that Committees are subject only to ACT law on other matters. The relevant Commonwealth, state and territory legislation still applies to Committees in the normal manner on matters such as workplace relations, occupational health and safety, planning and the environment.

In a broader sense, Committees need to be aware of Commonwealth, state and territory legislation which includes, but is not limited to the latest versions of:

Commonwealth legislation:

- [Age Discrimination Act 2004](#)
- [Archives Act 1983](#)
- [Competition and Consumer Act 2010](#)
- [Copyright Act 1968](#)
- [Criminal Code Act 1995](#)
- [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#)
- [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999](#)
- [Fair Work Act 2009](#)
- [Freedom of Information Act 1982](#)
- [Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986](#)
- [National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Privacy Act 1988](#)
- [Racial Discrimination Act 1975](#)
- [Sex Discrimination Act 1984](#)
- [The Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012](#)
- [Trade Marks Act 1995](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#)

State and territory legislation and regulations:

- Incorporated Associations Act
- Planning and Development Act and Environmental Protection
- Equal Opportunity
- Fair Work or Industrial Relations
- Work Health, Safety and Welfare
- Whistleblowers Protection
- Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation
- Anti-Discrimination
- Freedom of Information
- Regional Development.

1.8 Committee funding

1.8.1 Funding sources

Australian Government funding

Committees receive funding from the Australian Government, under the Funding Agreement which is administered by the Department. Subject to the provisions of the Funding Agreement, the Australian Government may change the level of funding it provides to a Committee in response to administrative or government policy changes.

State or territory government and local government funding

Committees may also receive funding from state or territory governments and local government bodies, in either cash or in-kind form.

Third party arrangements

Subject to provisions of the Funding Agreement on third party arrangements, Committees may obtain contributions from other sources. This includes from Australian Government agencies other than the Department. As outlined in the Funding Agreement, Committees must:

- in relation to Clause 6.2.g, seek Departmental agreement in writing if they wish to use any RDA program funding for an activity for which they receive Other Contributions. This applies to arrangements that do not relate to RDA program Activities as defined in the Funding Agreement, regardless of the value of the arrangement.
- in relation to Clause 10.6 (not applicable to IOT RDO and Victorian Funding Agreements), provide the Department with at least 15 business days' notice in writing of significant proposed arrangements that they intend to enter into with a third party, including those involving major payments. A major payment is regarded as \$50,000 or greater. Committees must write to their RDA Liaison Officer about such proposed arrangements. Please note, unless the arrangements involve subcontracting or the use of RDA program funding, Departmental approval is not required, only advance notice of intent. This provides us with an opportunity to highlight to RDAs any potential risks for consideration prior to entering into agreements.

1.8.2 Australian Government funding

Funding is provided to support the Committees in delivering outcomes and reports, as set out in Schedule A of the Funding Agreement. Funding amounts, any additional terms or

restrictions and a payment schedule, are also set out in Schedule A of the Funding Agreement.

Committees prepare annual budgets to use these funds in undertaking their approved Annual Business Plan and Budget (business plan). The Committee must submit the business plan to the Department for approval. (See Section 3 for the relevant mandatory templates).

Committee expenditure must be clearly aligned with the approved business plan. The Department generally regards costs such as accommodation, employee salaries, office supplies and equipment, marketing expenses, motor vehicle costs, travel costs, and providing for stakeholder consultation or information sessions as reasonable expenditure.

Clause 6.11 (Clause 6.12 of the IOT RDO Funding Agreement, Clause 6.15 of the Victorian Funding Agreement) of the Funding Agreement sets out that the Committee must seek the Department's approval if it wishes to transfer more than 15 per cent of its RDA program funding for the period from one expenditure item to another in a financial year.

The main purpose of this requirement is that the Department is aware of any intention to change substantially the Committee's activities from those in the approved business plan.

International travel

While it is generally a matter for a Committee to decide whether costs incurred in achieving outcomes are reasonable, the Department does not generally regard international travel as a reasonable cost.

If a Committee believes an exceptional case can be made for international travel, the Committee must write to their RDA Liaison Officer for consideration of approval. This must include a business case that demonstrates the relevance of the travel to the outcomes and approved business plan and provide any other information requested by the Department.

The Department may impose terms and conditions, including the provision of a report summarising the outcomes from the travel.

End of financial year funding surplus

The Funding Agreement requires Committees to write to the Department if:

- more than 20 per cent of the Australian Government's RDA program funding for a financial year remains unspent at the end of the financial year in which it was paid to the Committee, and
- the Committee wishes to treat that unspent amount as funding for the following year (note: this refers to funding to support the Committee to deliver the outcomes, not to specific project funding).

Committees can identify any expected unspent funding at the end of the financial year when preparing their business plan for the next financial year. Once Committees have completed their Annual Audited Accounts and finalised the exact carry over amount they should present a business case to the Department outlining the final surplus and intended use.

The following information must be included when writing to the Department with that request:

- the amount
- the reason for delay in completing the approved activity

- what the carry-over amount would be used for and by when if approved
- the impact on delivering the outcomes, performance indicators and reports
- the benefit of the carry over to the program as a whole and to the Committee's region.

1.8.3 Project funding

Project funding may be provided by the Australian Government to particular Committees from time to time to undertake specified activities, as agreed by both parties and is set out in a schedule to the Funding Agreement.

The broad requirements for the management of such funding are the same as for annual funding, but the timing of payments and reporting requirements will be as specified in the relevant schedule(s) to the Funding Agreement. Acquittals and reporting may be additional to that provided for in the main body of the Funding Agreement.

1.9 RDA boundaries

The geographic area a Committee is funded to service (its boundaries) is defined in the Funding Agreement at Schedule A (or Schedule B of the Victorian Funding Agreement).

RDA boundaries have been set to generally accord with state regional development boundaries or structures where possible, and currently do not cross jurisdiction borders. In most cases they incorporate complete local government areas and, where necessary, Australian territories and/or unincorporated areas in any state.

For the standalone capital city RDA Committees of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide Metropolitan, 'region' refers to the areas of their state outside of their boundaries.

In a small number of cases a local government area may be divided between two Committees where a clearly definable district aligns better with one Committee, whilst the remainder aligns better with another Committee. Such arrangements are only entered into with the agreement of both Committees and the support of relevant stakeholders such as the local governments affected and partner state or territory governments.

1.9.1 Boundary adjustments

Boundaries may be adjusted where changes to state and/or local government boundaries, changing demographics or other relevant factors make such changes desirable. Generally speaking, the Department's preference is to have alignment with state and territory regional development areas where possible, so a change to a state or territory-based regional development area may be a reason to suggest an adjustment to Committee boundaries.

Committees, and partner state or territory governments and local governments, may request boundary adjustments. The Department may initiate boundary changes where necessary.

Boundary adjustment requests must be made in writing to the Department's RDA Liaison Officer specified in the Funding Agreement and emailed to rda@infrastructure.gov.au, and include:

- a clear business case for the proposed change
- written support from all Committees affected by the proposed changes
- proposed funding adjustments (within current funding levels) that have been agreed between Committees
- where relevant, written support from a partner state or territory government
- written support from other relevant stakeholders such as local governments, chambers of commerce or local members of parliament.

A Boundary Change Request form is provided at [Attachment 1.B](#) to assist with written requests.

Consideration of requests for boundary changes will be on a case-by-case basis by the Australian Government Minister, in conjunction with their state or territory ministerial counterpart in partner jurisdictions, and (for Committees in South Australia) with the President of the Local Government Association of South Australia.

Any changes to boundaries of Committees will require a variation to those Committees' Funding Agreement to reflect the changes to the area covered and funding levels.

Section 2 – Committee governance and appointments

2.1 Committee composition

Committees composition is determined by each Committee's constitution or rules of association. Typically, a Committee's governing body is made up of a Chair, Deputy Chair and 6-8 governing body members.

2.2 Committee meetings

Committees should hold regular meetings to discuss key issues and make decisions in accordance with the requirements of the Committee's constitution and the Funding Agreement. Committees are encouraged to take advantage of teleconferencing and videoconferencing facilities to maximise participation.

Committee meetings must be based on an agenda that has been approved by the Chair prior to the commencement of the meeting. Committees should ensure that the following matters are addressed during each of their meetings:

- acknowledgement of the traditional owners of the land/s where meeting participants are located³
- reiterate conflict of interest procedures at the commencement of the meeting, and record all declarations of conflicts of interest in the minutes and the action taken to address them. Best practice has conflicts of interest as a standing agenda item
- report on year-to-date expenditure against the operational budget
- report on progress against achieving outcomes and performance indicators
- record all Committee decisions and document any actions taken as a result of decisions
- include informed strategic discussion of regional economic priorities and solutions, and the Committee's ongoing role in these.

Committees must keep accurate minutes of meetings, including action items, and may be required to provide these to the Department.

Committees must table and acknowledge the RDA program's Code of Conduct at least annually (see Section 5).

It is also recommended Committees complete the 'Annual Governance Certification' each year (see Section 4.1.1).

2.2.1 Attendance at Committee meetings by Departmental employees

Clause 10.5 (Clause 9.5 of the IOT RDO Funding Agreement, Clause of the 10.6 Victorian Funding Agreement) of the Funding Agreement provides for Departmental employees to attend Committee meetings in an observer capacity.

Clause 10.4 (Clause 9.4 of the IOT RDO Funding Agreement, Clause 10.5 of the Victorian Funding Agreement) provides for Committees to provide notices of meetings and agendas in advance of meetings if requested, as well as minutes, reports and financial statements. Departmental employees must provide adequate notice of their intention to attend and, in

³ For a suggested wording for an acknowledgement of country see https://www.indigenous.gov.au/contact-us/welcome_acknowledgement-country and Section 8.

attending, will engage in such a way that provides support to Committees but does not inhibit Committee discussions of strategic matters.

Departmental employees attend in an observer capacity only and cannot participate in decision-making by Committees on their internal management. They can provide factual advice relating to the obligations of the Committee under the Funding Agreement, on wider Australian Government policy or other matters for which the Australian Government may have information that will assist Committees in achieving their objectives.

Departmental employees should ensure they are in a position to provide advice that might be requested prior to attending the meeting and must actively follow up on advice requested by the Committee after the meeting if they were not in a position to provide advice at the meeting.

2.3 Committee roles

Please see the *RDA Appointments Guide* for information about the roles, accountabilities and responsibilities of Chairs, Deputy Chairs, governing body members and Directors of Regional Development (DRDs). For a copy of the *RDA Appointments Guide* contact your RDA Liaison Officer.

2.4 Selection and appointment processes

Please see the *RDA Appointments Guide* for information about selection and appointment processes for Chairs, Deputy Chairs, governing body members and DRDs.

2.4.1 Public sector appointees to Committees

APS employees can serve on RDA Committees. However, the Department and relevant applicants must be confident that the risk of conflicts of interests or duties associated with holding such dual roles is acceptable and manageable.

There is a greater risk of conflicts of interests or duties where the official:

- will have access to confidential information regarding:
 1. the department's intentions regarding the RDA program; or
 2. the internal workings and conduct of the RDA; or
- holds a position that involves making formal recommendations, advice, or decisions in relation to the Funding Agreements or RDA program more broadly.

The Department will ensure that it does not appoint any public official to an RDA committee who has responsibility for the functions of the Committees. However, appointees must ensure that they continue to monitor their circumstances and declare any potential, perceived or actual conflicts of interest that arise.

For further information on conflict of interest see Section 5.7.

2.5 Absences, resignations and terminations

2.5.1 Leave of absence – Chairs

A Chair may take leave at any time and must follow relevant procedures set out in the constitution/rules of their Committee. During any absence of the Chair, the Deputy Chair will act as Chair and will assume that role's position and duties. The Chair is required to notify the Department of all periods of leave.

For periods of leave over one month, the Chair should also write to the Australian Government Minister. In Victoria, the Chair should also advise the State Minister. In South Australia, the State Minister and the President of the Local Government Association of South Australia must also be advised. Advice should include the period of leave and the Deputy Chair's willingness and availability to assume the role for that period. In the case of absences exceeding 6 months, the appointment of the Chair may be reviewed by the Australian Government Minister.

2.5.2 Resignation of the Chair, Deputy Chair or governing body member/s

Chairs, Deputy Chairs and governing body members may resign at any time, but need to follow relevant procedures set out in the constitution/rules of their Committee. This should include details of arrangements and procedures for advising the Committee about the resignation and the timing of acceptance. The Chair must ensure all resignations are consistent with the Committee's constitution/rules.

Chairs must inform the Department of their resignation in writing. Chairs must also advise the Department, in writing, of the resignation of a Deputy Chair and a governing body member within 5 days of receiving notice. In the case of a Chair resigning, the Deputy Chair will be asked, by the Department, to assume the position and duties of the Chair until a new Chair is appointed.

When a Deputy Chair has resigned, the Chair may invite a current governing body member of the Committee to fill the role in an acting capacity until a new Deputy Chair is appointed through an open and transparent application process, as per the *RDA Appointments Guide*. The Department's preference is that the acting period not exceed 6 months.

2.5.3 Termination of appointment

Under Sections 8.1 and 8.2 of the Funding Agreement, the Australian Government Minister may, at their absolute discretion, terminate the appointment of a Chair at any time through the provision of written advice. The Committee constitution or rules of association must provide for the Australian Government Minister to terminate the appointment of a Chair in alignment with Clauses 8.1 and 8.2 of the Funding Agreement (not applicable to the IOT RDO or Victorian Funding Agreements).

The termination of appointments is taken seriously by governments and will normally be preceded by consultations and discussion about issues of concern. In Victoria these decisions are made jointly, or after consultation with, the relevant State Minister and in South Australia, decisions are made jointly, or after consultation with, the relevant State Minister and the President of the Local Government Association of South Australia.

