

Armidale Regional Council
Brilliant Region
Strategy

2024

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

The Armidale Regional Community pays tribute to their love of land, love of people, and love of culture.



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What a Brilliant Region looks like

Our local context

The Armidale Region stands out as a unique blend of natural beauty, biodiversity, strong cultural heritage, a strategic and convenient location, and leading educational facilities.

The region also offers enormous opportunities to shape a better future, thanks to its status as a major Renewable Energy Zone, which is intended to have a network capacity of eight gigawatts. The New England REZ is currently the largest in Australia and is the backbone to Australia's low carbon future.

Our commitment to sustainable controlled environment horticulture with the largest and most significant precinct in Australia. Located 980m AHD and above 1300m AHD, our Horticulture Precincts in Armidale and Guyra will be serving the dining tables of Australia and abroad as a result of its ideal climate, excellent year-round solar exposure and water security.



In January 2022 the newly elected Armidale Regional Council (ARC) resolved to set an aspirational target to grow jobs in our region by 4,000 by 2040 (increasing our regional population by 10,000) and to identify the region building infrastructure and catalyst job growth projects that will maximise the region's potential.

This clear direction from the newly elected Council has culminated in the preparation of this Local Strategy Planning Statement (LSPS) Advancing our region: Toward 50,000.

As we grow to a population of 40,000 over the next 20 years and beyond, the Armidale region is connected to the world through 4,000 new jobs of the future and our strong sense of community and social responsibility. We are leaders of Australia's low carbon future, and our re-enlivened businesses and industries are the engine room of the New England.



→ Advancing our region: Toward 50,000

40,000 by 2043



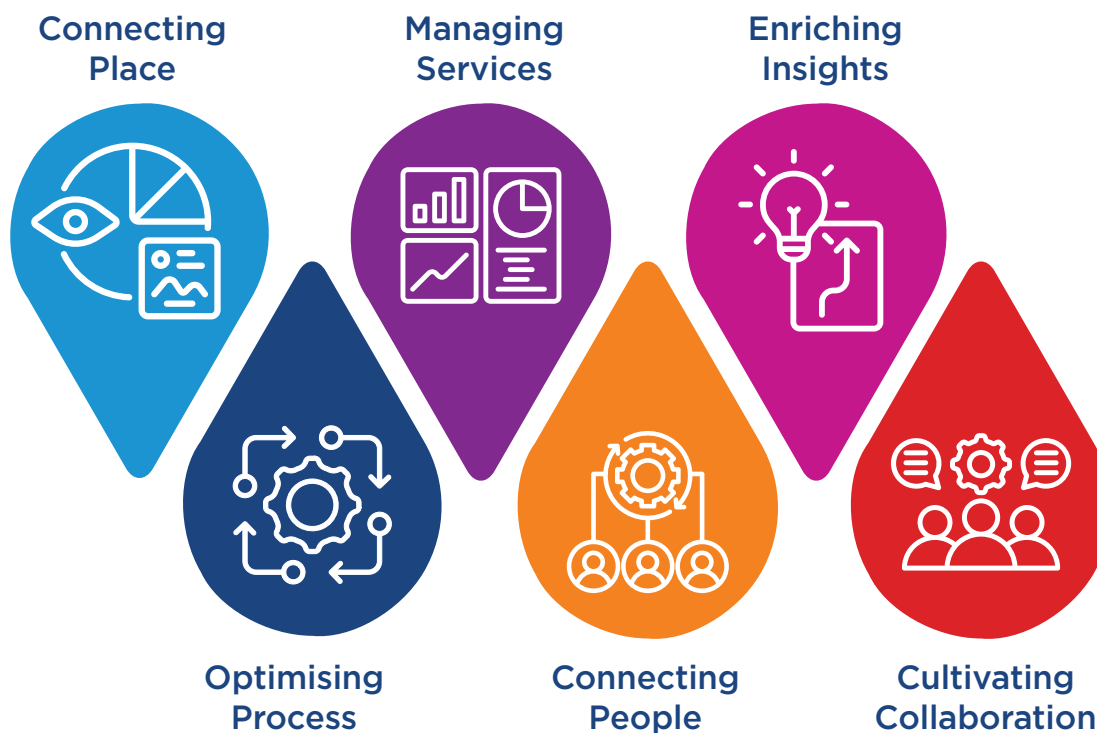
4,000
new jobs



4,400
additional homes

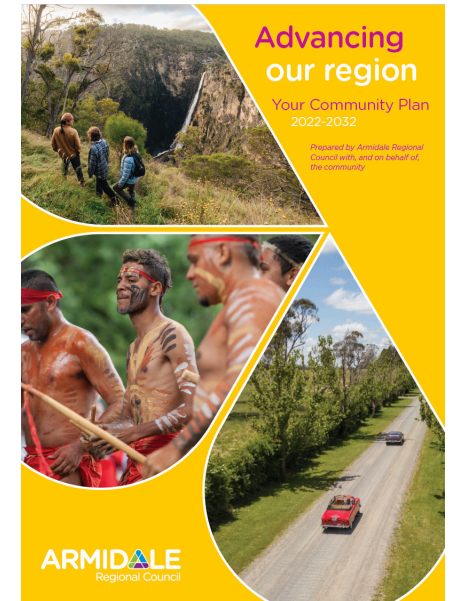
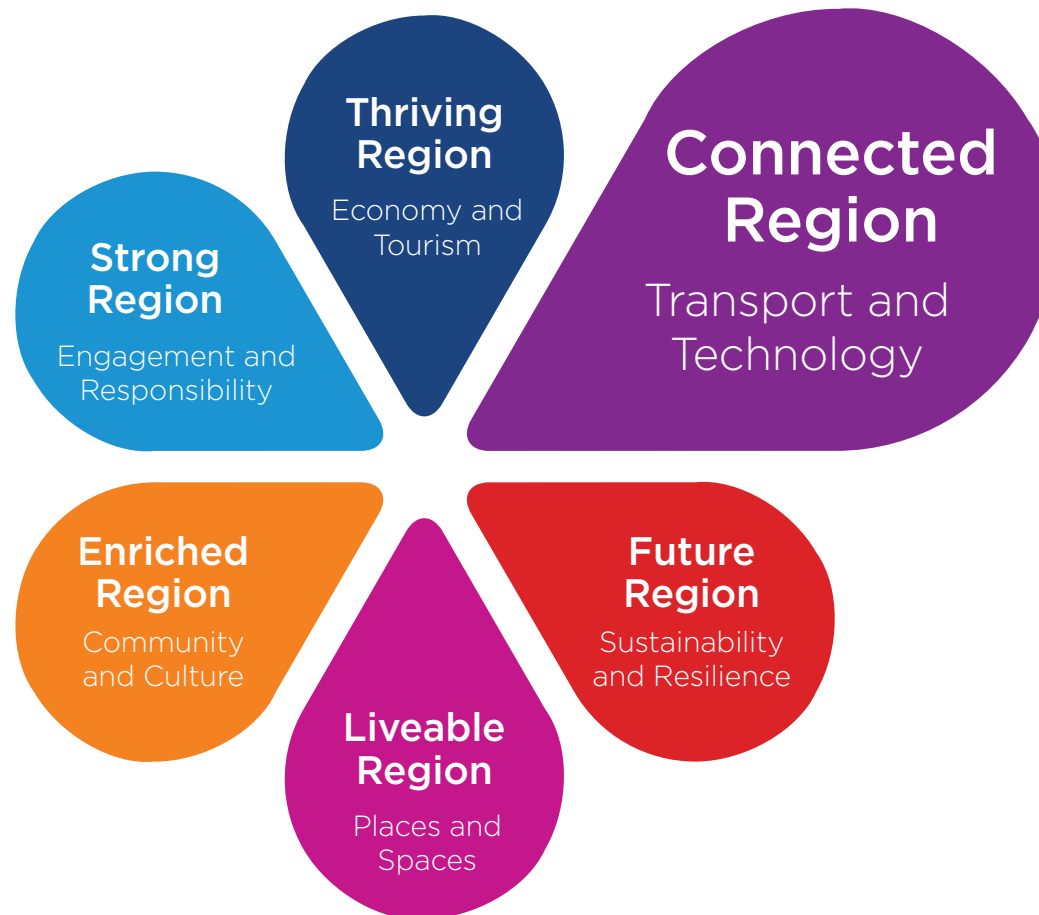
Our six pillars

To accelerate the impact of the numerous initiatives defined within these strategies, ARC is progressively exploring digital capabilities to support the six pillars of the plan.



