

Background

Due to an identified need to ready industry, business, government agencies and communities to take advantage of opportunities presented by the digital economy, the Queensland Government, Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday Regional Councils, RDA, Whitsunday Marketing and Development, Mackay IT Network and Mackay Chamber of Commerce worked together to develop a regional digital economy strategy.

Gravelroad was commissioned to develop a strategy in conjunction with the Working Group. The Mackay Isaac Whitsunday Digital Economy Strategy and Action Plan (the Strategy and Action Plan) was endorsed by the Steering Committee in March 2015.

The Strategy and Action Plan aims to:

- Enhance ability of government, industry, business and communities to engage in the digital marketplace.
- Act as a catalyst for change, strengthening the existing economic base and facilitating diversification.
- Influence the use of high speed broadband rollout throughout the region by increasing understanding of the benefits.
- Inform regional economic development strategies.

The Strategy and Action Plan contains a number of actions government, industry groups, business and communities can take to assist the region to embrace opportunities provided by the digital economy in the following areas of influence:

- Demand – all existing and potential users of the digital economy.
- Supply - industries, businesses and individuals that assist others to connect and engage effectively in the digital economy.
- Local leadership – provision of information, communication, guidance and support to industry, business and communities to as they undergo change.

Governance Model

Whitsunday ROC¹ have endorsed and taken high level responsibility for the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan. The ROC has agreed that the role of the ROC Executive Officer will provide regional coordination and oversight of implementation of the strategy. However, in line with the Strategy's recommendations, a Digital Economy Reference Group was formed to guide and inform the strategy's implementation in conjunction with the ROC Executive Officer.

Reference Group Membership

- Mackay Regional Council
- Northern Australia Services
- Whitsunday Regional Council
- Isaac Regional Council
- RDA Mackay Isaac Whitsunday

¹ Whitsunday ROC Ltd is the Regional Organisation of Councils covering the Local Government areas of Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday.

- Whitsundays Marketing and Development Ltd
- Mackay Tourism Ltd
- Mackay IT Network (MITN)
- Mackay Region Chamber of Commerce
- Department of Science, Information Technology & Innovation
- Department of State Development
- Young Professionals
- Mackay Hospital and Health Services
- CQUniversity
- Startup Mackay
- Diversify Mackay Leadership Alliance – Education and Innovation Pillar group

Objectives:

1. Develop and implement a communications plan;
2. Conduct a series of information presentations regarding the digital economy;
3. Establish collaboration between councils, industry peak bodies and industry and community leaders;
4. Develop case studies demonstrating the opportunities and benefits of the digital economy;
5. Conduct a series of training workshops utilising local case studies;
6. Liaise with telecommunications infrastructure constructors and Retail Service Providers (RSPs);
7. Utilise existing leadership groups such as the Mackay IT Network (MITN) and Diversify Mackay Leadership Alliance (DMLA) to foster the development of the local ICT industry;
8. Guide businesses and not for profit organisations to undertake an assessment of their current state, future desires and resultant gaps;
9. Work with education facilities and providers with the aim of enhancing digital capability at all levels;
10. Work with medical and health facilities and providers to optimise their usage of digital technology in the delivery of their services;
11. The three Councils, through the Whitsunday ROC, to lead by example demonstrating the principle “thinking digital first” when delivering services and through working collaboratively by sharing resources, information, knowledge, people and technology;
12. Develop a business case to encourage telcos to provide necessary infrastructure to alleviate blackspots; and
13. Liaise with NBN Co to ensure that all actions undertaken demonstrate the regions’ willingness and capability to partner with NBN Co and collaborate with the objective of sharing, or linking infrastructure to facilitate deployment of the NBN throughout the region.