Reasons for the termination of appointments could include, but are not limited to:

- breaching the Code, as outlined in Section 5
- serious concerns regarding the administration or performance of the Committee
- a change in the Australian Government's regional priorities and/or policies
- a loss of confidence in the capacity of a Chair to fulfil their obligations and lead a Committee
- a view that a change of leadership would be in the best interests of the Committee.

A Chair may, in accordance with the Committee's constitution or rules, suspend or terminate the appointment of the Deputy Chair and or one or more governing body members through the provision of a written notice. To suspend or terminate the Deputy Chair, the Chair must **first** seek the agreement of the Australian Government Minister. In Victoria, the Chair should also seek agreement from the State Minister. In South Australia, agreement must also be

sought from the State Minister and the President of the Local Government Association of South Australia.

The Chair is required to provide written advice to the Department if a Deputy Chair or one or more governing body members have been suspended or terminated. This advice must be provided within 5 days of the Chair's decision, and must provide details of the circumstances and the procedure/s that were applied prior to the decision being made.

Procedural fairness must be demonstrated in any decision to terminate a Chair, Deputy Chair, or governing body member of a Committee. For the avoidance of doubt, procedural fairness in the suspension or termination of a Chair, Deputy Chair or governing body member involves:

- providing reasons for decisions
- allowing individuals to have a right of reply
- genuinely considering any response.

Section 3 – Committee deliverables under the Funding Agreement

3.1 Overview

The Funding requires each Committee to submit the following documents to the Department by the due dates specified in item A.4.2 of the Funding:

- Annual Business Plan and Budget
- Annual Report on Outcomes
- Annual Audited Accounts (or Annual Certified Accounts in Victoria).

Guidance for these documents is provided below and in the attachments. Some elements of each are mandatory, and these are identified as such in the guidance. The majority is provided as better practice guidance only, and Committees can determine how they choose to complete their documents.

Committees **must** complete the mandatory elements in the format specified by the Department. Committees will be asked to resubmit their document/s if the mandatory elements have not been included. RDA Liaison Officers can assist Committees in the preparation of these documents by reviewing drafts and providing timely, constructive feedback during the preparation process.

These documents not only provide important program acquittal information, but are utilised extensively by the Department to promote Committees, reply to Ministerial requests for information and to demonstrate to the Government and the Minister the impact of RDA work throughout regional Australia.

Having an Annual Business Plan and Budget in place by 1 July of each financial year also enables Committees to demonstrate to stakeholders they have a clear and agreed set of objectives from the beginning of the year.

It is therefore very important documents are provided on time. RDA Liaison Officers will follow up on documents not received by due dates with the DRD in the first instance, then with the Chair and Deputy Chair if the required information is not provided.

Extensions to due dates will be considered for up to one month in extenuating circumstances, on a case by case basis and should be submitted prior to the report due date for consideration.

3.2 Annual Business Plan and Budget

Each Committee must prepare an Annual Business Plan and Budget (business plan). This is an operational document, which brings together all aspects of the Committee's activities for the coming financial year, including its work program, priorities and resources. It is required to provide operational parameters for the DRD, Executive Officer and employees, and assist with determining staffing structures and required skill sets.

The Department has identified mandatory and recommended elements of a business plan below. The mandatory elements must be included in the business plan to satisfy the requirement of Schedule A.4 (Plans and Reports) in the Funding Agreement.

Once the Department has accepted a business plan, significant changes to it (i.e. changes resulting in more than 15 per cent of the total RDA program funding for that period being moved between expenditure items in the budget as a result of the change) can only be made by written approval of the department.

Key elements of the business plan

Chair's foreword or executive summary (recommended)

This should provide a reflection by the Chair on the lessons learned from the previous year and summarise the Committee's key focus areas for the coming year, provide an overview of how the skills of Committee governing body members and Personnel will be used to deliver the business plan and outline how the Committee will work with other regional development stakeholders to facilitate economic development.

Strategic context and regional priorities (mandatory)

Consideration should be given to the strategic priorities and needs of the region over the next 3-5 years and the potential impacts of external influences (such as local, national and international market forces and public policy changes) on these. Based on this, outline the short-, medium- and long-term outcomes and performance indicators of the Committee (please note that these are required to align with the Funding Agreement outcomes and performance indicators and the Australian Government's regional development priorities⁴). For Capital City Committees, state level strategic priorities are to be outlined.

For regional Committees, this section must include information about the region's Strategic Regional Plan/s that the RDA has adopted or developed in collaboration with key stakeholders and how the Committee's work program will complement the priorities identified therein.

Annual work plan (mandatory)

This section should operationalise the strategic context identified in the previous section and include the activities that will be completed in the year to commence, continue or complete the delivery of the Committee's identified outcomes.

When preparing a business plan, the Committee may also wish to specify any outcomes and performance indicators that it believes are *not* relevant to its region or are addressed by other economic development stakeholders. Analysis should be provided which explains the reasons why the Committee has chosen to focus on particular outcomes and performance indicators and also why it believes others require a lower (or no) level of activity.

The Department will agree this position with Committees via acceptance of the business plan. Reporting against the Funding Agreement outcomes and performance indicators will then be tailored accordingly in the Annual Report on Outcomes, with a greater level of performance being demonstrated against those areas that were defined as high priority and a lower (or no) level of performance being reported for areas that are low priority or not relevant to the region.

Committees may also wish to address their internal corporate governance and process improvement needs in this section. A number of Committees use a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis to assist them with this aspect of their

⁴ [Microsoft Word - RMBS-combined.docx \(infrastructure.gov.au\)](#)

planning as it helps to identify areas of their business that may need attention and opportunities for improving organisational efficiency and effectiveness.

Guidance for Victorian and South Australian Committees (mandatory)

State governments jointly fund Committees in these jurisdictions. Local governments also provide funding to South Australian Committees. It is acknowledged that for these states, some outcomes and performance indicators sought by the Victorian Government, the South Australian Government and local governments (as appropriate) will be the same, and others may be different but complementary.

Therefore, the business plans of Victorian and South Australian Committees must detail:

- the outcomes and performance indicators being sought by state and local governments
- the activities that will contribute to the achievement of common outcomes and performance indicators
- the activities that will contribute to the achievement of state and local government specific outcomes and outputs.

Outcomes and Performance Indicators table (mandatory)

Committees must include an Outcomes and Performance Indicators table. This allows the Department to determine how the Committee is addressing the Charter and delivering the outcomes required under the Funding Agreement.

The Department has provided 3 templates for regional Committees and 3 templates for capital city Committees at [Attachment 3.A](#) for presenting this information, and Committees may choose the template that best suits their needs. The first two templates use the Funding Agreement outcomes and performance indicators as the starting point for detailing activities and reporting performance. The third template allows Committees to use their strategic priorities as the starting point, with activities to be reconciled to the Funding Agreement outcomes and performance indicators so that the Department can ensure Committee work programs are consistent with the Australian Government's policy directives (that is the Charter) for Committees.

Committees are required to provide their top 5 strategic priorities and key business activities for the year as part of the Outcomes and Performance Indicators table. This will assist the Department in reporting key focus areas for Committees to ministers and government agencies.

Committees must complete Part 1 of the table, *What will we do?* for their business plan. Please note that targets in terms of the value of investment and local procurement, and the number of jobs created are not required in the business plan.

Part 2 of the table will be completed for the Annual Report on Outcomes (see Section 3.3) at the end of the reporting period.

Budget table (mandatory)

Committees must provide a detailed budget for the year in the format provided at [Attachment 3.B](#). This provides the Department with assurance that RDA program funding is being allocated appropriately.

There are 2 versions of [Attachment 3.B](#), one for the majority of RDAs and a separate version for the following Committees:

1. RDA Far South Coast and RDA Mid North Coast – these Committees receive 2 separate streams of RDA program funding under their Funding Agreements, to cover the delivery of the RDA program to the Jervis Bay Territory and Norfolk Island respectively. Their variation to the template allows them to separately budget and acquit both streams of funding
2. Victorian Committees – these Committees have different reporting requirements due to their arrangements with the Victorian Government. Their variation to the template allows both Australian and Victorian Government funding to be budgeted and acquitted.

When submitting their Annual Audited Accounts (see Section 3.4), a representative of the Committee or the auditor must complete the 'Actual' column of the template. This information enables the Department to effectively acquit the program funding that it provides to Committees.

Communications strategy (recommended)

Including a communications strategy in the business plan is better practice as it assists in ensuring communication is integrated with a Committees' overall operational strategy and work plans.

The communications strategy should analyse how communication can be used to support the achievement of outcomes and performance indicators during the coming year and outline the various communication processes that will be implemented.

Regular maintenance of the information contained on Committee websites and a plan for how social media will be used should also be factored in to ensure that current and accessible information is continuously available to stakeholders (see Section 8.5.3). Some Committees provide regular, structured information to regional stakeholders generally in the form of updates or newsletters, and this could also be considered as part of the communications strategy.

This information typically addresses:

- significant consultations undertaken with regional stakeholders, such as community groups, industry associations, businesses, government agencies and local government
- conferences attended by Committee governing body members or Personnel, forums hosted, or submissions invited
- activities undertaken, especially significant activities initiated or completed. This includes papers or submissions prepared by the Committee, research commenced or completed and progress on priority issues
- recent achievements including media coverage of the Committee, grants or contracts awarded to or successfully supported by the Committee, new partnerships formed and major projects completed
- emerging 'hot' issues for the region and/or the Committee, including significant changes in employment levels, new industries moving into or out of the region, and the local impact of significant natural events and the Committee's role in addressing these issues.

If the Committee is continuing to apply the principles of a communications strategy that has been provided to the Department previously, please note this in the business plan.

3.3 Annual Report on Outcomes

The annual report is the formal mechanism through which Committees share their successes and achievements with the Department, including how their activities relate to the strategic priorities of their region and of all levels of government.

Each Committee's annual report is required to provide both qualitative and quantitative reporting against the outcomes and performance indicators outlined in the Funding Agreement. The strategic priorities and key business activities from the business plan for the reporting period must be included and referred to.

Committees can choose what they include and how they set out the majority of their annual report, with the exception of the following mandatory items:

Guidance for Victorian and South Australian Committees (mandatory)

The mandatory business plan requirements outlined in Section 3.2 must be reported in the annual report. The information provided regarding activities that have contributed to the achievement of shared outcomes and performance indicators, as well as those that are state and local government-specific, must be easily identifiable from the reporting provided on Committee-specific activities.

Outcomes and Performance Indicators table (mandatory)

Committees must complete Part 2 of the Outcomes and Performance Indicators table that was provided in their business plan (which included the completion of Part 1 of the table), in order to provide information against the *What did we do?* (qualitative input) and *Performance indicators* (quantitative input) items for each of their previously-nominated activities. Reporting needs to detail these activities' progress and achievements against the outcomes and performance indicators specified in the Funding Agreement, as agreed with the Department via the business plan.

Case studies (mandatory)

Committees must include at least 2 written case studies in their annual report.

These should:

- focus on key achievements during the reporting period
- demonstrate examples of where the Committee has made a difference in its region
- be new case studies (i.e. not used previously in an annual report) unless there has been considerable advancement in the project's status.
- include images and/or videos
- only contain personal information of individuals over the age of 18 years whose informed consent to use the personal information has been provided

Case studies are extremely valuable for the Department, as they assist in promoting Committees' work to ministers, government agencies and community stakeholders. Committees may wish to provide a further summary of their activities and lessons learned during the year. The format and amount of detail provided is up to each Committee to determine.

Third party arrangements (mandatory)

The Funding Agreement (Clause 10.6, Not applicable to IOT RDO and Victorian Funding Agreements) requires that Committees provide information in the annual report regarding significant third-party arrangements that are in place (that is those with a contract value of \$50,000 or greater).

This information must include:

- a description of the activity being undertaken
- impact that the activity will have on Funding Agreement outcomes
- risks to the Committee in completing the activity and the mitigation strategies for these
- contract start and end dates
- contract value and payment milestones
- activity progress to date.

Committees may choose to reference this information in the body of their annual report or in an attachment.

3.4 Annual Audited Accounts

Committees must provide the Department with a complete copy of their independently-audited financial accounts each year (audited accounts). The audited accounts allow the Department to determine if the financial management practices of the Committee have been effective and financial risks are being controlled.

Committees must also provide a completed version of the budget table (as per [Attachment 3.B](#)) that was supplied with the business plan at the beginning of the reporting period, with the 'Actual' columns completed for each line item. Certification by the Chair and the auditor regarding the accuracy of this table is required. Certification that RDA program income and expenditure has been reported correctly by the auditor also gives the Department assurance that funding has been recorded correctly and spent appropriately.

3.4.1 Financial reporting by Victorian Committees

RDV will provide the Department with detailed financial reports, including:

- Income and expenditure for each Committee of Australian Government, Victorian Government funding and all other funding (as per [Attachment 3.B](#))
- an aggregated financial statement
- a reconciliation and balance statement of the RDA Trust Fund into which RDA program funding is paid.

3.5 Ad hoc reports to the Department

3.5.1 Requests from the Department

The Department may request ad hoc reports, and/or verbal or written information from Committees from time to time for the purposes of providing briefing content for the minister, the Department or the wider government, or for Departmental engagement and program management activities. If any particular format is needed with such a request, that will be conveyed to the Committee by the Department.

3.5.2 Critical regional development issues

If critical regional development issues (positive or negative) are identified by Committees, these must be reported to the Department. This allows the Department to proactively respond to these issues.