A Connected Region

The Advancing our Region Community Plan explicitly identifies “advancing technology” as an important initiative for connecting our region. This strategy extends this from helping to create a Connected Region to support all the themes of our community plan.



The Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS)

The Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) sets out a vision for the region to be “Brilliant”, emphasizing that leveraging digital technology is a contemporary way of effectively addressing our challenges and opportunities.

Sustaining the path we are embarking on to attract new jobs and population while maintaining our quality of life and sustainably managing our environment and climate is a complex task. Over the long term, Council needs consistent and continuous access to deep insights about community life, assets, infrastructure, and our environment. These insights need to be reliable and available on demand as strategic decisions are made; this is where digital technology plays a critical role.



B1.9

Ensure the necessary infrastructure is available to activate housing

B1.9(d) Prepare a Smart city strategy to identify digital infrastructure needs for our urban centres

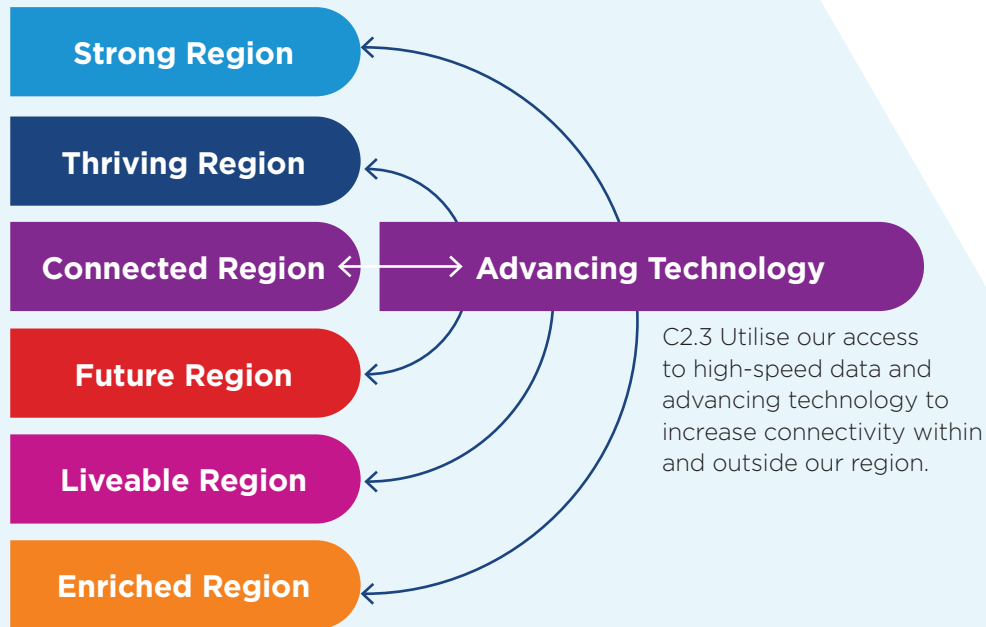
Digital capability

This strategy represents ARC's approach to leveraging digital capability to support the outcomes we need. It recognises the unique and compelling opportunities presented by digital capability for Council and the community. We are embracing a digitally inspired and data-driven approach to empower the community, businesses and delivering our services.



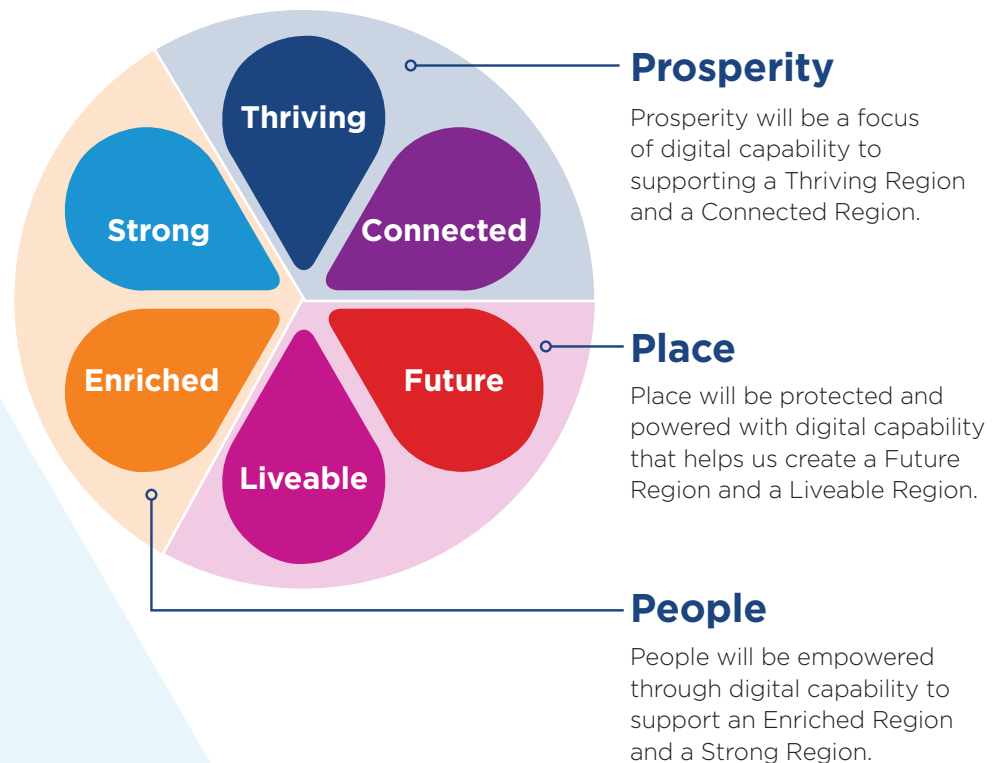
The Advancing our Region Plan

The Advancing our Region Plan explicitly identifies “advancing technology” as an important initiative for connecting our region. This Strategy extends this from helping to create a Connected Region to supporting all the pillars of our Plan.



Alignment to Advancing our Region

Each of our Drivers for Digital – Prosperity, People & Place - has applicability to all the pillars of our Advancing our Region Plan, but the primary focus of each of the Drivers for Digital will be to compliment two of the pillars of our Plan as follows:





Creating a connected community

Council acknowledges that becoming 'smarter' and the creation of smart places rely upon having the right environment – adequate digital connectivity, foundational knowledge, and resource availability to support the implementation of smart projects.

A focus on capacity-building (both internally and externally within the Council) as well as a multidisciplinary, interdepartmental approach is essential to bring smart projects to life. By offering optimistic and united leadership, the Council acknowledges the financial and legislative limitations within which it operates. Council will work towards strengthening both physical and digital infrastructure, upskilling staff, and identifying champions to lead the implementation of potential smart places and projects across the Armidale Regional LGA.

Limited financial resources can be a barrier to the implementation of digital infrastructure and technologies, which often have significant foundational costs. However, investment in smart technologies offers long-term cost and resource efficiencies. The cost-benefit analysis must reflect long-term gains.

