

2014 Draft Strategic Research Priorities

Regional Australia Institute

- The Regional Australia Institute (RAI) is determining its strategic research priorities for 2014.
- To ensure the RAI remain engaged with our stakeholders and that our research remains relevant to the tasks of regional decision makers the RAI is seeking your input and feedback to their strategic priorities for 2014.

Introduction

In 2014 the Regional Australia Institute (RAI) will continue its research program in accordance with its Strategic Research Agenda. This will involve the continuation of existing research and policy projects as well as the annual update of [In]Sight and [In]Form.

In addition to these, the RAI will initiate **three** new projects for 2014.

To date, the RAI has identified two major project concepts for 2014 and four potential project concepts from which to determine the third major project.

The initial two major project concepts for 2014 are;

- ***Regions Leading Their Own Development: Australian Case Study Library***
- ***Developing the Potential Framework and Testing Ideas Within It***

While the four (4) potential project concepts are;

- *Developing Human Capital;*
- *Entrepreneurial Ecosystems;*
- *Optimising Outcomes of Governance, and;*
- *Infrastructure Investment.*

An outline of the continuing and future projects and their contribution toward the Strategic Research Agenda is detailed in the following pages.

Continuing projects (as in Figure 1);

- First annual update of [In]Sight
- First annual update of [In]Form
- RAI Business Survey update and extension
- Population dynamics report
- RAI Policy paper series;
 - Service provision, social outcomes and migration habits
 - Innovative approaches to governance
 - Improving Government outcomes in regional Australia
 - Regional diversity
 - Data and decision making
- Natural Disasters – From Recovery to Renewal
- Structural Adjustment in regional Australia

Guidelines for contributing to the Draft Strategic Research Priorities for 2014

In order to determine the third research priority the RAI is seeking feedback and input from its key stakeholders. Stakeholder input is a valuable source of information for the organisation to ensure that our research continues to reflect the issues and opportunities in regional Australia. For this reason the RAI encourages its key stakeholders to review the four potential research options and provide feedback to the RAI no later than COB Friday 29 November 2013.

Please consider the guidelines below when providing feedback;

- The feedback is intended to assist the RAI in determining its third research priority for 2014 - the potential research options are **limited to those four options** already shortlisted by the RAI and its Board, Research Advisory Committee, Research Fellows and Staff;
- All three research projects should work together with as a package - the project should be considered **complementary** to the two projects already chosen but should also make a significant contribution to regional Australia as a stand-alone project;
- The RAI need to be able to demonstrate a significant **value add** in the research area – ie, there shouldn't be other organisations or persons who are already undertaking the project or could possibly be better placed to undertake it

The comments and feedback will be collated by the RAI and used to determine the research option that is considered to provide the largest value-add for regional Australia and the RAI. Upon approval of the final research priorities by the RAI Board of the Directors, the RAI will undertake further consultation with a wide range of stakeholders to fully scope each research priority.