Critical issues are those which are likely to have a significant impact on the economic performance and growth of the region. They can be positive or negative in nature. For example, identified critical issues could be those which:

- have a major impact on key industries in the region, or could have flow on impacts to related industries, which in turn have consequences on the comparative advantage and business competitiveness of the region
- relate to infrastructure, which could affect access to key international, national and regional markets
- have a relationship to human capital in the region, particularly education and skills
- affect the sustainable growth of the region. This may include major changes in the political, physical or regulatory environment, which may impede economic growth
- impact effective cross-sectoral and intergovernmental partnerships in the region
- stop or adversely affect the Committee completing key activities.

Where possible, critical issues should be supported by evidence or data.

Committees can also provide advice on critical regional issues via their business plan and annual report, through discussions with their Departmental RDA Liaison Officer, and through correspondence to the minister (please provide a copy of the correspondence to the Department to ensure its awareness of the issues).

The Department will also bring issues to the attention of Committees, through teleconferences, update emails⁵, their Departmental RDA Liaison Officers, [RDA Connect](#) and through other means, as appropriate.

⁵ Emails sent from update@infrastructure.gov.au

Section 4 – Committee operational management framework

4.1 Corporate governance

Good governance arrangements are essential for an organisation to demonstrate to stakeholders that it can deliver on its intended outcomes. Such arrangements inspire confidence in stakeholders that the organisation has the necessary skills and expertise to run its business, and that it has established robust administrative arrangements efficiently, effectively and ethically.

There are 3 main areas of good governance requirements for organisations:

1. **Performance** – whereby the organisation uses its governance arrangements to contribute to its overall performance and the delivery of its goods, services or programs
2. **Risk management** – whereby the organisation manages risk and has contingencies in place to deal with identified risk (see Section 4.2)
3. **Conformance** – whereby the organisation uses its governance arrangements to ensure it meets the requirements of the law, regulations, published standards and community expectations of probity, accountability and openness.

Committees should adopt best practice corporate governance procedures, notably:

- clear definitions of responsibility, including roles of the Chair, Deputy Chair, governing body members and Personnel, with clear lines of reporting
- transparent management processes and procedures for addressing conflicts of interest of those entrusted to manage resources and deliver outcomes
- delegations must be clear, formalised and reviewed to ensure they are still appropriate
- open, transparent and independent merit-based recruitment processes
- accountability in all operations, particularly in management of expenditure in accordance with the Funding Agreement.

Corporate governance is underpinned by a values system and specifically the Code, which outlines minimum standards of integrity and ethical behaviour and highlights the transparency and consistency in actions of Committee governing body members and Personnel.

Good corporate governance also requires sound risk management and reporting to the Australian Government on the findings of conformance reviews.

The basic responsibilities of individual governing body members include:

- understanding and complying with all formal obligations, including the Code of Conduct for Committee Members and Personnel (see Section 5)
- meeting specific roles and responsibilities as outlined in governance documentation
- formulating strategies, goals and business plans including Committee reports
- reviewing progress towards achieving those goals
- ensuring adequacy and efficacy of internal controls and reporting systems.

4.1.1 Annual Governance Certification

An 'Annual Governance Certification' (the Certification) is provided [Attachment 4.A](#) to assist Committees to assess whether they have better practice governance arrangements in place which are being reviewed regularly and complied with.

Use of the Certification is not mandatory. However, the Department views the Certification as a valuable tool to enable Committees to assess the adequacy of key governance arrangements and Committees are therefore strongly encouraged to table, discuss and complete it at one meeting each year. Committees may consider it timely to do this as part of their meeting to discuss and endorse the Annual Report on Outcomes or Annual Financial Statements.

It is also anticipated the Certification will assist Committee governing body members to demonstrate they have effectively completed their key fiduciary duties and provide useful information for the financial statement auditors in completing their work.

The Certification is provided as guidance for Committees, and Committees may wish to add to it, or amend it, to suit their specific needs.

4.2 Risk management

4.2.1 Importance of risk management

Risk management is an important part of good corporate governance and sound management practice. The business of Committees involves some degree of risk which must be managed.

Identification and management of risks which must be managed by each Committee:

- provides a more confident and rigorous basis for decision-making and planning
- creates a clearer understanding of opportunities and threats
- improves the ability to manage uncertainty and variability
- supports active consideration of change
- supports effective allocation and use of resources
- improves the security of assets
- improves stakeholder confidence and trust.

The methodology used to identify risk and procedures to be implemented for managing these should be documented and endorsed by the Committee. It is considered better practice for Committees to prepare a risk management strategy and review this annually.

4.2.2 Developing a risk management strategy

When developing a risk management strategy, the Committee should consider the following, but not limited to:

- outcomes and performance indicators – whether there are any risks that would impact the achievement of the Committee's outcomes and performance indicators
- financial matters – procedures to authorise and monitor expenditure
- budget matters – procedures to monitor expenditure against agreed budget items and identify unauthorised expenditure
- contractual matters – procedures to ensure that funds are expended in accordance with the Funding Agreement, monitoring of the Funding Agreement and prevention of breaches of the Funding Agreement

- insurance coverage – for litigation or professional misconduct, occupational health, safety and welfare, workers’ compensation and motor vehicle
- taxation matters – procedures to ensure adherence with Australian Tax Office requirements and the maintenance of full records for the purposes of fringe benefits and other taxes
- assets – procedures to ensure accurate recording of and accounting for assets, prevention of misuse of assets, and that leasing arrangements are entered into only after approval by the Committee
- administrative matters – procedures to ensure that accurate financial records are kept, breaches of financial policies are identified and addressed, audit reports are obtained and supported by complete documentation, and that appropriate back-ups of electronic records are kept
- employment of employees – procedures and processes to ensure fair and transparent recruitment, workplace safety, and the use of employment contracts which meet government regulations and enable performance monitoring.

Committees may wish to draw on the Australian Risk Management Standard (AS/NZS ISO 31000–2009 Risk Management - Principles and Guidelines)⁶

4.3 Financial management

4.3.1 Financial records

Each Committee should implement financial management controls, guidelines and management information reports consistent with Australian Accounting Standards. They should also maintain financial records that comply with the requirements of the Funding Agreement. At a minimum, a report addressing the Committee’s financial performance and financial position must be tabled at each Committee meeting and reviewed and endorsed by governing body members.

4.3.2 Interest from bank accounts

Any interest earned on funding should be used as if it were a part of the funding. Interest earned on RDA program funding should be recorded separately from interest earned from other contributions. An estimate of interest to be earned on Australian Government funds should therefore be included in the relevant parts of the annual budget. Actual interest earned should be included in the relevant part of [Attachment 3.B](#) when it is submitted as part of the audited accounts.

4.3.3 Taxes, duties and government charges

In resolving or clarifying any issues relating to taxation, it is the responsibility of individual Committees to obtain financial and legal advice. This may include gaining advice or a Private Ruling from the Australian Tax Office on matters which are particular to the Committee. See www.ato.gov.au.

The Department does not include Goods and Services Tax on Funding Agreement payments, based on section 9–17(3) of the [A New Tax System \(Goods and Services Tax\) Act 1999](#) which deals with payments made between government-related entities.

⁶ The full text of this document is only available for purchase, but some websites provide summaries.

With regard to income tax, the Department refers Committees to the Australian Taxation Office's *Income tax status review worksheet for self-assessing non-profit organisations*⁷. Committees should also seek advice from a financial adviser.

4.4 Reimbursements, honoraria, sitting fees and travel costs

Funding may be used, with Committee approval, to reimburse reasonable⁸ travel expenses incurred by Committees governing body members and Personnel when they attend meetings related to the work of the Committee or perform Committee activities. Reasonable expenses mean items such as domestic travel and accommodation, meals and motor vehicle allowances. In all cases the Committee must ensure that the principles of reasonableness, accountability and value for money are upheld. International travel is generally not regarded by the Department as a reasonable expenditure of Australian Government funding (unless an exceptional business case is made out as outlined in section 1.8.2 of this document).

Funding may not be used for payment of Chair or member honoraria or sitting fees. Sitting fees or honoraria may be paid from funding sources other than the Australian Government's funding where that source permits such fees to be paid and where the Committee's constitution or rules of association allow such payments.

For further information on reasonable expenditure and travel (see Section 1.6.2).

Committees may also wish to refer to the current travel allowance remuneration rates, as set out in the Remuneration Tribunal's determination *Official Travel by Office Holders*⁹.

No governing body member, including the Chair, is entitled to claim the cost of employing a person to look after their business while they are performing Committee duties.

4.5 Other contributions, third party arrangements and sponsorships

4.5.1 Contributions from other Australian Government agencies

Committees should be alert to the very wide range of programs managed by Australian Government agencies which they may be able to access as support for specific activities. There may be opportunities, for example, for Committees to obtain funding for investment and industry attraction. Such funding will be subject to the advice on third party arrangements (see Section 4.5.3).

4.5.2 Contributions from state or territory agencies

Other contributions may be provided to a Committee from a state or territory government. This may be for operational purposes or for specific activities. Such funding is subject to the following advice on third party arrangements.

4.5.3 Third party arrangements and contracting

Clause 10.6 (not applicable to IOT RDO and Victorian Funding Agreements) of the Funding Agreement, Reporting and Third-Party Arrangements, requires Committees to provide the Department with advance notice (at least 15 business days), in writing, of any significant proposed arrangement that they intend to enter into with a third party (see

⁷ See <https://www.ato.gov.au/Forms/Income-tax-status-review-worksheet-for-self-assessing-non-profit-organisations/>

⁸ In some jurisdictions, a cap on expenditure which can be reimbursed to Committee governing body members may be in place.

⁹ See <https://www.remtribunal.gov.au/document-library-search/determination-201607-official-travel-office-holders>

Section 3.3 for information Committees need to provide). This does not cover the provision of day to day supplies or services.

'Significant Proposed Arrangements' include those with potential to have a notable impact on the Committee's activities, such as by any of the following:

- involving major payments (regarded as \$50,000 or greater), necessitating the re-allocation of resources,
- taking up considerable amounts of Committee personnel time
- having potential to alter the Committee's relations with stakeholders.

Please note, unless the arrangements involve subcontracting or the use of RDA program funding (refer below), Departmental approval is not required, only advance notice of intent. This provides us with an opportunity to highlight to Committees, any potential risks for consideration prior to entering into agreements.

Third party arrangements often involve the provision of goods or services to the Committee. Where this involves the performance of any of the Committee's obligations under the Funding Agreement, such an arrangement amounts to subcontracting, which requires the Australian Government's written approval in all cases.

Where third-party arrangements involve generation of income for the Committee, the Committee must ensure, as far as practical, expenses are fully costed to the third party, including a proportion of office expenses (such as rent, telephone, equipment and salaries).

Committees must ensure that all third-party contracts that do not relate to RDA program Activities as defined in the Funding Agreement, whether under or over \$50,000, do not require the support or use of RDA program funding provided by the Australian Government. Clause 6.2(g) of the Funding Agreement requires the Department's written agreement if Committees intend to use RDA program funding for this purpose.

Committees should be confident that any additional business undertaken on behalf of other organisations does not compromise their activities, including those set out in the funding agreement and the business plan.

Clause 10.7 (Clause 9.6 of the IOT RDO Funding Agreement) of the Funding Agreement prohibits Committees from negotiating for or entering into any arrangement which may bring the Australian Government into disrepute. This encompasses a very wide range of scenarios, which could be expected to cover anything perceived to be contrary to law, the policies of the Australian Government, or the values that it promotes. Committees should consult the Department as early as possible if they have any concern that a prospective arrangement could raise any such perceptions.

Section 4.6 provides further information regarding insurance coverage for third party arrangements.

4.5.4 Sub-leasing of premises

Committees should advise the Department before sub-leasing office space to third parties. The Department prefers such sub-leases to be with a 'like' body, particularly where there are opportunities to support and build networks or to build a relationship to progress the priorities identified in the business plan.

4.5.5 Sponsorships

The provisions in the Funding Agreement at Clause 10 on arrangements with third parties include sponsorships (not applicable to IOT RDO or Victorian Funding Agreements). Sponsorship is a commercial arrangement in which a sponsor provides a contribution of money or in-kind to support an activity in return for certain specified benefits. Sponsorship can be provided by the corporate sector or private individuals in support of a Committee's activities, or may instead involve the Committee itself granting sponsorship. This does not include unconditional gifts, donations, bequests or endowments. Sponsorship is not philanthropic - a sponsor expects to receive a reciprocal benefit beyond an acknowledgement.

Although there is no prohibition on Committees entering into sponsorships, they must be mindful of any implications for their obligations under the Funding Agreement. This includes, but is not limited to, Clause 10.7, concerning arrangements that may bring the Australian Government into disrepute, and Clause 10.6, concerning third party arrangements. Entering into sponsorship arrangements either as a recipient or a provider involves potential risks for the Committee, including real or perceived conflicts of interest.

There are a number of principles that all Committees should consider prior to entering into any sponsorship agreement, regardless of whether the Committee is the party seeking or providing the sponsorship. These should be addressed in a sponsorship policy, which should be published by the Committee in advance or circulated to organisations interested in providing or receiving sponsorship.

Any sponsorship proposals must then be considered against these principles:

- a sponsorship agreement must not impose or imply conditions that would limit, or appear to limit, a Committee's ability to carry out its functions fully and impartially. Instead, sponsorship agreements should be of assistance to carrying out the activities in the Committee's business plan
- there must be no actual conflict between the objectives and/or mission of the Committee (and the Australian Government) and those of the party receiving or providing sponsorship
- sponsorship received or provided must not be political or contentious
- it is inappropriate for any Personnel or governing body member of the Committee to receive a personal benefit from a sponsorship
- in most circumstances, the public interest is best served by making sponsorship opportunities widely known. To this end, sponsorship must be sought and granted by using broadly based, open processes that are not limited solely to invited sponsors
- a sponsorship arrangement is a contract and should be described in a written agreement
- all sponsorship arrangements must be approved by the Committee and described in the reports the Committee submits to the Department (that is the business plan and annual report) in a form commensurate with the significance of the sponsorship.