Creating a connected and brilliant community will foster:

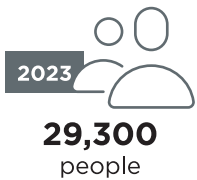
- Efficient service delivery
- Effective programs
- Better facilities and amenities
- Engaging and vibrant spaces
- A thriving economy and activation
- Enhanced wellbeing, safety, and security
- Sustainable natural assets
- Innovation and collaboration
- Insightful policy
- Intelligent investment
- Future-proof skills



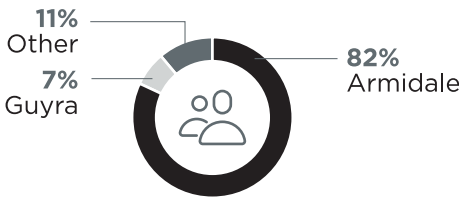
Armidale Region profile

Where we are now

Population

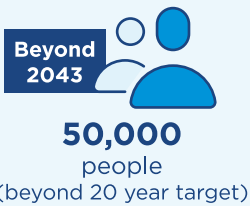


Population split

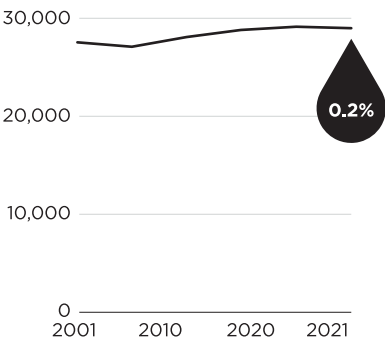


Future growth

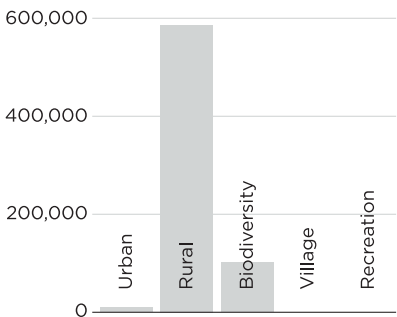
Population



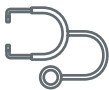
20 year population growth



Land distribution



Target population growth



One healthcare provider per 123 persons



20% retail vacancy due to oversupply



12,800 (95%) of workforce participants employed



Under supply in employment land



Winter air pollution



Water security risks



4,000 new jobs



100ha additional employment land



Health precinct



City centre revitalisation



Malpas and Oaky dam water security

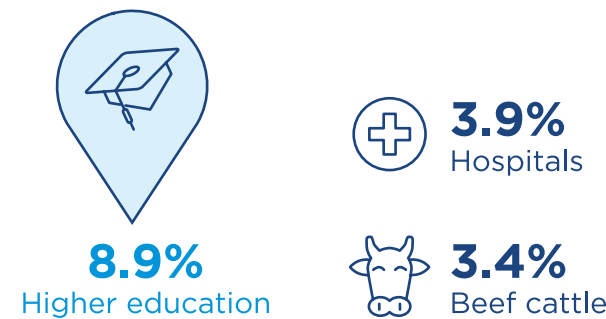


Improved air quality

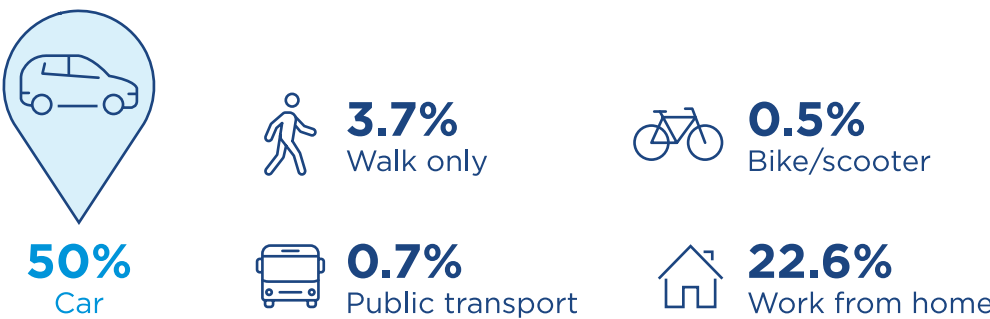


Community snapshot

Industry of employment



Travel to work



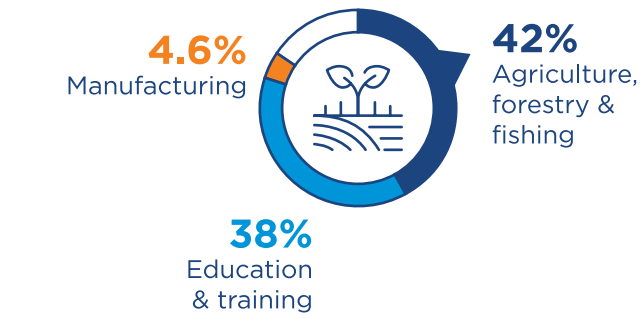
37
Median age

7.6%
Indigenous population

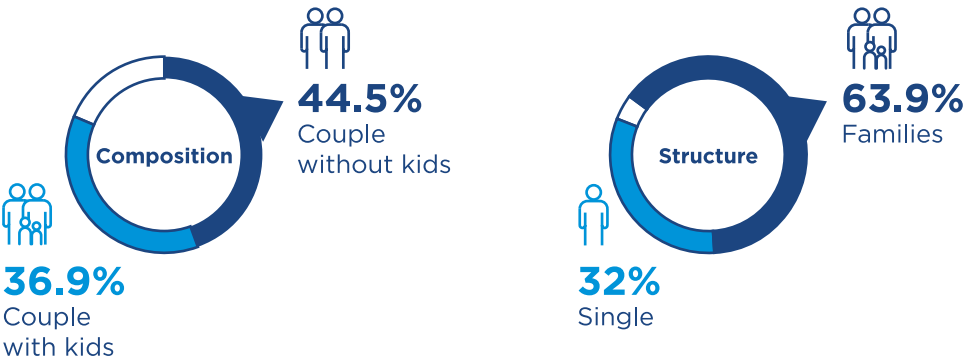
14,426
Local jobs

2,899
Local businesses

Top industries



Households



Why is Council working towards building a Brilliant Region?

Australia has a series of strategies, plans and policies that establish smart visions, goals, and priorities at the federal, state, territory, and regional levels. In response, many councils have prepared strategies, plans, and policies, to identify local smart visions, goals, and priorities, and to ensure alignment with overarching directions.

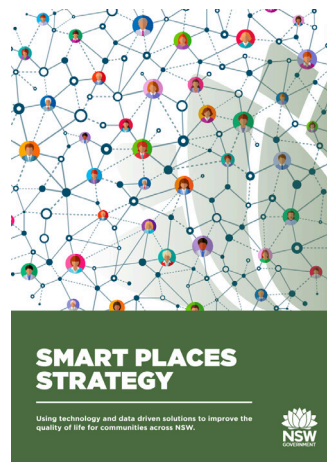




Australia

The Smart Cities Plan (2016) outlines the Federal Government's vision for a 'smarter' Australia.

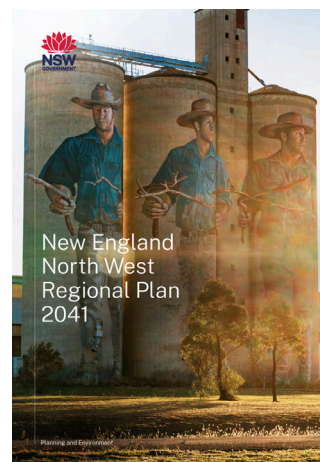
It prioritises the development of smart policies, and the investment in smart infrastructure and technology, across all levels of government. The Smart Cities Standards Roadmap (2020) highlights key actions that will support the growth of smart places across Australia, including improved knowledge sharing and collaboration.



New South Wales

The Smart Places Strategy (2020) aims to support the digital transformation of NSW.

The SmartNSW Roadmap 2022-2027 provides 14 actions to support consistent planning and the delivery of connected infrastructure and smart solutions across the state. These include the delivery of digital infrastructure, skill development, and capability uplift.

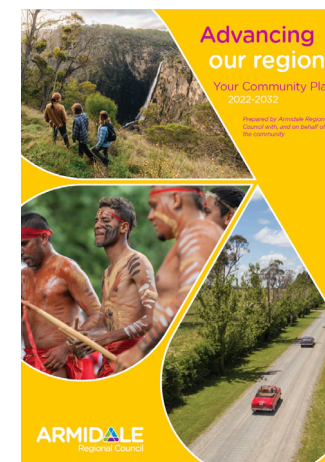


Regional

Whilst not realised as a smart plan, the New England North West Regional Plan 2041 sets a 20-year strategic vision for the region.

It prioritises creating new and improved quality public spaces, connecting communities, and identifying opportunities for smart infrastructure.

Similarly, the Southern New England High Country Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018-2022 and 2023 Update highlight digital infrastructure investment and the macroeconomic trend of 'Digital Transformation' across various sectors in the region.



Armidale Region LGA

The Advancing Our Region Community Plan 2022-2032 outlines the community's vision for the future.

Alongside key goals, it is organised into six pillars: Thriving Region, Connected Region, Future Region, Liveable Region, Enriched Region, and Strong Region.

Additionally, the Advancing our region: Toward 50,000 Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) creates a strategic planning vision for the future of the Armidale Region LGA, building upon the community's aspirations expressed in the community plan.

Purpose

This strategy has been collaboratively developed with leading industry experts, engaging a broad range of Council representatives.

It also considers extensive community engagement conducted during the development of our Advancing Our Region Community Plan and the Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS). The intent of this strategy is to complement existing plans by providing Council with a guide to strategically leverage relevant digital capabilities. Its ultimate purpose is to create a positive socio-economic and environmental impact on the community while delivering operational and financial benefits for Council. The strategy is designed as a “living document” that should be regularly reviewed in the context of evolving community needs and the external environment.

Execution

To ensure successful implementation of this strategy, Council will need to:

- Undertake community consultation.
- Adopt the recommendations outlined in the strategy, incorporating them into all plans, processes, and principles across organisational functions.
- Treat digital practices as ‘business-as-usual.’
- Act as organizational sponsors and facilitators, advocating for adoption and participation in the program by all staff.
- Effectively communicate the socio-economic and environmental aims of the strategy to external community stakeholders.
- Manage and measure the implementation of the strategy.
- Ensure that all staff engage effectively in deploying and utilising digital capabilities where relevant.

This strategy reflects our deliberate and thoughtful approach to leveraging relevant digital capabilities across Council departments. It is integral to the services we provide and the programs and projects we implement, augmenting the execution of the Advancing Our Region Plan and the LSPS.

Council is committed to leverage every available opportunity to achieve our vision for the future. Over the past decade, technological advancements have introduced digital capabilities that have the potential to accelerate our recovery and amplify the positive impacts of the initiatives identified in our strategies.



Our Community's Vision

This Strategy is informed by the significant community engagement program which formed part of the development of the Advancing our Region Community Plan and the LSPS.

It aligns with the community vision, encompassing our shared values, priorities, and aspirations.

The alignment between this strategy and the Advancing Our Region Community Plan ensures that we harness digital capabilities to address community priorities effectively. By integrating these capabilities, we strive to create a positive impact on our community's socio-economic well-being and environmental sustainability.



Prosperity

Thriving
Region

Economy & Tourism

- Create opportunities for business/industry and support their use and benefit
- Support growth and evolution of the region
- Help retain young people and attract tourists and residents
- Stimulate employment and career opportunities.
- Impact the regions tourism sector
- Augment events, beauty, lifestyle opportunities and attractions

Transport & Technology

Connected
Region

- Improve the community experience of transport infrastructure including roads, footpaths, kerbs and cycleways
- Enhance transport links to other regions, public transport and lifestyle infrastructure.

People

Enriched
Region

Community & Culture

- Facilitate a cohesive, engaged, and supportive, family-friendly and welcoming community
- Help the community embrace cultural inclusiveness and diversity
- Support engagement with first nation's people
- Benefit the arts and cultural scene
- Support health and community services
- Help provide a safe and welcoming community
- Support the provision of services for disadvantaged sectors of the community

Engagement & Responsibility

Strong
Region

- Utilise good governance
- Facilitate strong community consultation and partnerships.
- Help council provide stewardship for growth, development and prosperity
- Facilitate a unified and inclusive region
- Support affordable rates and charges, quality services and financial sustainability

Place

Future
Region

Sustainability & Resilience

- Preserve our natural environment
- Protect our biodiversity
- Support sustainable management of our resources
- Positively address climate change
- Support renewable and alternative energy
- Promote carbon neutrality
- Create a safe and healthy environment
- Support ecological sustainability
- Support the provision of clean air

Places & Spaces

Liveable
Region

- Facilitate beautiful and practical parks, playgrounds and gardens
- Help improved reserves, open and green spaces
- Support vibrant and independent villages
- Supplement effective regional planning to support the community to grow, develop and attract more residents and investment
- Add value to the provision of affordable and available housing



Benefits of being a Brilliant Region

The Armidale Region is uniquely positioned to leverage opportunities presented by digital technology, data, and innovation.

Distinct from Australia's capital cities, it offers a lower cost of living, a strong sense of local community, and a vibrant atmosphere with the lifestyle benefits of a regional centre.

Council has identified a range of benefits for people, businesses, and the Council itself to progress on this journey and help create a better-connected region.



For People

Our program will deliver significant benefits for individuals over time as capabilities are built, deployed, and then blended to magnify and accelerate impacts. These benefits include:

- **Enhanced citizen experience:** creating a better-managed and more attractive place to live and work, delivering value for ratepayers.
 - **Informed decision-making:** providing better access to information for decisions related to life and work in the community.
 - **Personalised services:** integrating services around individual needs rather than the convenience of service providers, including the Council.
 - **Increased democratic participation:** greater transparency in public sector decision-making processes.
 - **Digital skill development:** opportunities for growth and skill development through digitally savvy local businesses and Council.
 - **Supportive insights:** managing lives more effectively and fostering community support using new insights and applications.
-

For Businesses

Our strategy aims to provide substantial benefits for local businesses and service organisations, including:

- **Meeting customer needs:** creating new ways to meet customer needs by developing services that deliver better outcomes.
 - **Efficient management:** easier access to accurate and detailed real-time data about community life and services, enabling efficient organisational management.
 - **Market expansion:** increasing tourism and resident numbers, leading to greater engagement opportunities.
 - **Data-driven efficiency:** making data-driven decisions around product, sales, marketing, and distribution for cost savings.
 - **Collaboration synergies:** closer collaboration for greater efficiency and control of desired outcomes.
-

For Council

Our program will bring transformative benefits to Council across various areas, including:

- **Cost reduction:** gaining better insights into infrastructure and services utilisation, resulting in reduced costs.
- **Informed decision-making:** providing evidence and confidence for better decision-making.
- **Effective collaboration:** enabling efficient and integrated working between Council departments.
- **Community engagement:** better engagement with residents, businesses, and vulnerable sectors, supporting targeted strategies.
- **New service opportunities:** insights into residents' and businesses' consumption, movement patterns, and emerging needs.
- **Efficiency and compliance:** proactive data-driven management of assets and infrastructure, adopting proactive and preventative community management strategies.



Brilliant Region opportunities

The Armidale Region is uniquely positioned to harness the opportunities presented by digital technology, data, and innovation.

As we explore the region's distinctive characteristics, we'll delve into three key areas: Culture & Community, Potential of Place, and Investment & Innovation. These facets collectively contribute to the region's journey toward becoming a truly brilliant and connected community.



Image: Penny Vozniak, courtesy of the Smart Regional Spaces 'Ready Set Go' project.