Further considerations regarding receiving or providing sponsorship funds are below.

Committees receiving sponsorship funds

If Committees seek sponsorship funding from third parties, this must be done using a transparent process outlined in the sponsorship policy which applies the principles outlined above. Committees should note the types of sponsorship appropriate to their Committee

before seeking sponsorship, including identifying the types of activities that would not be appropriate for sponsorship.

Committees should also consider the desirable attributes of an acceptable sponsor, including but not limited to:

- potential sponsors must be reputable individuals or bodies
- the objectives and products of potential sponsors cannot conflict with the values and the objectives of the Committee
- potential sponsors should have an acceptable sponsorship record with the Committee or other agencies
- goods or services provided would benefit the Committee and/or the general public and be of the type and quality that is required
- the objectives and missions of potential sponsors' parent companies or subsidiaries must not conflict with those of the Committee
- where sponsorship involves the sponsor providing a product to the Committee, the Committee should evaluate that product for its fitness for purpose against objective criteria that are relevant to the Committee's needs.

Committees should be clear on the benefits they will provide to sponsors, and must ensure these benefits are consistent with their funding agreement, the Charter, and the Code of Conduct. Committees must maintain detailed records of their decision to enter into any sponsorship agreement.

Committees providing sponsorship (must be defensible)

As well as the principles listed above, Committees must ensure that any sponsorship being granted is within the Committee's budget.

Committees are encouraged to consult the ICAC publication *Sponsorship in the public sector—a guide to developing policies and procedures for both receiving and granting sponsorship (2006)*¹⁰. For more information, go to:

<https://www.icac.nsw.gov.au/prevention/corruption-prevention-advice-topics/sponsorship>.

4.6 Insurance

4.6.1 Insurance coverage

The Australian Government provides three types of insurance cover:

- Management Liability and Professional Indemnity (Not for Profit Organisation Liability Insurance, includes cover for 'wrongful act', 'employment practices' and 'personal injury or publishers' liability' and Social Engineering Fraud) to a limit of \$10,000,000 for any one claim and an annual aggregate for all RDA committees of \$10,000,000;
- Volunteer Workers (provides Your Committee Members with personal accident insurance whilst undertaking the Activity including travel to and from meetings) to a limit of \$100,000 for any one claim and an annual aggregate for all RDA committees of \$5,000,000; and
- Public and Products Liability Insurance (covers Personal Injury/Property Damage/Advertising Liability Insurance) to a limit of \$20,000,000 for any one occurrence, with an annual aggregate limit for all RDA committees of \$20,000,000.

¹⁰ See <https://www.icac.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/232/Sponsorship%20in%20the%20public%20sector.pdf.aspx>

The policies for all three of these types of insurance coverage and the Certificates of Currency are available by contacting your RDA Liaison Officer or rda@infrastructure.gov.au. It is important for all Committees to familiarise themselves with the content of these insurance policies. Each of these forms of insurance includes coverage of Committee volunteers.

Note that there is no age limit for insurance coverage for Public and Products Liability Insurance coverage and Management Liability Insurance, however Voluntary Workers Insurance is only provided for Committee governing body members who are 90 years of age or under.

Extraneous 'out of pocket' expenses incurred while undertaking Committee activities, such as damage to or loss of personal property, should be managed within the Committee's budget where these incidents are not covered under the existing insurance policy. The Australian Government will not pay for this type of additional cover.

It should also be noted that, under the terms of the insurance cover maintained by the Department for the benefit of Committees, the 'Insured' (the Committee) is required to pay the 'Deductible Amount' (the excess) specified in the policy. The Australian Government will not pay the excess for any insurance claims. Committees must also ensure that sub-contractors of the Committee are covered by insurance under either the Committee's insurance policies or separate insurance policies.

In general, the Department's insurance coverage for RDA Committees, as detailed in Clause 16 (Clause 15 of the IOT RDO and Victorian Funding Agreements) of the Funding Agreement, does not extend to third party arrangements. However, coverage may be able to be provided if the arrangement involves an Australian Government agency. If this is the case, please contact your RDA Liaison Officer who will contact the Department's insurance broker to determine whether the arrangement can be accommodated under the Department's existing policies.

If a Committee has any questions when an incident arises, the DRD should consult with the RDA Liaison Officer in the first instance or email rda@infrastructure.gov.au. The Department will seek advice from the insurance broker as required.

Committees will be advised by the Department of any updates to insurance coverage.

4.6.2 Workers' compensation insurance

Committees are responsible for taking out and maintaining workers' compensation insurance under the relevant state or territory legislation to cover their employees. Committees must be aware of and comply with their legal responsibilities regarding workers' compensation insurance and workers' health and safety.

4.6.3 Asset insurance

Committees are responsible for taking out and maintaining comprehensive and contents insurance for all assets owned or controlled by the Committee. This includes contents insurance for Committee premises and specific cover for items not located at the premises.

4.6.4 Motor vehicle insurance

Committees are responsible for taking out and maintaining comprehensive insurance of any motor vehicle leased (subject to the terms of the lease) or owned by the Committee. The use of personal motor vehicles is not covered by the insurance which is procured by the Department, for example driving a personal motor vehicle to and from a Committee meeting.

4.7 Assets

4.7.1 Committee responsibilities for assets

The Funding Agreement requires Committees to use Assets for the purposes of the activity, to safeguard their assets, to have regard to comply with the sections on Assets in this Guide and follow any processes in it, and to maintain an Asset register. This also applies to Assets that are owned by a third party and are under lease, hire or finance arrangements. Assets that are lost, damaged or destroyed should be promptly reinstated from the proceeds of Asset Insurance referred to in Clause 16 (Clause 15 of the IOT RDO or Victorian Funding Agreements) of the Funding Agreement.

Committees are responsible for purchasing, leasing, managing and disposing of the Assets which they acquire with funding and must:

- ensure the purchase or lease is in accordance with the Funding Agreement, and not compromise the Committee's ability to comply with the Funding Agreement
- ensure all Assets are held securely to prevent theft, loss, damage or unauthorised use
- keep appropriate documentation of all Assets, including of their purchase or lease, as well as an Asset register.

Asset purchases or leases should also provide value for money, so competitive quotes should be obtained and kept on file. The Department may ask to see these quotes and the Committee's assessment of them.

The following provides an outline of good practice Asset management that Committees are encouraged to follow.

4.7.2 Asset management system

Committees should implement an Asset management system that sets out procedures to record, monitor and manage Assets.

Such a system should cover:

- purchasing Assets
- registering Assets on the Asset register (see below)
- testing the Assets for impairment as per [Australian Accounting Standard AASB 136 'Impairment of Assets'](#)¹¹
- monitoring and recording the replacement of Assets
- disposal of Assets.

4.7.3 Register of Assets

The Register of Assets should record details of all Assets and all portable and attractive items.

The following is an outline of details which the Asset register should maintain for each Asset (where applicable):

- description of the Asset
- date of purchase or lease of the Asset

¹¹ See https://www.aasb.gov.au/admin/file/content105/c9/AASB136_08-15_COMPmar20_07-21.pdf

- purchase or lease price of the Asset
- amount of funding used to purchase or lease the Asset
- details of lease arrangements (if applicable)
- location of the Asset
- amount of depreciation on the Asset
- details of disposal of the asset (such as the date and method of disposal, sum received and sales particulars)
- a separate addendum listing all portable and attractive items i.e. those with a high inherent risk of theft, are easily portable or transferrable, and are attractive in terms of their personal use or for resale. This includes mobile telephones, laptops, iPads, tablets, televisions, DVD players and other similar communication tools.

The Register of Assets should be updated whenever Assets are acquired or disposed of by the Committee.

4.7.4 Stocktake of Assets

Committees should complete a stocktake of their Assets every 12 months. This should involve:

- confirming that all items are correctly recorded in the Register of Assets and still in the custody of the Committee
- checking on the condition of Assets, including testing for impairment as per [Australian Accounting Standard AASB 136](#)
- adding any unrecorded existing Assets to the register and removing Assets no longer held.

4.7.5 Asset replacement account

An important part of Asset management is making provision for the replacement of Assets as their useful life expires. Committees should budget for the replacement of Assets from their funding and, to support this, may maintain an Asset Replacement account. The dollar value of this account should reflect the accumulated depreciation recorded in the Committee's general ledger and needs to reconcile to the Register of Assets.

4.7.6 Asset disposal

All Committees should have clear procedures for the disposal of Assets. Appropriate means of Asset disposal include through sale at auction, tender, trade-in or via a second-hand dealer. If sale is not practical, another option is to gift the Asset to a charitable organisation, local school or library. To ensure a fair return to the Committee and to avoid any actual or perceived preferential treatment, any disposal transaction should be transparent and at arm's length from Committee governing body members and personnel. Assets should therefore not be sold to:

- the Chair
- governing body members
- Personnel engaged by the Committee
- contractors
- sponsors or third parties whom the Committee has entered into arrangements with
- friends or relatives of any of the persons set out above.

The sale process should be clearly documented. Profit from the sale of any asset (disposal price less accumulated depreciation) should be deposited into the Committee's operating account on receipt. That profit remains part of the funding and must be used for the activity.

When the Funding Agreement expires or if it is terminated, the Department may require the Committee to deal with an Asset in a particular way and will notify the Committee in writing what it must do. This advice does not apply to Assets that are owned by a third party.

4.8 Records management

Records refer here to information in any form that is created, received and maintained as evidence and documentation by the Committee or its personnel in pursuance of legal obligations, including undertaking Committee activities. Record keeping is an important part of transparency and accountability. Committees should implement a records management system, keep accurate records of operations, and store records securely. Some information recorded may be considered sensitive or 'in-confidence', for which particular care should be exercised to ensure integrity and security.

Committees must maintain records and documents consistent with relevant Commonwealth, state or territory legislation and the Funding Agreement. The Funding Agreement requires Committees to make and keep full and accurate records of their conduct of activities and retain them for a period of no less than 7 years after the end of the activity period.

The Australian and international standard for records management, AS ISO 15489, provides guidance on records policies and procedures to help meet business needs, legal requirements and stakeholder expectations. It is widely used in Australia and internationally in both private and public organisations. AS ISO 15489 may be purchased from Standards Australia ([Home | Standards Australia](#)).

The National Archives of Australia also provides advice <http://www.naa.gov.au/information-management/>. This information has been developed for Australian Government agencies, much of this advice may also be useful for bodies such as Committees.

Records may be subject to the [Freedom of Information Act 1982 \(Cth\)](#) and the relevant state or territory equivalent. Some Committee records may also be deemed to be Australian Government records and must be treated accordingly. The [Archives Act 1983](#) provides further details and clarification of responsibilities.

4.9 Complaints management policy and procedures

Complaints management is an important part of good corporate governance and sound management practice. All Committees should have a complaints management policy that sets out how they will handle any grievances.

Feedback, including formal complaints, can be vital in improving the quality of services to a community. All formal complaints should be dealt with in a professional and accountable manner, even where the Committee believes a complainant is vexatious.

When developing a complaints management policy, Committees can find the Commonwealth Ombudsman's *Better Practice Guide to Complaint Handling* and other guidance at: <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/publications-resources-and-fags>.

Complaints regarding Committees should be directed to the Committee concerned in the first instance. However, the complainant may choose to make an initial approach directly to the Department if that is their preference¹².

¹² Complaints about an RDA Committee should be submitted via rda@infrastructure.gov.au

If the Committee is unable to resolve a complaint to the complainant's satisfaction, the complainant may raise the matter with the Department. The Department will then investigate and may require the Committee concerned to account for how it:

- gave the complainant the opportunity to be heard by the full Committee
- investigated the complaint, deliberated on the course of action and recorded the deliberations
- chose to act in response to the formal complaint
- responded to the complainant.

Evidence such as minutes of meetings may also be sought.

Any feedback or complaints concerning the Department itself can be made using the feedback facility located on the Department's website¹³.

4.10 Privacy requirements

Committees should be aware of all their legal responsibilities under privacy legislation, as well as those specified in the Funding Agreement. The Funding Agreement requires that Committees not do anything which, if done by the Department, would be a breach of an Australian Privacy Principle or the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).

The Australian Privacy Principles (March 2014) regulate the handling of personal information by Australian Government agencies, businesses with a turnover of more than \$3 million or those trading in personal information and all private health service providers. For further information, go to Office of the Australian Information Commissioner <https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/australian-privacy-principles-guidelines/>.

Each Committee should develop a privacy plan for handling personal information.

Consistent with privacy legislation and good management practice, Committees should:

- ensure any Committee personnel who are required to deal with personal information for the purposes of the Funding Agreement are made aware of the privacy obligations set out in this Guide and the Funding Agreement
- immediately notify the Department if they become aware of a breach or possible breach of any of privacy obligations.

4.11 Disclosure

The Funding Agreement prevents Committees from disclosing any Confidential Information without its permission (except where that disclosure is required by law).

Confidential Information may include (but is not limited to) information in the following categories:

- information specifically designated or marked as confidential by the Department
- personal information
- information concerning confidential business affairs
- trade secrets or commercially valuable information
- research by CSIRO or the Australian National University
- information relating to the enforcement of law and protection of public safety
- documents subject to legal professional privilege

¹³ See <https://infrastructure.gov.au/utilities/contact.aspx>

- documents containing material obtained in confidence
- documents, disclosure of which would be in contempt of Parliament or in contempt of court.