Culture & Community

The Armidale Region has several opportunities to leverage with the help of digital capability including:

- **Visionary leadership:** the Armidale Region benefits from a new Council and Executive team with a growth-oriented vision. This leadership provides the potential to leverage digital capabilities across all functions and services. By fostering strong engagement and partnerships, the region can align its efforts with an inspirational vision for the future.
- **Education advantage:** high levels of education within the community facilitate broad familiarity with digital technology. This familiarity makes pursuing digital strategies viable and attractive.
- **Arts and culture sector:** the region's strong arts and culture sector, combined with the availability of "city-like" experiences, positions digital amenity as a catalyst for economic activation, enhancing the overall community experience.

Potential of Place

The Armidale Region has a unique mix of characteristics providing enormous potential to leverage digital capability:

- **Internet connectivity:** the Armidale Region enjoys relatively strong internet connectivity, thanks to NBN's fibre deployment. This connectivity also provides a platform for fiber connection to "non-premise assets" through NBN's new Smart Places program.
- **Natural assets:** the region's seasons, local climate, natural beauty, topography, and elevation create an ideal backdrop for lifestyle activities and events. By augmenting these features with digital capabilities, the region can enhance safety, support sustainability, and deliver valuable insights.
- **Strategic location:** situated equidistant between capital centres, the Armidale region offers opportunities for visitation and streamlined access. Its central location enhances mobility and connectivity.

Investment & Innovation

Potential for investment and innovation are strong in the region, which will provide diverse opportunities to utilise digital capabilities:

- **Tertiary education hub:** the presence of a strong tertiary education sector fosters an appetite for consuming digital insights. Students and researchers can drive initiatives based on these insights, contributing to innovation.
- **Digital savvy resources:** the UNE SRI (UNE Smart Region Incubator) provides a pool of digital-savvy individuals. Leveraging this resource can accelerate the region's adoption of digital capabilities.
- **Large-scale projects:** the region's focus on water security and renewable energy opens up commercial and infrastructural opportunities for applying digital capabilities. These projects can drive efficiency and positive outcomes.

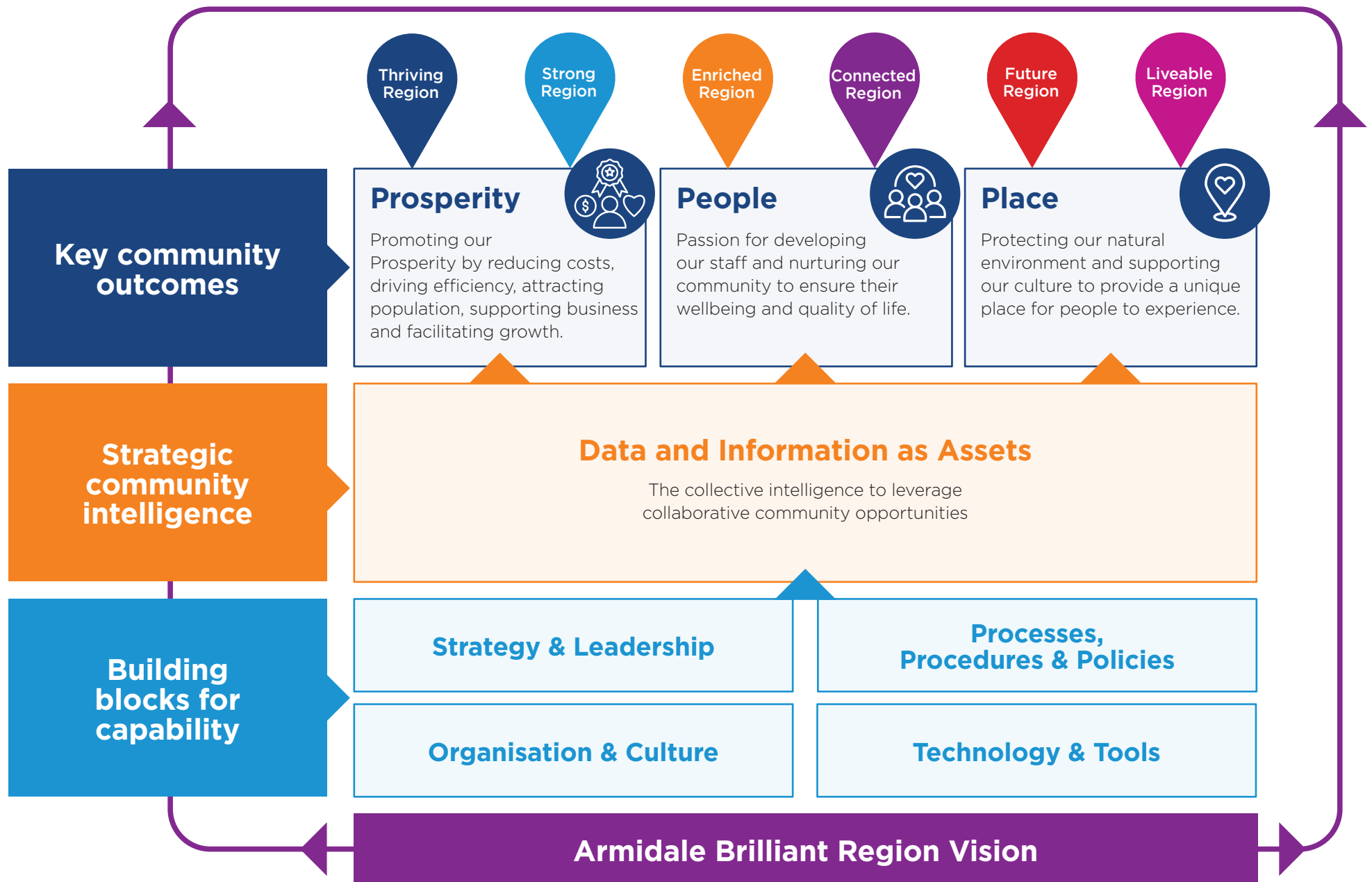
The Armidale Region stands poised to embrace its brilliant future through strategic digital investments.





Vision and Principles

Our strategic vision and principle pulls together our digital capability to impact the drivers for digital change in a way that supports the pillars of our Advancing our Region Community Plan.



Vision

Council's approach to implementing our strategy is characterised by the following commitments:

- **Leveraging digital capability:** prioritising digital capabilities to address our strategic priorities.
 - **Cultural Embrace:** Fostering a culture that recognizes digital tools, systems, and methods as critical for our future.
 - **Process Adaptation:** Aligning all processes, procedures, and policies with the adoption and extensive use of digital capability.
 - **Comprehensive Governance:** Establishing governance processes and structures that facilitate our digital program.
 - **Community Partnerships:** Informed by digital insights, we engage with stakeholders across the community.
 - **Insight-Driven Engagement:** Engaging with community stakeholders based on deep insights derived from our digital capability.
 - **Value Pursuit:** Unwavering commitment to leveraging digital capability to amplify our unique community attributes.
-

Principles

A few key principles will underscore our strategy:

- We will ensure that within each technology type, we operate a single best-in-class system and unnecessarily avoid multiple vendors
- We will ensure that data generated by all information systems we operate is owned by Council and will as part of our roadmap employ capabilities that allow for on-demand access to data from across all functions and systems
- We will ensure that all decisions to design, build, operate and maintain physical assets and infrastructure include integration of digital capability with real-time data provision
- We will ensure all systems facilitate easy dataflows to supervisory, management and analytical tools
- We will invest in capability to correlate, interrogate, and analyse data from information systems to generate meaningful insights
- We will ensure that we share insights with community stakeholders and use data and insights to support collaboration initiatives.





Building a Digital Platform

Our strategy defines a program which will help us build a platform of digital capabilities to compliment and leverage the impacts of technology across Council and into the broader community and beyond with a view to supporting the Advancing our Region Community Plan and the LSPS.



Brilliant Region Strategy digital functions

Our strategy will focus on deploying digital capability to achieve different kinds of objectives. These different objectives are digital capability functions that technology can be leveraged to address.