4.12 Further information and resources

There are a number of available resources on corporate governance that Committee governing body members and Personnel may find helpful to draw on when developing procedures and reviewing their own practices. Committees may wish to consider the following (not an exhaustive list):

- The Australian Public Service Commission - [Governance | Australian Public Service Commission \(apsc.gov.au\)](https://www.apsc.gov.au/governance)
- Better Boards - <https://betterboards.net/>
- Women on Boards - <https://www.womenonboards.net/en-au/home>
- Australian Institute of Company Directors - <https://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/resources>
- Board Checkup - <https://www.boardcheckup.com/>
- Standards Australia (note that users must pay to access these publications) - <https://standards.org.au/>.

Section 5 – Code of conduct and ethics for Committee governing body members and Personnel

5.1 Introduction

Committee governing body members and Personnel are required to be people of good character who reflect accepted standards of behaviour. They need to be open, honest and accountable, and to act in good faith. Committee governing body members and Personnel need to be aware of the responsibilities attached to their roles.

The obligations outlined in this section of the Guide (**Code**) are in addition to, and do not replace, limit or modify obligations which are applicable to Committees or their staff under applicable state or territory incorporated associations legislation.

It is the responsibility of each Committee to be familiar with their Code of conduct obligations under this Guide and the legal requirements in their jurisdiction.

5.2 Application

Compliance with this Code is mandatory for Committees under Clause 17.1 (Clause 16.1 IOT RDO and Victorian Funding Agreements) of the Funding Agreement. In addition, Committees must, under Clause 2.3(f) ensure that their governance documents and internal management practices give effect to its obligations under the Funding Agreement. Accordingly, Committees must put in place procedures to ensure that governing body members and Personnel adhere to the obligations in this Code. This may include referring to or including the Code in employment contracts, volunteer deeds/agreements, or internal policies of the organisation.

5.3 Principles

Committee governing body members and Personnel are to always act in the best interests of the community in their dealings with government agencies, the business sector, other organisations and individuals by:

- being honest and exercising all due care and diligence in the performance of their duties and functions
- maintaining the confidentiality of information made available in the course of their duties and of Committee decisions
- never making improper use of their position, or the information gained through that position, to the unfair advantage of themselves or any other person
- never taking any course of action that would bring into disrepute or otherwise disadvantage the Committee, the Department or the Australian Government, the relevant state or territory government Department, the relevant state or territory minister responsible for regional development or local government in the Committee region
- disclosing any material or personal interest in Committee or regional economic development matters, and subsequently abstaining from any discussion or vote on those issues
- being bound by, and committed to, decisions legitimately taken by the Committee, whether or not they agree with the decision

- demonstrating loyalty to the public interest and to the standards set out in the Funding Agreement and this Guide
- providing authorised persons, fellow governing body members and auditors when asked with complete, accurate and correct information, which is not misleading in any respect
- complying with relevant laws.

Victorian Committee employees

Employees of the 6 Victorian Committees are required to comply with the [Code of Conduct for Victorian public sector employees](#).

5.4 Personal and professional behaviour

Governing body members and Personnel of a Committee must perform their duties diligently, impartially and conscientiously to the best of their ability. Governing body members and Personnel of a Committee must comply with all relevant state or territory and Commonwealth legislation. In particular, Committees must provide a workplace that safeguards the health and safety of Personnel, and is free from discrimination, bullying and harassment.

5.5 Fairness and equity

It is important that principles of fairness and equity are both complied with and are seen to be complied with by the Governing body members and Personnel of a Committee.

These principles are:

- taking all relevant information into consideration and not taking any irrelevant information or opinion into consideration
- dealing with like situations in a consistent and fair manner, but treating each matter on its merits
- acting in a reasonable, just and non-discriminatory manner
- taking all reasonable steps to ensure that the information upon which decisions or actions are based is factually correct
- only acting for proper and relevant purposes, and on proper and relevant grounds
- operating in a transparent manner and allowing equal access for the community to contribute and access services.

5.6 Use of information

Information provided to a Committee may come with the understanding that it will be treated as confidential, commercial-in-confidence and/or sensitive. It is important to ensure the integrity and security of official documents for which Governing body members and Personnel of a Committee are responsible and to respect the rights of the providers of information. In accordance with the Confidentiality Clause of the Funding Agreement {Clause 13 (Clause 12 of the IOT RDO Funding Agreement)}, Committees should not disclose Confidential Information.

Confidential Information must only be released in accordance with Clause 13 (Clause 12 of the IOT RDO Funding Agreement), of the Funding Agreement.

5.7 Conditions of Committee governing body membership and employment

Committee governing body members are expected to represent their Committee's interests in the region, rather than those of any particular organisation(s), business or local council, and must be available to participate in Committee meetings and activities.

Committee governing body members and employees must:

- not tender for consultancy or contract work for or on behalf of the Committee (unless an exceptional case has been made to do so as provided in Section 5.7.5)
- comply with the relevant state or territory associations' incorporation legislation, and the conditions stipulated by the Department and the relevant state or territory government Department in the Funding Agreement(s) with the Committee regarding the allocation of administration and/or project funds
- be people of good character who reflect accepted standards of community behaviour. This includes, but is not limited to, not having a civil or criminal conviction punishable by a period of imprisonment and not being an undischarged bankrupt.

5.8 Conflict of interest

5.8.1 Overview

Conflict of interest is one of the most important governance issues for Committees. As recipients of Australian Government funds, it is essential that Committees undertake their activities in a fair, non-biased and apolitical manner, without actual or perceived conflicts of interest in their decision-making.

As some conflicts of interest may be unavoidable, Committees need to manage all conflicts of interest within an ethical, open and transparent framework that requires the Chair, Deputy Chair, governing body members and Personnel to act with integrity, impartiality, good faith and in the best interests of the Committee at all times.

Transparency is fundamental to the principles of good governance and managing conflicts of interest. Committees should build an ethical culture by consistently requiring conflicts of interest to be identified, recorded and dealt with properly.

The Funding Agreement requires Committees to take all reasonable steps to identify any conflicts of interest and to maintain a register of these. Declaration of conflicts of interest should be a standing item on all Committee meeting agendas, and should appear on the agenda prior to the discussion on any substantive issues.

5.8.2 Conflict definition

A conflict is defined in Clause 1 of the Funding Agreement as “an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest arising through [the Committee, a governing body member or Personnel] engaging in any activity or obtaining any interest that is likely to or has potential to conflict with or restrict [the Committee] in engaging in the [activity] fairly and independently”. When assessing conflicts of interest, the Committee should always take a conservative approach and carefully consider the perception of a conflict by the general public. The test should always be: *Could a member of the community, on the face of it and with limited information, consider the matter to be a conflict of interest?*

5.8.3 Identifying a conflict of interest

A conflict of interest arises when a Chair, Deputy Chair, governing body member or Personnel:

- has a personal, business, or financial interest that could be considered to influence their work with the Committee, their contribution to debates by the Committee, and/or decisions taken by the Committee
- uses information and/or contacts gained through working in a professional capacity for the Committee to benefit their own personal business interests in any way, or inform other organisations that they are involved with outside the Committee where those organisations could benefit directly or indirectly from the information.

Conflicts of interest can be direct or indirect, for example:

- the Chair, Deputy Chair, governing body member/s or Personnel owning or having an interest in a business that is under consideration to provide goods or services to a Committee
- a close family member being employed by an organisation applying for support for a project
- the Chair, Deputy Chair, governing body member/s or Personnel participating in a decision that results in their gaining an economic or financial benefit or a non-financial benefit, such as a gift being given to the individual involved in making the decision
- the Committee employs a partner, relative or close friend of a Committee governing body member or Personnel, who is then responsible for approving benefits such as reimbursement of travel or salary increase for that person
- progressing personal business or personal business relationships through the course of Committee professional business
- the Chair, Deputy Chair or governing body member/s working in the office of an elected representative of the federal or state parliament, where their access to Committee information could be seen by the public to give the elected representative unfair access to Committee resources and influence over Committee decision making.

Committees should contact their RDA Liaison Officer if they have any questions about conflict of interest arrangements or whether a particular activity may constitute a conflict.

5.8.4 Disclosing a conflict of interest

Committees must have clearly documented principles and procedures for handling conflicts of interest, consistent with their constitution, the Funding Agreement and this Guide. In addition, declaration of conflicts of interest should be a standing agenda item for all Committee and sub-committee meetings.

If, while performing Committee business, the Chair believes that they have a conflict or potential conflict of interest, they must disclose the nature of the conflict to the Committee. Similarly, the Deputy Chair, governing body members or Personnel must disclose any real, perceived or potential conflict to the Chair of their Committee as soon as that conflict or potential conflict becomes apparent. Such declarations should be made immediately after the Committee has received the agenda and papers for its next meeting.

The interests of immediate family members and close associates need also be disclosed to the extent that they are known and could be considered to lead to a conflict of interest. All disclosures, discussions and decisions on conflicts of interest must be recorded in the minutes of the relevant Committee meeting.

If a situation arises where any governing body member of the Committee (or any Personnel) believes that there is an undisclosed conflict or potential conflict of interest relevant to a Committee governing body member, the matter will, in the first instance, be

raised with the party who may be conflicted. Such a discussion should be sufficient to suggest that a potential conflict exists and the matter then be listed for discussion by the Committee at its next meeting. If doubt continues to exist, the matter is to be raised with the Chair or with the Department if related to the Chair.

Following disclosure, the remaining Committee governing body members must determine whether or not there is a conflict of interest. Where it is determined that a conflict of interest exists, or may be perceived to exist, the Committee must determine a course of action which ensures that any subsequent decisions and/or actions are, and are seen to be, free of undue influence or bias.

In doing this, the Committee should refer to its constitution, which may prescribe arrangements with respect to voting on decisions where a conflict or the perception of a conflict of interest exists. In the absence of such direction, the Committee must act to preclude the governing body member with the identified conflict from:

- receiving any subsequent or related papers
- being present and/or participating in the consideration, discussion or debate on the matter
- voting on the matter
- being counted in quorum for the vote on the matter
- being privy to the record of discussion of the matter, including the record which is set out in the minutes of the meeting.

The decision of the Committee (and the steps taken to resolve or deal with the perceived or actual conflict of interest) must be recorded in the minutes of the Committee meeting.

Where a conflict of interest arises or is perceived to arise, the Department may investigate the circumstances of the conflict to determine that the action taken to address the conflict is appropriate.

5.8.5 Managing an ongoing conflict of interest

A different situation arises when a conflict of interest is ongoing and may continue to affect an individual's ability to perform Committee business or contribute to Committee discussions, deliberations and/or decision-making.

In the case of ongoing conflicts of interest, Committees should conduct an initial investigation into the conflicts of interest, including the evaluation of any potential remedies, and a risk assessment which:

- identifies the risks
- evaluates the nature of the risks (for example, if the risk eventuated, would the consequences be serious?)
- evaluates the likelihood of the risks (for example, is it probable the risk will occur?)
- considers whether the risk may be acceptable to the Australian Government, relevant state or territory governments, and the public
- determines whether the proposed remedies (if any) would adequately resolve or otherwise manage the risk
- leads to the Committee notifying the Department immediately if it is determined that a conflict restricts the Committee from undertaking activities in a fair and independent way, including advice of what measures are being taken to prevent any such restriction.

All action taken to address these situations must be documented and readily accessible. Where the risk cannot be mitigated, the conflicted individual should be excluded from all

discussion on the matter, including receiving papers and records of discussion and decision. Depending on the nature and seriousness of a conflict of interest, a Committee may need to consider seeking independent legal advice on the most appropriate manner in which to manage a conflict.

For general advice on procedures and templates to manage conflicts of interest and conflicts of role, go to Australian Public Service Commission [Conflict of Interest](#) page or [Australian Charities and Not-For-Profit Commission](#) (ACNC).

Section 5.6 requires that ordinarily Committee governing body members and Personnel must be excluded from tendering for consultancy or contract work for or on behalf of the Committee.

In rare cases, however, the Committee may resolve that a governing body member or Personnel can tender for consulting or contracting work for or on behalf of the Committee.

This could only occur in circumstances where the Committee, after making inquiries, is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the individual is the only service provider that can deliver the services to the Committee on terms which are reasonable and represent a value for money outcome for the Committee.

In such a case, the Committee must follow the requirements of Section 5.6, including that the Committee approves the work, the terms are reasonable and comparable with those elsewhere, and that the selection process is open and transparent, documented and stored in the Committee's conflict of interest records.

5.9 Gifts, benefits and assets

A Committee governing body member or Personnel of the Committee must never demand or request any gift or benefit for a governing body member or anyone else in connection with their Committee work. A governing body member or Personnel must not accept any gift or benefit if they think, or a reasonable person would think, the person offering the gift is likely to expect the governing body member or Personnel to be influenced in the way they do their Committee work as a result of the gift.

Generally, non-token gifts would only be accepted in exceptional circumstances. Where non-token gifts are accepted, it would be appropriate to inform the Chair of the Committee or the next meeting of the Committee. If the governing body member or Personnel is in any doubt about whether or not a gift is token, they should notify the Chair.

As set out in the guidance on asset disposal (section 4.7.6), Committees must follow proper procedure for the disposal of assets, including not selling these to Committee governing body members, Personnel or those people's friends or relatives.

5.10 Public comment

With respect to activities funded by the Australian Government, state or territory or local governments, the Committee must not make any statements or give any undertaking that could be interpreted as committing the Australian Government Minister or relevant state or territory minister or the Australian Government, state or territory or local governments to a particular action or expenditure. This position should be made clear in any negotiations which the Committee, its governing body members, Personnel or representatives undertake with any company, firm or other body, or member of the public.

Whilst it is recognised that a governing body members or Personnel of a Committee, as members of the community, have the right to make public comment and enter into public

debate on political and social issues, comments must not, in any way, be made or be perceived to be attributable to the person in their capacity as a member or employee. This includes all forms of commentary on all social media platforms.

If it is not possible for a Committee governing body member or Personnel to make it clear that they are speaking personally, public comment must not be made.

While constructive criticism of the operations of Committees and the Department is welcome, it is inappropriate for such criticism to be reflected in press releases, public documents or statements, or on social media platforms. The utmost care must be taken to ensure public comments cannot be misinterpreted. The Chair is responsible for channelling matters relating to the operations of Committees and the Department to the state, territory or Australian Government Ministers and/or senior employees of the Department.

5.11 Corrupt and unethical conduct

If a governing body member or Personnel of the Committee is aware of any possible corrupt or unethical conduct by another governing body member(s) or Personnel, it must be reported to the Chair. The governing body member or Personnel does not need to have proof that corruption or unethical conduct is occurring - they need merely to suspect it on reasonable grounds. The Chair can then seek specialist advice for managing the particular issue. Corrupt and unethical conduct can also be reported to the Department, or the relevant state or territory Departmental manager responsible for regional development, where appropriate. This does not alleviate any right or obligation of the relevant governing body member or Personnel to also report the conduct to relevant authorities (for example, the police) as required under relevant legislation.

People who report possible corrupt or unethical conduct will not be penalised for making their report.

5.12 Breaches of the Code

Committees should be vigilant for any actual or perceived breaches of the Code, and be prepared to take their own disciplinary action as necessary.

Breaches of the Code by a Committee, its governing body members, or Personnel may result in disciplinary action being taken by the Department pursuant to the Funding Agreement as necessary and reasonable in the circumstances.

Disciplinary action under the Funding Agreement may include:

- directing the Committee to remedy a breach
- investigating a conflict of interest
- removing Personnel including Committee governing body members;
- withholding or recovery of payments
- terminating of the Funding Agreement for default
- referral of matters to appropriate authorities as necessary.

5.13 Allegations of misconduct

This section deals with allegations concerning the conduct of Chairs, Deputy Chairs, governing body members and Personnel which if true would constitute a breach of the Code (misconduct). It is important that the conduct of Chairs, Deputy Chairs, Governing body members and Personnel is at all times perceived in the community to reflect the principles and ethical requirements set out in the Code. If allegations concerning the misconduct of a Chair, Deputy Chair or governing body member are made, the person the allegations have been made against must immediately stand aside from the governing body of the Committee.

Standing aside means a temporary leave of absence from the Committee. During this time the stood aside individual must not participate in Committee business.

Chairs must facilitate the standing aside of Deputy Chairs and governing body members and, if the matter involves the Chair, the Australian Government will facilitate the Chair standing aside. If the Chair is required to stand aside, the Deputy Chair will be asked to assume the role as Acting Chair. The governing body members may appoint an Acting Deputy Chair where this is required.

All allegations concerning the misconduct of a Chair, Deputy Chair, Committee governing body member, DRD or other Committee Personnel are to be notified to the Department's Director RDA Program Management Section and the Liaison Officer allocated to the RDA within 48 hours after the Committee becoming aware of the allegations and in any case, within 24 hours of the allegations being made public. The Chair is responsible for advising the Department (Director RDA Program Management Section and the RDA's Liaison Officer) of allegations against the Deputy Chair, a Committee governing body member, DRD or other Committee Personnel. If the allegations are against the Chair, the Deputy Chair must advise the Department (Director RDA Program Management Section and the RDA's Liaison Officer). The Chair or Deputy Chair must advise the governing body member or Personnel that the Department has been advised.

Notification of any such allegations should include the allegations and the context in which they have been made. The Department will, with the Chair (or with the Deputy Chair if the allegations concern the Chair), consider an appropriate way to address the allegations. The Department reserves the right to apply the provisions of Clause 23.8 (Clause 22.8 IOT RDO Funding Agreement, Not applicable to Victorian Funding Agreement) of the Funding Agreement regarding potential removal of Personnel from the Committee's activities. This provision is covered in Section 7.2.8 of this Guide.

Allegations include, but are not limited to, being:

- referred to a relevant authority for investigation or review in relation to misconduct
- referred to in sworn evidence (either oral or written) in any court or tribunal proceeding in relation to misconduct
- the subject of or named as a person of interest in any investigation by a state or territory ombudsman or Commonwealth Ombudsman
- the subject of or named as a person of interest in any investigation, review or proceedings in relation to misconduct by any relevant authority, court or tribunal in any jurisdiction
- the subject of an internal investigation involving a workplace health and safety matter.

Relevant authorities include any department, agency or authority of the Commonwealth, State, Territory or local government (however described) with functions including the review, prevention, detection, investigation, remedying, prosecution or punishment of criminal offences, breaches of a law or improper conduct.

It is important to note that the Chair's or Deputy Chair's responsibility to notify the Department about allegations of misconduct does not require them to have been proven or established.

The governing body member may resume their governing body membership of the Committee when the relevant authority, court, tribunal or internal investigation makes a finding that the allegations are unfounded, or otherwise when the Australian Government and relevant state or territory governments and where appropriate the relevant state, territory or local government association, so determines.

Section 6 – Political participation

6.1 Contesting elections and other political participation

The Australian Government acknowledges the involvement of Chairs, Deputy Chairs, governing body members and Personnel in community organisations and institutions, such as service clubs, chambers of commerce and local government. However, all levels of government expect Committees will ensure their operations remain apolitical at all times. Committees must be particularly alert to incidents that may compromise the apolitical nature of the Committee's operations leading into a federal, state, territory or local government election.

6.2 Campaigning by Chairs, Deputy Chairs, governing body members and Personnel

Where Chairs, Deputy Chairs, governing body members or Personnel are playing a significant part in a political campaign there is potential for a perceived or actual conflict of interest between issues raised in the campaign and their involvement with the Committee. Significant political campaigning includes, but is not limited to:

- running as a candidate in an election for public office
- acting as a campaign director, or similar, for a candidate for public office
- providing full-time, or substantial part-time (over 15 hours per week), administrative or other support to such a candidate.

It may also be difficult for individuals who are involved in campaigning to maintain their commitment as a Chair, Deputy Chair or governing body member. Clause 17.5 (Clause 16.5 of the IOT RDO and Victorian Funding Agreements) of the Funding Agreement provides for governing body members or Personnel who have a significant involvement in an election campaign for office in a federal, state or territory election to stand aside from the Committee (for IOT RDO governing body members or Personnel they must exclude themselves from working on, or otherwise being involved in, the Activities for the duration of the campaign) from the date that caretaker conventions apply until such time as these conventions cease to be in force (caretaker conventions begin when the Parliament is dissolved and end when the result of the election is clear or, if there is a change of government, when the new government is appointed).

Governing body members and Personnel must also stand aside prior to caretaker conventions coming into force in situations where the apolitical nature of the Committee's operations could be compromised. For example, this may include situations where they have been pre-selected to be a candidate in a future election and will commence campaigning prior to the application of caretaker conventions, or they have been appointed to a position that will involve early co-ordination of a future election campaign.

Where these circumstances arise, the individual must advise the Committee in writing. If a governing body member and/or Personnel stands aside, the Committee must write to the Department to confirm the date that this occurred. Advice on alternative arrangements for Personnel must also be communicated to the Department. Where a Chair is aware that an executive Committee position may become temporarily vacated due to this provision, the Chair may offer a replacement, from within existing Committee governing body members, at that time. If the Chair has stood aside, the Deputy Chair should assume the role as Acting Chair. The governing body members may appoint an Acting Deputy Chair where this is required.

Committee governing body members or Personnel playing a significant part in a local government election campaign can maintain their involvement with the Committee. However, they must be aware that in participating in an election for any level of government they need to avoid creating the impression that they are representing the Committee. They must not, for example, use clothing, badges or letterhead featuring the Committee name or logo, or introduce themselves as a Chair, Deputy Chair, governing body member or Personnel of the Committee.

6.3 Launches, seminars and other public events

Committee launches, seminars or other public events that may take place during the caretaker period must avoid hosting ministers, other politicians or local government representatives. Flyers, speeches or media releases about the event must be apolitical. Committees must also take steps to address a situation where a politician has been invited to a public event prior to the election having been called, with the result that the event takes place during the caretaker period. This may involve cancelling the invitation, deferring the event or inviting representatives of other parties that could form government.

6.4 Information campaigns and promotional activities

Some information and promotional campaigns related to government programs and initiatives may need to be suspended or curtailed depending on the nature of the campaign and whether they are likely to affect voting. Caution must be exercised to ensure that material used on Committee websites is not political material and printed material produced and distributed by Committees is not electoral matter (that is, matter which is intended or likely to affect voting in an election). Information that is of a political nature must not be added to websites or included in Committee printed material.

Events, items on Committee websites and newsletter articles which highlight the role of particular ministers or other government representatives or which address issues which are matters of controversy between the major political parties, must be avoided in the caretaker period.

6.5 Provision of information

During the caretaker period, a Chair, Deputy Chair, governing body member or Personnel must not give any member of any political party information that may be used for political advantage.

6.6 Fundraising events

Committees are apolitical and must not, at any time (caretaker period or otherwise) contribute funds or resources towards any political party or candidate for election—this is either directly through a donation or attendance at or contribution to fund raising events.

The provision of equal contributions to all parties is not an acceptable use of Committee funds and clearly not a Committee activity. Chairs, Deputy Chairs, governing body member or Personnel may contribute to a campaign in a personal capacity but not from Committee funds.

6.7 Advertising

Committees can advertise consultation meetings in the press where such advertisements relate to their usual business. All communication products including advertising must carry the 'An Australian Government Initiative' crest and the RDA brandmark (national or localised). Please refer to Section 8 for branding guidance.

6.8 Use of Committee facilities

Committee assets and premises must not be utilised for support of any political party or candidate. This includes producing or disseminating political material using Committee equipment or resources, for example photocopiers, fax machines and office supplies. Party political material must not be put on the Committee's website and requests from political candidate to visit Committee premises for electioneering purposes must be declined. Party political meetings must not be held on Committee premises.

Committees are to remain apolitical at all times. Display of party-political material including posters, leaflets and badges is not permitted on Committee premises or on the Committee's website.

6.9 Practical application of pre-election guidelines

When the Australian Government assumes its caretaker role, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet issues [Guidance on Caretaker Conventions](#) which apply during the caretaker period. Several of these conventions apply to the operations of Committees, and assist in the maintenance of the Committees' apolitical status during the pre-election time¹⁴.

The Committee needs to develop a policy and/or operational arrangements that reflect these guidelines, and which set out actions to be taken when a governing body member or Personnel of the Committee is significantly involved in election campaigning.

6.10 Working with elected representatives

6.10.1 Communicating with elected representatives

Chairs, Deputy Chairs, governing body member or Personnel should work cooperatively with their region's local, jurisdictional and federal government elected representatives. Committees will be an effective conduit between governments and regional communities, and will provide advice to governments about the strengths and weaknesses of regional Australia.

6.10.2 Attendance at meetings

The Chair may invite their region's local, jurisdictional and federal government representatives to attend one Committee meeting each year. These representatives will only have observer status when attending the meeting. In some cases, Committee business may need to be considered privately and, in such cases, the Chair must request any observers or guests to absent themselves from the meeting for the duration of those discussions.

Elected representatives do not have an active role in the decision-making processes of the Committee and must not attempt to influence proceedings. They should not seek to give, and nor should Committees accept, direction on matters relating to the Committee's work.

Chairs should note that conflict of interest procedures for elected representatives are to be observed. Elected representatives are required to declare any personal or professional conflict with any item on the agenda. In cases where a conflict is identified, the elected representative will not receive papers or background information on that item nor participate in the discussion on that item.

¹⁴ <https://www.pmc.gov.au/resource-centre/government/guidance-caretaker-conventions>

6.10.3 Advice on outcomes of consultations

It would be reasonable for the Chair to meet annually with its local elected representatives to update them on the Committee's work. This meeting could also provide an opportunity for the Committee to present a copy of its annual report or other public document. Advice and information provided to elected representatives should be in writing and refer only to publicly available material.

Section 7 – Committees as employers

This section only applies to incorporated Committees.

Drawing on operational funding provided by the Australian Government, Committees will employ a DRD (or equivalent) and such other employees as they require to provide management skills and support to deliver Outcomes.

7.1 Legal obligations as an employer

Each Committee, as a separate legal entity, is required to meet its contractual and legal obligations as an employer. Committees should, as necessary, seek professional and/or legal advice on human resource management issues such as recruitment and management (including contracting), wages and conditions, workplace relations, performance reviews and grievance procedures, workplace health and safety, employee training, and superannuation.

As each Committee is a separate legal entity, the Department does not have a role in resolving employment related disputes. However, the Department may take appropriate action to ensure Committees are delivering their Funding Agreement Outcomes.

7.1.1 Legislation

Commonwealth legislation that applies directly to the workplace includes:

- the [Fair Work Act 2009](#)
- the *Work Place Health and Safety Act 2011* https://www.comcare.gov.au/the_scheme/the_whs_act (see section 7.3 below)
- the *Privacy Act 1988* <https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy-law/privacy-act/>
- the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* https://www.comcare.gov.au/the_scheme/the_src_act
- Commonwealth racial, sex, disability and age discrimination legislation www.humanrights.gov.au/about/legislation/index.html.

Comprehensive information about an organisation's obligations to its employees can be found via the Australian Government Business Entry Point website, see: <https://www.business.gov.au>.