Connecting Place

Capability for capturing information from physical assets and infrastructure via sensors and devices and transmitting the relevant data from the point of capture for use by other systems.

e.g., IoT/Sensing, Networks, People Counters, Environmental Monitoring, Water Meters, fleet devices, EV chargers, Smart LED's, CCTV cameras.



Connecting People

Devices, interfaces, networks and platforms for communicating and engaging with Council staff, residents or tourists to provide them with insights, information and amenity.

e.g., Citizen App, Workforce Management, Participatory Budgeting, Open Data, Wi-Fi, Digital Kiosks.



Optimising Process

Integrating captured data into operational systems for enhanced supervisory control, actuation, provisioning and proactive remediation in Council and community functions Including operational reporting, descriptive and basic diagnostic analysis to identify trends and patterns.

e.g., Operational Software, Provisioning systems, automated systems, reporting systems.



Enriching Insights

Tools and capabilities to correlate and interrogate Council and curated third-party data to inform policy, investment and infrastructure decisions and provide predictive and prescriptive insights for use by Council or other community stakeholders.

e.g., Business Intelligence, Predictive Analytics, Machine Learning Tools, Artificial Intelligence systems.



Managing Services

Ingesting selected data sets from operational systems into management systems for visualisation, more advanced diagnostics and dashboarding to create strategic situational awareness for executives.

e.g., Dashboards, Visualisation Platforms, Data Warehousing, Visualisation, Alerts, Apps, Online services for citizens.



Cultivating Collaboration

Leveraging data and insights collected from other digital functions to support on-demand accessibility to data and information to support organic collaboration initiatives across departments or with external stakeholders including businesses, UNE, the UNE SRI, State Government, Other Councils that maximise.

e.g., Data Exchange Digital Twin, Collaboration Hubs.



Advancing Our Region: projects and initiatives

Historically Council made very limited use of digital technology. In more recent years, Council's utilisation of digital technology has expanded organically, but this expansion occurred without clear linkage to strategic objectives; it was primarily driven by operational needs.

Currently, Council is proactively embracing a more systematic approach to digital technology. We have initiated discussions about creating a strategic framework that will transform digital technology into digital capability. This alignment with the Community Plan aims to enhance overall effectiveness and better serve the community.

Transform digital
technology into
digital capability.

Projects that Council has already delivered or that are underway as part of our journey into the digital space:



Smart Water Meters

Starting in 2024, Council has launched a trial of smart water meter technology. These smart meters are designed to save money and reduce water consumption by detecting leaks early, managing water use through real-time data, improving billing accuracy, and reducing asset maintenance costs.

Plans to roll out smart water meters more broadly are currently underway.



NSW E-scooter Shared Scheme Trial

Launched in September 2023, the e-scooter trial project positions Armidale as a regional leader in testing this emerging mode of transport. By embracing new technologies, promoting vibrancy, and creating jobs, the trial contributes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions—a key goal of our Advancing Our Region Community Plan 2022-2032 and the Project Zero30.

36,732

Total trips since the beginning of the trial (until the end of April)

61,667km

Total distance travelled (km) since the beginning of the trial (until the end of April):

5,836

Total unique riders since the beginning of the trial (until the end of April): 5,836



Smart Bins Trial

Council has secured State Government funding to launch a smart bins trial. Four smart bins for general waste will be strategically placed in high footfall locations within Armidale. These bins are equipped with sensors that allow real-time monitoring of waste fill levels, and they feature solar-powered compaction technology. Additionally, 20 sensors will be installed across the LGA, utilising existing bins to monitor waste fill levels. The data collected will inform waste management decisions and enhance efficiency in the waste collection process.



Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Station

In 2020, the State Government and the NRMA (National Roads and Motorists' Association) initiated Armidale's participation in the state's EV charging network. They funded the installation of an EV charging station located at the Armidale Visitor Information Centre on Marsh Street. The goal is to encourage EV motorists to stop, recharge, and enjoy the area.

Additional EV charging stations are planned for the Jessie Street carpark behind Dan Murphy's, with further expansion in the pipeline.



Armidale Regional Driverless Initiative (ARDi)

Completed in 2020, the ARDi Project was a 12-month trial of a battery-powered, 12-person electric vehicle. It operated at the University of New England (UNE) Campus during Phase 1 and in the Armidale CBD during Phase 2. The project was a collaborative effort involving the Council, Transport for NSW (TfNSW), UNE, EasyMile, WSP, Transdev, and Edwards Coaches. Its aim was to explore the application of automated vehicles in improving user safety and mobility outcomes in regional NSW. ARDi received a nomination for the Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) Australia Connected and Automated Vehicle Award in 2020.



Self-cleaning Toilets (Exelooos)

Armidale has Exeloo toilets in two of its public open spaces, Curtis Park and the Central Mall. These Exelooos are prefabricated public toilets equipped with automation features. They are accessible, featuring touch-free sensor-operated facilities, and are designed to be vandalism-resistant. The Exelooos have been programmed to automatically open and close each day using the Exeloo Web-Based Monitoring System, ExeWeb, eliminating the need for separate security visits.



Armidale Cycleway Solar Lighting Project

Council is progressively installing new solar-powered lighting along the cycleway between the Armidale CBD and the UNE Campus. This pathway is a popular route for cycling and walking. The addition of new lighting will enhance user amenity and safety. Stage 1 of the project, completed in 2020, involved erecting solar light poles along the pathway from Markham Street to the west of Niagara Street. Stage 2, which received funding from the NSW State Government in March 2023, will extend the project from Niagara Street to Elm Avenue. The improved lighting aligns with council's focus on sustainability and community safety.

Image: Penny Vozniak, courtesy of the Smart Regional Spaces: Ready Set Go! project.



Free Wi-Fi

Improving digital connectivity is crucial for bridging the digital divide between cities and regions. The provision of free Wi-Fi in strategic locations across the LGA is a significant step in this direction. It aims to make digital services accessible to all residents. Currently, Armidale's community enjoys free Wi-Fi access in the Armidale and Guyra libraries, at the Airport, as well as through portable Wi-Fi hotspots enabled by the Council's outreach program and via 10 of Telstra's Wi-Fi-enabled phones distributed across the LGA.



Water Dispensing Stations

Council has installed automated water dispensing stations at the Armidale Bicentennial Arboretum and the Mother of Ducks Lagoon in Guyra. These dispensers are part of the council's initiatives to enhance drought resilience in the region. Funded through the Federal Government's Drought Communities Program, each station features a 25 mm threaded connection for normal garden hoses. Additionally, the Arboretum station has a 50 mm male Cam Lock fitting, while the Mother of Ducks station has an 80 mm male Cam Lock fitting for bulk collections. Residents not connected to the town water supply can purchase water at a price per kiloliter, with payment made via credit or debit card using the digital payment machine.

Smart Libraries



Council has been working to expand community access to its resources through the digitisation of museum and library collections, enabling people to engage with these resources remotely. Council has procured DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System) players, designed for use by people with visual impairments, as well as Envoy Connect devices, a solar-powered audio player with a tactile keypad, available for loan. These efforts ensure that resources are accessible to people of all abilities.

Furthermore, the library now provides improved access to its services through the Library App, which includes a self-check function. Members can renew and check their records, browse the library catalog online, and even book a computer in advance. New multi-use spaces have been introduced in the libraries, including the installation of a soundproof booth and a video creation area for music and digital content creation.

Tech Help for Seniors Program



In 2022, Council launched its 'Tech Help for Seniors' program at Armidale and Guyra libraries. Geared toward providing digital assistance to seniors, the program offers bookings for in-person and online sessions at the libraries. These sessions assist seniors with navigating library services and digital devices. The initiative is supported by Tech Savvy Seniors, a NSW Government partnership involving Telstra, the State Library of NSW, Edwards Coaches, and youngster.co (a social enterprise that employs local youth to share their digital skills and empower the wider community).