7.1.2 National Employment Standards

Most Australian workplaces are governed by the system created by the [Fair Work Act 2009](#). On 1 January 2010, the National Employment Standards (NES) replaced the Australian Fair Pay and Conditions Standard. Together with modern awards (also applicable from 1 January 2010), the NES make up a safety net for employees covered by the national workplace relations system. In addition to the NES, an employee's terms and conditions of employment generally come from an award or agreement.

The NES are set out in the [Fair Work Act 2009](#) and comprise a safety net of ten minimum conditions for all employees in the national workplace relations system. The NES apply to all employees covered by the national workplace relations system (but only certain entitlements apply to casual employees). Employer obligations under the NES include giving every new employee a copy of the Fair Work Information Statement before or as soon as possible after they start work.

For more information, go to:

- The Fair Work Commission <http://www.fwc.gov.au/>
- The Fair Work Ombudsman <http://www.fairwork.gov.au/>

7.2 Management of Committee employees

7.2.1 Main obligations as an employer

Committees should aim to position themselves as employers of choice, capable of attracting and retaining skilled employees in a competitive labour market. They should provide a safe and supportive work environment, and present employees with learning and development opportunities. For further information regarding general good employer practice, go to: <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/tools-and-resources/best-practice-guides>.

All employees are to be engaged under a formal employment contract. In developing the employment contracts between the Committee and its employees, Committees could use the services of an independent employment expert, such as an industrial relations consultant, legal employment specialist or the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Each Committee should maintain a human resources policies and procedures manual that is provided to all employees. This could cover the following:

- recruitment procedures
- employment conditions, including probation, remuneration and leave
- workplace health and safety, covering general provisions and also workplace specific security and safety procedures
- policies and legislation on ethical behaviour, including privacy, harassment, discrimination and conflict of interest
- management of funds
- workplace grievances
- appropriate use of workplace technology by employees
- employee resignation and termination.

7.2.2 Job description and duty statement

The Committee should develop job descriptions and duty statements for all employee positions. Job descriptions should reflect the core business of the Committee and the Committee's role as defined by the Funding Agreement and business plan. These should also set out the role of the employee, duties and responsibilities and reporting arrangements. Committee employees may not be governing body members of the Committee.

When advertising a position, by law employers should not use discriminatory language that may exclude potential employees on the basis of race, age, sex, marital status, family status or responsibility, pregnancy, religious and political beliefs, disability, gender history or sexual orientation. A diversity statement is available on the national RDA website at www.rda.gov.au/join-your-local-rda.

7.2.3 Selection of Committee employees

The selection of all Committee employees should be based on the merit principle and follow a transparent and public process. This means that selection decisions are based on merit, having regard to the qualifications, skills and experience of candidates in relation to the duties of the position and that the process is, and is seen to be, fair and open with all candidates having an equal opportunity for success.

Vacant positions should be advertised and interviews conducted by a panel. It is desirable that this panel includes a person who is independent of the Committee. The *RDA Appointments Guide* contains information regarding the appointment of the DRD, including an application pack which must be used during recruitment processes.

7.2.4 Employment arrangements

The Committee should agree to the terms and conditions of employment of the DRD, or their equivalent, and of all other Committee employees prior to the positions being advertised and appointments made.

The Funding Agreement stipulates that employment contracts of staff (if for fixed terms) may be extended, however these decisions must be based on a transparent and thorough assessment of ongoing suitability, and be fully documented and approved by the Committee. Positions must be advertised when they are vacated, and the Department must be notified when a DRD position is to be advertised.

Committees should take their known and anticipated budget into account when recruiting employees.

All Committee employees are to be engaged under a formal employment contract that has been developed independently of the employee (for example by an independent organisation such as the Fair Work Ombudsman, an industrial relations consultant, a legal employment specialist, or as agreed by the Department) and endorsed by the Chair and/or the Committee.

Employment arrangements should be clearly recorded and documentation retained. Committees should ensure that each employee has a copy of the agreed terms and conditions prior to commencement of their employment.

The employment contract for the DRD should include a duty statement and clearly outline the conditions of employment. The conditions of employment should be comparable to other similar positions, especially with regard to work arrangements, pay, leave, notice and termination clauses – an independent employment expert can advise on these matters. Details on performance measures and reviews and reporting requirements should be clearly stated.

As noted in the Funding Agreement, employment contracts for DRDs must not have an end date beyond 30 September 2025. This is to ensure that there are not significant termination costs associated with longer term contracts for these positions should the RDA program cease at the conclusion of the current Funding Agreement and the Committee not be in a position to continue its operations. For the same reason, Committees should carefully consider employment contract periods for all other employees.

7.2.5 Remuneration, leave and entitlements

Committees should determine and document remuneration rates and processes, including non-cash items and reimbursement of expenses for employees. Increases in remuneration should be in line with industry standards and clearly linked to performance assessments.

As an employer, each Committee is responsible for complying with all relevant legislative requirements for employees such as annual leave, sick leave, long service leave, maternity leave, superannuation and other post-employment benefits. Committees are provided with funding to cover all employment costs. Committees must maintain an employee entitlement account, which holds funds to meet accrued employee liabilities and entitlements in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards.

Committees should allocate a portion of their budgets for employee training and development. Individual employee development plans should be negotiated between the Chair and the DRD, or between the DRD and other employees as appropriate. Specific training and development activities should be linked to each employee's performance agreement.

7.2.6 Employee performance

Committees should have an employee performance management framework in place. Individual performance agreements should be negotiated between the Chair and the DRD, or between the DRD and employees as appropriate, and be linked to training and development activities, and ensuring efforts are directed toward delivery of the Charter.

Performance reviews should be conducted at least every six months throughout the employment contract. Performance reviews are an opportunity to provide two-way performance feedback, assess an employee's overall performance, identify strengths and weaknesses, develop a plan to address weaknesses, reward performance and to manage performance where it does not meet expectations or agreed outcomes.

7.2.7 Grievances

Organisations with an effective formal grievance procedure that is open and accessible to employees will encourage the early reporting of grievances. This means that grievances can be resolved early and will be less likely to escalate into more difficult management problems. Unresolved grievances can be financially expensive to organisations because they result in increased absenteeism, increased leave due to stress, low morale within the workplace, high turnover of employees and underperformance. Committees should implement a documented formal grievance procedure which is open and accessible to all their employees.

7.2.8 Termination of employment contracts

If the employment contract of a Committee's employee is terminated, including at the end of a Funding Agreement, the liability arising from such actions will have to be met by the Committee out of its operational budget. It is recommended that each Committee maintain an employee redundancy account to hold funds to meet any potential employee redundancy entitlements should they be required under the relevant award or the individual's employment contract, in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards.

Although management of employees is up to Committees, Clause 23.8 (Clause 22.8 IOT RDO Funding Agreement, not applicable to Victorian Funding Agreement) of the Funding Agreement provides the Australian Government with the power to give notice in writing requiring a Committee to remove employees from activities relating to the Funding Agreement. This is subject to reasonable grounds and relevant legislation. Without limiting this power in any way, it is expected that Clause 23.8 (Clause 22.8 IOT RDO Funding Agreement, not applicable to Victorian Funding Agreement) will only be used where there is a compelling case for removal and after consultation with the Committee concerned.

7.3 Workplace health and safety

Under the [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(Cth\)](#) (WHS Act), all RDA Committees have a responsibility for Work Health and Safety.

To ensure that obligations under the WHS Act are met, Committees are to:

- comply with all duties under applicable work health and safety laws

- undertake risk assessments of all safety issues for their workers
- implement appropriate control measures, including putting in place an appropriate management system to address health and safety
- provide the Department with a copy of their risk assessment and plan and a copy of their implementation report, if requested by the Department.

At any time, the Department may wish to discuss with Committees, risks associated with undertaking activities relating to the Funding Agreement, and revisions to any activities which have been identified in the Committee's WHS risk assessment, plan and reports as posing unmanageable risk.

For more information on the WHS Act, go to: <https://www.comcare.gov.au/scheme-legislation/whs-act> and <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/>.

Section 8 – RDA communications and branding

The overarching aim of RDA communications is to deliver fit-for-purpose, accessible resources which enable Committees to better engage with their community stakeholders.

For any queries regarding RDA communications products, resources and activities please email: update@infrastructure.gov.au or go to: [RDA logo and templates](#).

Communications mix

Committees are encouraged to utilise the various functions and capabilities of different platforms and resources (mix) to engage with their community stakeholders, program areas and other Committees within the RDA network.

It is recommended Committees utilise two or three different resources to support a broader audience reach and stakeholder engagement.

8.1 RDA objectives, target audiences and messages

The **objectives** of the communications mix include to:

- increase understanding and awareness of Committees and of the benefits the national RDA network offers to Australia's regions
- encourage Australian Government agencies to access and use the regional intelligence Committees can provide in place-based program design
- promote the achievements of the national RDA network
- highlight Committees' capacity to deliver Australian Government programs in their regions
- encourage and promote joint government, business and stakeholder support in promoting the RDA network
- promote official visits to regions by Australian Government Ministers, Members of Parliament and Senators
- advertise for applications for Chair, Deputy Chair and governing body member positions and to publicly announce Committee appointments.

The **target audiences** for the communication mix include:

- RDA committee and the national RDA network
- business, industry and community peak bodies and associations
- regional and local media (legacy and online)
- people or planning to migrate to Australia's regions
- Australian Government
- Australia Local Government Association and local government
- state and territory governments and agencies with an interest or responsibility for regional development.

The **key messages** which can be included in the communications mix are:

Communications Mix – resources

Resource	What	Where / source
Key messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committees are local people developing local solutions to local issues • Committees with all levels of government, business and community groups to support the growth and development of their regions • Committees have an active and facilitative role in their communities and a clear focus on growing strong and confident regional economies that harness their competitive advantages, seize on economic opportunity and attract investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDA Charter • RDA national website
RDA national website and local websites	Outward facing (public) platforms	www.rda.gov.au
RDA Connect	Online portal with a secure repository section, 24/7 chat functions (secure and general). Committees are encouraged to create and share content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDA Connect
RDA Charter (July 2023)	Committees help to drive economic growth, innovation and entrepreneurship in regions through facilitating investment in community, industry and the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDA Charter Regional Development Australia
Regional Investment Framework	<p>The Government’s approach to supporting strong and sustainable regions.</p> <p>Committees are critical in delivering the RIF – a more coordinated approach to regional development.¹⁵</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Investment Framework • RIF graphic/placemat
Social media and word of mouth	For example: X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Instagram, YouTube, VOD, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger	

¹⁵ [RMBS-combined.docx \(infrastructure.gov.au\)](#)

Resource	What	Where / source
Update emails	<p>Range of information: operational guidelines, grants, webinars, case studies, events.</p> <p>RDA can also provide content for distribution via this general group email</p>	<p>update@infrastructure.gov.au</p> <p>As general practice update emails are sent to all RDA Chairs, Deputy Chairs and DRDs/EOs on batched/group emails</p>
Case studies	<p>Content provided by Committees and repurposed by Committees or program areas for promotion.</p>	<p>Case studies are published:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDA annual reports • www.rda.gov.au (sample) • RDA Connect (Committees are able to upload) or via the chat function.
RDA National Tagline	<p><i>Local people creating local opportunities.</i></p>	<p>Committees can also develop regional taglines.</p>
Media releases	<p>RDA generated</p> <p>Program/s related – complementary content</p> <p>Ministerial - cleared content published to DITRDA website.</p>	
Visual assets - RDA brand, logos and templates	<p>The RDA template packs (the packs) support Committees to better understand their roles and responsibilities of compliance when using the Australian Government Coat of Arms and RDA brand.</p> <p>The packs outline the various elements of the RDA brand and the application and use of these elements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDA Logo and Brand Template Packs and Guidelines • Australian Government Branding Guidelines
Priority Matrix	<p>The Priority Matrix is a snap-shot of each RDA's focus areas. The matrix helps to identify common issues or challenges, and opportunities of working together with other Committees, stakeholders and other levels of government.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority Matrix
Research and data	<p>Committees have access to a robust evidence base and analysis of key regional characteristics, including access to a variety of data sources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Bureau of Statistics • Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute • Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Resource	What	Where / source
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics • Regional Australia Institute • Regional Data Hub
Events	Ministerial Briefings, webinars, round tables, look and learn sessions, community of practice and RDA National Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MO determines RIB timelines • Program area and policy needs • Cross agency opportunities promoted on RDA national web and RDA Connect
Program partners	CEDA ¹⁶ . ALGA and ABC Heywire	Program Partners Regional Development Australia (rda.gov.au)

8.2 Visual assets

8.2.1 Overview

All communications activities and resources must be appropriately branded, recognising the RDA program as an initiative of the Australian Government initiative, as aligned to the [Australian Government Branding Guidelines](#).

The RDA program is administered by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.

For the current suite of RDA program logos, templates and brand guidelines available go to: [RDA logo and templates](#)

For bespoke requests and creative design solutions, email: update@infrastructure.gov.au

8.2.2 Branding and logos

All communication products and activities must carry the 'An Australian Government Initiative' crest and the RDA landmark (national or localised).

The Department developed design resources which contain RDA brand and logo templates and guidelines on RDA a ranged of communication materials.

The template packs will:

- provide accessible fit-for-purpose compliant resources
- equip Committees with the information and tools needed to effectively deliver their communication roles and responsibilities

¹⁶ All RDAs are members of Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) [CEDA - Home](#)Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.

- ensure a consistent, national approach to the RDA national brand
- ensure Australian Government and state and territory and local government support and involvement is appropriately acknowledged for their contribution to the program.

There are two template packs available – one for Committees and another higher-level resource for design professions. Both packs are available at: [RDA logo and templates](#)



Image: the RDA national brandmark (registered trademark) used by the Department.

Alt text: (Above) Image of the RDA national brandmark of stylised map of Australia with states in different colours of blue and greens. There is text that reads “Regional Development Australia”.



Image (left): an example of the Australian Government Crest with the RDA national brandmark, stacked.

Alt text: (left) Image of the Australian Government Crest and RDA national brandmark. The crest has the Australian Coat of Arms above the text that reads “An Australian Government Initiative”. The brandmark is stylised map of Australia with states in different colours of blue and greens. There is text that reads “Regional Development Australia”.

8.2.3 Multiple logo application

When using multiple logos the correct order (inline or stacked) is:

1. the RDA logo lockup
2. State/Territory Government logo
3. Local Government/Council logo
4. Private company or alliance.



8.2.4 Victorian and South Australian Committees

As outlined in the Australian Government Branding Guidelines, the required order of the logos, which can appear in an inline (from left) or stacked formation, is as follows:

1. Australian Government Initiative' logo with the Commonwealth Coat of Arms
2. national or localised RDA brandmark
3. Victorian Government / SA Government brandmark

When preparing any materials, Committees in Victoria and South Australia should refer to refer to the Partnership Arrangements (Section 1.5) and the appropriate guidelines developed by:

- **Victorian Government** brandvictoria or email: branding@dpc.vic.gov.au
- **South Australian Government** dpc.sa.gov/govcommunications or email: govcommunications@sa.gov.au
- **Local Government Association of South Australia** lqasa@lqa.sa.gov.au or email lqasa@lqa.sa.gov.au.

Co-funding state, territory and local government logos should be obtained by Committees from relevant government authorities.

8.2.5 RDA template packs

The templates work in accordance with:

- [Australian Government Branding Guidelines](#)
- [Australian Government Style Manual](#)
- [RDA logo and templates](#)
- registered RDA program Trade Mark (brandmark).

For advice or bespoke design solutions, please contact: update@infrastructure.gov.au

8.2.6 Websites branding

The branding of the national RDA website and Committee websites are slightly different.

RDA national website

The national website is branded with the Australian Government crest at the top left to indicate that it is a website created and maintained by an Australian Government agency.

RDA (localised) websites

Committee websites must be branded with the “Australian Government Initiative” crest, and (if applicable) with third party logos.

Committees may find they have a need to be involved with cross-jurisdictional initiatives or websites outside the Australian Government domain either through a sponsorship agreement or entering into a collaborative arrangement.

When considering the use of the RDA brand, Committees can negotiate to use the design in the most appropriate place on the site that recognises the Australian Government's involvement, without compromising the intention of the initiative.

8.2.7 Images

Photographs can be used to enhance RDA publications, design material or websites. Overall, the photographic style should be locally focussed and progressive, linking both people and Australian regions together.

Permission – use of images

When using photographs and videos, it is important the Committee obtain written permission of the photographer / videographer and all persons represented.

Please note additional privacy provisions apply for the use of images of minors. These provisions vary in each state or territory.

There are numerous templates available online that Committees may utilise for this purpose.

For tools how to select, attribute and treat images, go to: [RDA logo and templates](#)

Alt Text – captions

Alternative text (alt text) explains information in images for screen reader users. Captions describe images to help users relate them to the text.

Alt text should be less than 100 characters and based on user need. All images should have captions, unless they are only decorative such as background patterns.

For more information, go to:

- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#)
- [WSC alt text decision tree](#)
- [Inclusive Publishing in Australian Government](#)

8.3 Acknowledgment of Country

As outlined in Section 2.2, Committees should ensure that during each of their meetings and (where appropriate) communication activities an acknowledgement of the traditional owners of the land/s where meeting participants are located is provided.

The following Acknowledgment of Country is provided on the [RDA national website](#).

Regional Development Australia acknowledges First Nations peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Australia. We respect and celebrate the inherent strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and their commitment to the land, waters and their communities. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

For more information, go to

- [Acknowledgment of Country](#)
- [National Indigenous Australians Agency](#)
- [Reconciliation Action Plan](#)

8.4 RDA media policies and public comment

All forms of communications generated and platforms managed by Committees will be considered as official communications from the Committee (see also Section 5.9).

Committees must ensure appropriate measures and policies are in place to adequately protect these mechanisms for delivering official messages.

The Department strongly recommends each Committee develop its own internal policies for social media to clarify roles and responsibilities (including internal moderation and approval policies) for employees and Committee governing body members on the appropriate use of social media accounts operated by Committees.

Committee governing body members and personnel must also keep their professional and personal social networking accounts separate. As with any public forum, when participating in social media, whether on their personal or RDA account, Committee governing body members and Personnel must adhere to the Code (see Section 5).

As a starting point, **media policies** should be prepared with reference to public comment guidelines (see Section 5.9). A policy will help Committees to **evaluate** opportunities to promote their activities and government programs and facilitate the take-up of appropriate funding opportunities to progress regional economic growth.

A media policy will also enable Committee to better manage online comments and activities through:

- **awareness** – social media is 24/7 and requires regular monitoring
- **voice and tone** – public comment on social media should complement the role of Committees, resolve any issues constructively and recognise the contribution that the Committee is seeking to make to progress an issue for the community
- **apolitical** – committee governing body members and Personnel must take care to uphold the Committee’s status as an apolitical organisation that is not aligned with any particular political party or ideology
- **moderation** – comments and statements made on social media must be impartial and of a professional nature, establish (and promulgate) a policy on how unwanted or inappropriate behaviour will be managed
- **commitment** – with respect to activities funded by the Australian Government or state or territory or local governments, the Committee must not make any statements or give any undertaking that could be interpreted as committing the Australian Government Minister or relevant state or territory minister or the Australian Government or state or territory or local governments to a particular action or expenditure
- **accessibility** – create accessible and inclusive content which enables to the majority of users to have the same experience¹⁷
- **currency** – establish a regime to regularly review all on line content, especially web content and hyperlinks
- **copyright** – only use or reproduce copyright material or the intellectual property of others if permission has been provided from the creator or the owner. This includes applications, screen shots, sound and music recordings, video footage, graphics, artworks, images photographs and publications
- **attribution** – to acknowledge and recognise the contribution or use of a third party’s work ensuring it is properly attributed and linked back to the original source¹⁸
- **permission** – do not post images without permission. Always seek (and retain) the express written permission of anyone who appears in any photographs, image, video or other footage before sharing it via any form of social media. Please note

¹⁷ APS Style Manual: <https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/accessible-and-inclusive-content> and [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.0](#).

¹⁸ It is recommended before reproducing any comment or image the Committee should verify the entity’s attribution requirements and include the appropriate / prescribed attribution adjacent to the content or in production credits.

there are separate permissions required for people under the age of 18 years. If requested, remove materials as soon as practicable

- **defamation** – defamation laws are actionable regardless of the medium. Even if the Committee did not create the defamatory material, anyone who shares information on social media can also be liable for defamation action. There are some exceptions to defamation, including that the statement was an honest opinion or was true
- **privacy** – be sure to maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy and property of others. Only discuss publicly available information and preserve the confidentiality of internal discussions and personal or private information about people.
- **security** – all social media accounts are appropriately secured and are controlled and managed only by authorised employees. Report hacking
- **help** – include contact details where users can provide feedback, comment or request assistance such as an email address, postal address or online template.

8.5 Online presence

8.5.1 Regional Development Australia website and RDA Connect (online portal)

The Department maintains the RDA national website www.rda.gov.au and the online portal [RDA Connect](#).

Both the RDA national website and online portal help to enhance communication by raising the profile of the RDA network, sharing information and connecting Committees, regional communities, stakeholders and the Department.

The RDA national website contains interactive maps of the national RDA network and states (jurisdictions). It also has an overview of the RDA network, events and news section, program partners and landing pages for all Committees. In addition to the national site, each Committee maintains a local website. Branding is slightly different for the national and local websites. (See section 8.2.5).

The key features of the online portal – **RDA Connect** is a 24/7 (secure and general) chat, secure document repository, Department grant funding opportunities and operational information.

Due to system limitations, access to the closed chat is only available to the RDA Chair, Deputy Chair and DRD/EOs. Committees can nominate up to 2 other governing body members to be provided access to closed (secure) section. There is no limit to the number of users who can access the open (general) chat function.

8.5.2 RDA Committee (local) websites

In addition to the RDA national website, each Committee is required to establish and maintain an accessible public website (See Clause 22.4 of the Funding Agreement, Clause 21.4 IOT RDO and Victorian Funding Agreements) which should include, but not limited to:

- a link to the Australian Government's RDA national website www.rda.gov.au
- acknowledgment of the support if the Australian Government and the Department through the [compliant](#) use of the Australian Government crest and RDA landmarks
- information about the Committee's role and activities, in terms of the activity as set out in the RDA Funding Agreement
- a current list of Committee governing body members and key Personnel
- Committee's contact details such as address, phone and email
- links to the Committee's social media pages
- current [RDA Charter](#) (July 2023)

- copies of all newsletters or updates Committees send to stakeholders and any other significant reports that you produce or are produced by others and are relevant to the Committee's region
- Acknowledgment of Country
- any other information as required or requested by the Department.

Other information which Committees may wish to include:

- cultural safety message
- privacy statement
- diversity statement.

For information on how to establish and maintain online communications:

- [Australian Government Branding Guidelines](#)
- [Australian Government Style Manual](#)
- [Digital Transformation Agency](#)
- [RDA logo and templates](#)
- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.0](#)

8.5.3 Social media

The Department uses a range of [social media](#)¹⁹ to communicate and engage with the public and stakeholders to share news, promote events, research and information about government policy and programs. Committees are encouraged to develop and maintain social media accounts.

Committees' social media accounts should be clearly identifiable through usernames and branding.

Usernames should reflect the name of the Committee, for example @RDAKimberley. Committees should *avoid* usernames that may misrepresent a Committee as a national body, for example @RDA.

Committees are permitted to use (under the Department's *terms of use*), these social handles:

Facebook	X (formerly Twitter)
AusGov Infrastructure	AusGov Infrastructure
AusGov Media and Tech	AusGov Media and Tech
AusGov Arts	AusGov Arts
Prime Minister's Literary Awards	LinkedIn (only) https://www.linkedin.com/company/infrastructureau/

For more information on the *terms of use* go to:

¹⁹ This definition of social media is from the [Australian Communications and Media Authority](#), with minor amendments

- [Department's social media guidelines](#)
- [Social media: Guidance for Australian public Servants and Agencies](#)
- [Creative commons attribution license](#)
- [APS Code of Conduct](#).

Please note: all the Department's media accounts are managed by our Communications Team. For any feedback on the DITRDCA media accounts, please contact: media@infrastructure.gov.au

8.5.4 Email addresses

Committee governing body members and Personnel are encouraged to maintain an email address at their individual domain, which can be used for all work related to their Committee, for example [john.smith@rda\[name\].xxx.au](mailto:john.smith@rda[name].xxx.au)

The Department encourages Committees to establish email addresses for office holders that reflect that person's position, such as [chair@rda\[name\].xxx.au](mailto:chair@rda[name].xxx.au), to ensure continuity of communications when office holders change.

For examples of an email address in signature blocks, go to: [RDA logo and templates](#)

8.6 Media

8.6.1 Media releases

The Australian Government reserves the right to announce government policy or program decisions, including project funding. Committees may distribute media releases that complement or provide more details after the announcement has been made. These media releases may provide information on how the announcement relates to their region.

In addition, Committees may wish to generate and issue media releases to highlight their achievements, activities, consultations or events for example:

- Local RDA office launches
- local events/launch announcements and invitations
- regional and other national conferences
- visits to Committee premises
- visits to major initiatives and projects driven by Committees
- other major achievements.

Media releases must acknowledge funding support from the Australian Government, for example: 'The RDA program is an Australian Government Initiative' and include the RDA logo (or the localised Committee logo, if appropriate) and the 'An Australian Government Initiative' logo.

Media releases do not require approval from the Department. However, to assist the Department in being informed of Committee announcements and activities, please include your RDA Liaison Officer and copy update@infrastructure.gov.au in the distribution list of all media releases.

8.6.2 Media queries and request for comment

When representing the Committee, a governing body member must not express their personal opinion on a political or social issue if that is not the opinion of the Committee (see Section 5.9 Public Comment).

Committees should contact their RDA Liaison Officer:

- for advice on matters for discussion or information on government initiatives
- to provide advance notification of intention to speak to the media where practical
- to provide a subsequent debrief of media contact (short email of matters discussed).

Communication with the media about the Committee is encouraged and topics for discussion may include, but are not limited to:

- The role, work, aims, goals, or progress of initiatives of the Committee
- the regional or local context/situation/experience (including anecdotal)
- the overall RDA network initiative in broad terms.

When engaging with the media it is also important to note:

- the Chair is the official spokesperson for the Committee, but they may nominate a spokesperson from the Committee as a representative
- Committee governing body members are not federal, state or territory public servants or elected officials and, as such, do not speak on behalf of the Australian Government or state and territory governments.
- while some Committee governing body members may be elected officials of local government they need to be clear that they are representing the Committee, not their local government
- comments or discussion regarding the policy and programs of the respective governments should be fair and balanced
- spokespeople should be well-versed in the key messages and aims of the RDA initiative
- when speaking as a Committee spokesperson, views expressed will be taken as those of the Committee and not the individual
- anything said, even in general conversation, can be used by the media.

8.7 Events

Committees should notify the Department of upcoming events such openings, launches, and award ceremonies. This information should be sent to your RDA Liaison Officer and copied to update@infrastructure.gov.au.