SCADA Implementation



Council manages a range of assets throughout the LGA and aims to continually improve efficiencies in asset management using smart technology. As part of this effort, Council's Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system is being upgraded. This upgrade will add the capability for remote monitoring of the LGA's water and sewer assets, along with the harmonisation of the Armidale and Guyra SCADA/Telemetry system.



Air Quality Monitors

Council has previously installed air quality monitors in specific areas of town. These real-time environmental monitors allow Council to manage the community through a distributed network of sensors.

An additional 10 units will be acquired, including air monitors and an independent power supply. The power supply consists of a solar panel, bracketing system, and power storage and transfer case, which will make location and maintenance issues much more flexible.



Project Zero30

Initiated in 2020, the Zero30 program is a collaborative effort by Council, UNE, Business New England, and the local community to make the LGA carbon-neutral by the year 2030. Some of the significant goals of the project include: achieving carbon certification for 25% of the Armidale LGA's buildings; bringing winter air-quality levels below the NSW Department of Health's guidelines; planting one million trees to offset carbon usage.

In November 2023 Council finalised the Baseline Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Account for Armidale Region LGA. Council has committed to abatement initiatives that will offset around 250,000 tonnes of CO₂-e over the next 10 years.

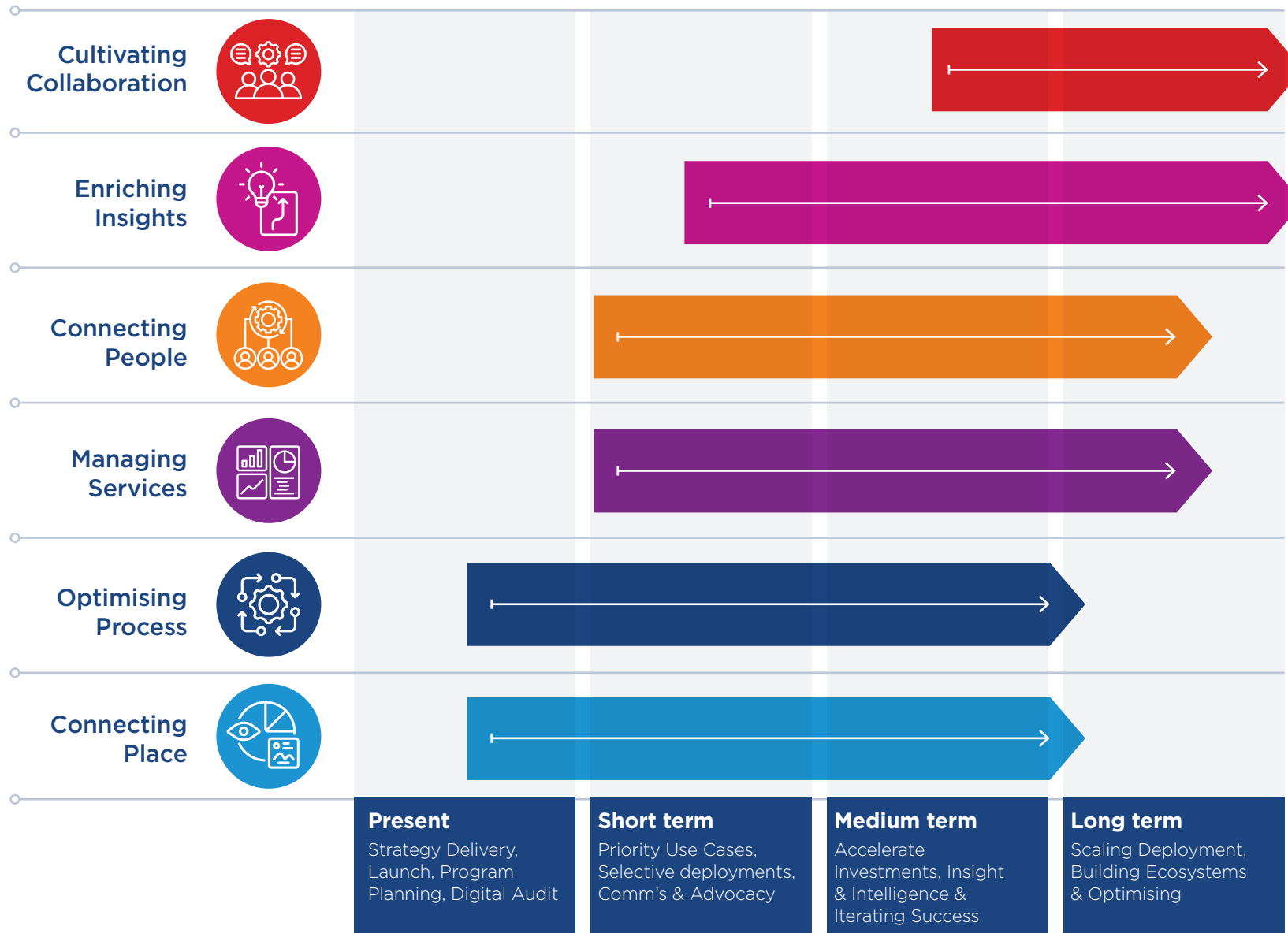
Delivering our strategy – Strategic themes and priority actions

Our implementation process will follow a deliberate and cyclical approach. Initially, we will prioritise foundational digital functions, using their success as a springboard for introducing more advanced capabilities in the future.

Collaborative ecosystems will play a pivotal role in maximising the overall value of these functions, and while we adhere to this general approach, we will remain open to exceptions where they make sense.

Throughout individual projects, we will collect and evaluate data, considering economic, environmental, social, and cultural impacts. This holistic review will inform our strategic planning, ensuring a robust and sustainable path forward.





Key actions

In alignment with our Advancing Our Region Community Plan 2022-2032, which outlines our community's vision for the future across six pillars:

- Thriving Region
- Connected Region
- Future Region
- Liveable Region
- Enriched Region
- Strong Region

And guided by our Advancing Our Region: Toward 50,000 Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS), we have identified the following key actions:

Connected Region



CP	Actions	Timing	Year
C2.3	Develop and endorse the Brilliant Region Strategy, conduct an audit of digital capability and develop relevant policies and governance to support ongoing implementation of the strategy.	Present	2024-2025
C1.2	Develop a minimum digital specification guide for Open Spaces with a range of options to suite specific open space categories and needs of specific locations.	Short	2026-2028
C2.2	Invest in EV charging infrastructure and e-bike charging at key locations to increase EV charging capabilities across the region.	Short	2026-2028
C1.1	Implement smart parking management systems configured for various sites including airport, Council owned car parks and on-street in high density areas, in order to reduce congestion, better enforcement efficiency, improved access facilities and improved pedestrian safety.	Medium	2029-2031
C1.1	Deploy technologies for providing connectivity (Wi-Fi), ensuring safety (CCTV) and collecting data via asset and infrastructure monitoring sensors for insights at key transport hubs, key pedestrian and vehicle routes, and provide for future connectivity options (e.g. 5G small cells). Also implement digital technology across open spaces based on the digital specification (including parking, people counting, CCTV, Wi-Fi, smart waste, smart poles and lighting, smart Irrigation and environmental monitoring devices) to enhance management of open spaces and utilisation by residents and tourists.	Medium	2029-2031
C1.2	Build or buy centralised data warehouse to ingest various transport data sets, open data and tourism data, scooter mobility data and curated origin-destination data, and implement suitable data analytics tools to develop insights to inform future active transport and open space strategies.	Long	2032-2034
C2.1	Support the development of the Rail Trail with appropriate digital technologies (Wi-Fi, CCTV and duress stations, parking, smart lighting/poles), integrating with tourism capabilities (app, wayfinding, signage etc.)	Long	2032-2034
C2.1	Leverage transport data sources and analytics tools to develop insights in partnership with UNE to advocate for additional transport options and links.	Long	2032-2034

Future Region



CP	Actions	Timing	Year
F2.2	Explore opportunities and negotiate to leverage REZ renewable energy to service energy needs in the region in commercially attractive ways and utilise Councils digital capabilities to optimise and manage this as appropriately.	Present	Ongoing
F2.3	Roll out implementation of relevant smart waste technologies including solar compacting and bin sensing, improving efficiency and effectiveness of Council's waste management.	Present	2024-2025
F2.2	Identify and implement appropriate technologies to support sustainability including microgrid options, smart metering, smart lighting at Council sites, and work with Energy providers around smart home devices and metering options.	Short	2026-2028
F2.2	Expansion of use of solar renewable capabilities at Council sites and facilities.	Short	2026-2028
F1.2	Install water monitoring devices to capture the quality, level and flow of water to support protection of waterways, catchments and creeklands.	Short	2026-2028
F1.1	Develop and implement a network of environmental monitoring and microclimate sensors and systems using appropriate sensors to monitor acoustics, air quality, temperature and other environmental parameters including fire detection, supporting biodiversity protection and its management.	Medium	2029-2031
F1.1	Implement an active biodiversity monitoring program using drone technology with infra-red and multi-spectral visual inspection and LiDAR mapping capabilities combined with data analysis tools to monitor biodiversity, conduct surveys and understand movement and patterns.	Medium	2029-2031
F1.1	Investigate services utilising satellite surveying to augment vegetation cover and biodiversity mapping into a Digital Twin (engage NSW Spatial Digital Twin to negotiate utilization of the existing platform to derive early benefits before deploying capability in the region).	Medium	2029-2031
F1.3	Utilise Data Exchange, Digital Twin and appropriate data analysis tools to foster collaboration with other stakeholders to inform climate actions and initiatives to generate insights and actionability to support climate change initiatives.	Long	2032-2034



Liveable Region



CP	Actions	Timing	Year
L2.1	Implement appropriate technologies for supporting water security through monitoring of use and mitigation of leakage including Smart Water metering, Smart Irrigation and Soil Moisture detection.	Present	2024-2025
L2.2	Leverage Councils data assets to develop insights using analytical tools to support housing decisions.	Medium	2029-2031
L2.2	Incorporate specifications for digital amenities when creating masterplans for the new release areas under the Local Housing Strategy 2024	Present	2024-2025
L1.2	Additionally to the Connected Region action to provide future connectivity options and enhancement of open spaces, implement appropriate technologies to support management of facilities to inform maintenance, planning, development and divestment decisions (e.g. access control, smart building).	Medium	2029-2031
L2.1	Implement suitable technology package at the Airport to improve revenue, enhance asset and facilities management and support engagement and economic activity (including Parking, CCTV, Wi-Fi, Smart Poles, LED lighting etc). Ensure standardisation with the rest of the region where possible to provide seamless capability and insights.	Medium	2029-2031
L1.4	Leverage data and insights and implement selected capabilities to promote and attract sports tourism, and provide data for management, utilisation insights and to inform planning and upgrades on other recreational spaces, e.g playgrounds.	Long	2032-2034
L2.3	Develop a Digital Twin capability to replicate key architecture and heritage assets and locations to provide a centralised platform for managing assets and the ability to enable digital observation for community and tourists.	Long	2032-2034



Enriched Region



CP	Actions	Timing	Year
E1.2	Assess opportunities to leverage data assets with analytical tools and digital technology to support the needs of diverse and disadvantaged people, as well as new residents (e.g. citizen service app, and digital facilities at libraries)	Medium	2029-2031
E1.3	Implement CCTV with video analytics and smart lighting to create safer places, and advocate with NSW Police to provide monitoring and/or duress services.	Medium	2029-2031
E2.3	Support indigenous digital literacy and skilling programs delivered at libraries using data assets, analytical tools and digital platforms.	Medium	2029-2031
E2.1, E2.5	Implement technologies to support safety and engagement at artistic events and locations (e.g. Wi-Fi, CCTV and lighting, AR/VR and gamification, contactless digital check-in, live video streaming, holograms, digital visualisations, wayfinding, kiosks, etc.)	Medium	2029-2031
E2.3	Digitise indigeous cultural content, narratives, art and productions into Digital Twin to enable digitally inspired experience showcases.	Long	2032-2034
E2.4	Integrate cultural experiences into digital tourism engagement (e.g. apps, displays, Digital Twin) and implement select technologies at museums to support displays, connectivity and engagement to showcase cultural and heritage content and productions	Long	2032-2034





CP	Actions	Timing	Year
S2.1	Integrate the Brilliant Region Strategy Risk Assessment with Councils Risk Management Framework	Present	2024-2025
S2.1	Implement Data Security, Privacy and Ethics policies and frameworks in conjunction with the Council's Data Strategy, creating a framework for responsible management of data assets.	Present	2024-2025
S2.4	Develop and implement a Data Strategy in parallel with this Strategy to support management of data as an asset, which includes third party data curation which identifies data assets required which are not owned by Council and currently not accessible (align with Data Warehouse, Data Exchange, Open Data portal and Digital Twin initiatives).	Present	2024-2025
S1.1	Implement a Digital Services plan across all Council services and relevant channels (mobile first approach via Community App), providing digital service engagement for residents and businesses across all Council services to reduce friction and cost.	Short	2026-2028
S2.3	Adopt suitable tools and technologies for asset tracking and monitoring on fixed infrastructure, access infrastructure, portable supplied, stationary plant and fleet including technologies for enhancing the sustainability efficiency and management of Council's buildings and facilities.	Short	2026-2028
S1.1	Implement a Community Management Platform to ingest key data sets across functional digital systems and enable service performance management for executives and Council, helping the community to be informed and have input into decisions about its region and future.	Medium	2029-2031
S1.1	Implement participatory budgeting capabilities to provide transparency in expenditure decisions and promote the outcomes achieved from expenditure, giving residents visibility of budget decisions and the outcomes of these.	Long	2032-2034
S2.1	Adopt suitable digital tools and systems to foster safety and wellbeing – for example duress or “lone/remote worker” systems and the use of drones for remote inspection tasks.	Long	2032-2034
S1.2	Implement a collaborative community data exchange platform to enable Council to securely and discretely provide consented access to Council and community data and provide distributed data sovereignty for third party data and collaborative access to data analytics environments.	Long	2032-2034



CP	Actions	Timing	Year
T1.1	Develop a minimum digital specification with emphasis on sustainability for activation precincts based on needs of and services to engine industries and potential residents, delivering materials on digital capability in activation precincts and the broader region reflecting the benefits for engine industries and potential residents for use in attraction initiatives.	Present	2024-2025
T2.1, T2.3	Develop a plan to leverage digital technology to support the delivery of the ARC Tourism Strategy.	Present	2024-2025
T1.2, T1.3	Develop digital business engagement tools (e.g. App, Web, Social Media) to enable businesses to automate Council services and processes including business concierge services.	Short	2026-2028
T2.4	Implement digital technologies in the CBD to create safety (CCTV, lighting), provide connectivity (Wi- Fi), collect data for insights, support ergonomics and aesthetics and provide future options for 5G small cells (Smart Poles). Better safety, connectivity and vibrancy could encourage local economic vibrancy, including night-time economy.	Medium	2029-2031
T1.2, T1.3	Deploy Community Open Data portal to provide key insights and data resources to businesses.	Medium	2029-2031
T1.5	Work with the SRI to leverage a nominated facility to deliver a living lab for testing and experimentation on new technologies, co-work on developing community insights, conducting key innovation events for a challenge program.	Long	2032-2034
T1.2, T1.3	Partner with UNE, SRI, TAFE and other partners to provide digital training and support program for businesses and data insights development program supported by appropriate analytical tools and skills and data sharing platform.	Long	2032-2034