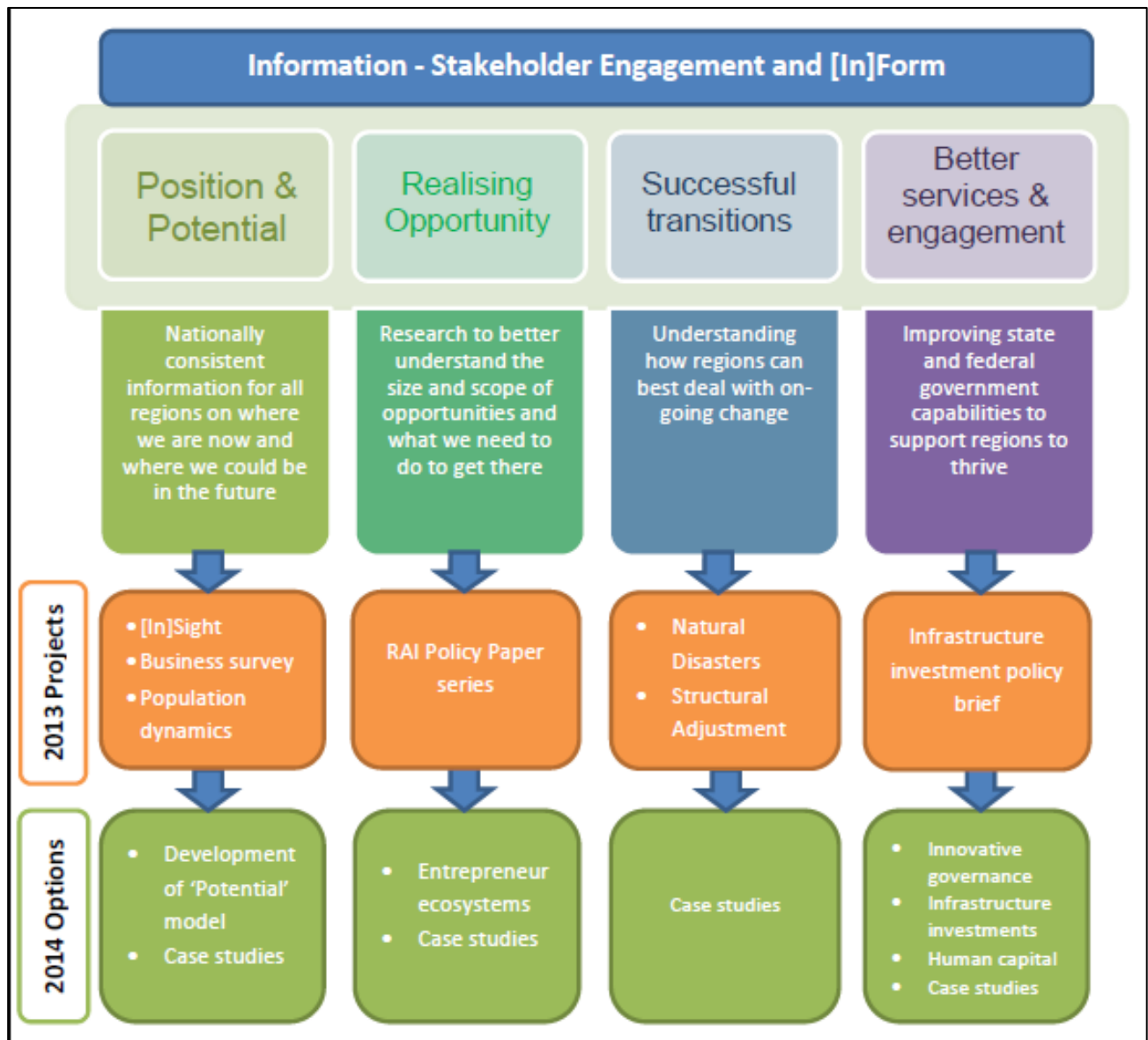


Figure 1: Strategic Research Agenda and 2013/14 projects

Research Agenda and Strategic Themes

The Research Priorities align with the four Strategic Research Themes in Figure 1 above. These themes were determined through extensive consultation at the inception of RAI.

Next Steps

The RAI will now further scope the identified priorities to develop a robust plan for working toward its strategic research agenda in 2014. This requires extensive consultation with all levels of stakeholders to gauge where the largest value add for regional Australia will be and what role RAI can do in fulfilling this role within each research proposal.

Theme 1: Position and Potential

This theme will continue to be a major research focus, recognising the substantial issues that have been identified with the knowledge and research on understanding regional potential. Priorities under this theme include:

Development and testing of the *Regional Potential* model (Figure 2):

This project is proposed to be a **pivotal** component of the 2014 Research Agenda and will explore the concepts outlined in the potential model and use case studies to test the efficacy, accuracy and viability of the model.

The project will provide a strong platform for identifying and developing the central themes to regional potential. It will allow regions to identify their unique position and potential and set forth a strategic style framework from which to explore how to expand and mobilise these attributes.

The project will engender a large scope of works that will build on the central themes and assist in testing. Research may include components related to:

- How to improve of human capital in regional areas;
- Understanding the flows of investment into regions to provide mobile resources;
- Understanding the efficacy of regional leaders as agents of action.

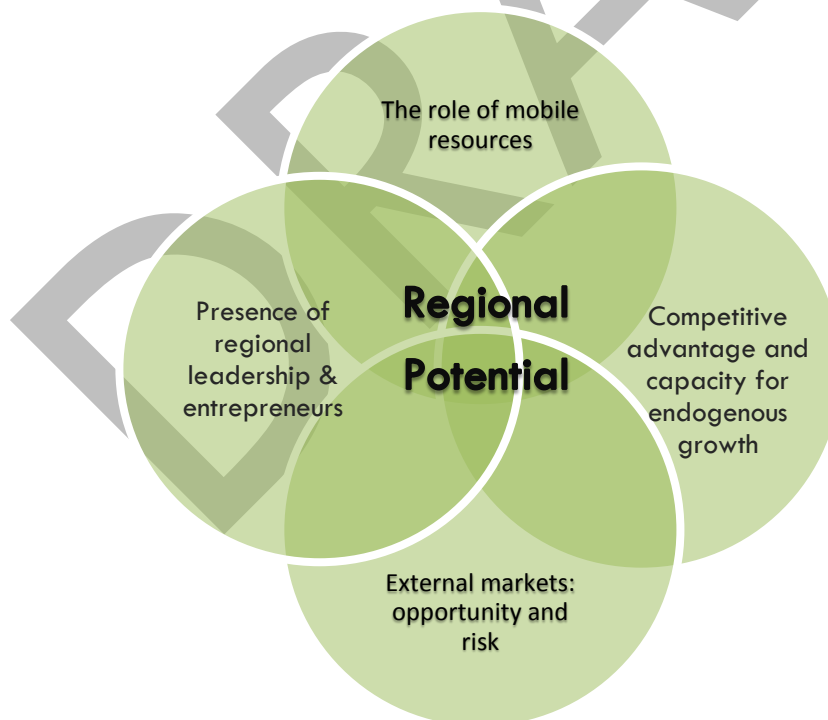


Figure 2: The Draft Potential Model (draft in concept)

Case study library:

The case study library will be developed with specific projects and evidence that supports and informs the development of the potential model. Case studies may also be developed and harvested for projects which align with continuing projects such as Population dynamics and [In]Sight papers.

Continuing projects

[In]Sight – Australia’s Regional Competitiveness Index

After its launch in 2013 [In]Sight will receive its first annual update in 2014. The [In]Sight database will be updated with available data and the RAI team will also be compiling feedback from the initial tool to ensure it remains user friendly, the information remains relevant and that the tool continues to be widely used by researchers, policy makers, investors and all members of the community to understand their regions.

The RAI team will also continue to develop research papers exploring the myriad of information and applications provided by the tool.

Business Survey

The business survey measures unique information from regional businesses and is used throughout [In]Sight. As part of the [In]Sight update the Business Survey will also be revised and updated so that the information obtained may inform other projects in the future to assist in understanding the unique experiences of regional business.

Population Dynamics

Understanding the population movements, trends and profiles of regional Australia is an essential component of understanding what the real regional Australia is.

In 2013 the RAI commissioned Prof. Graeme Hugo to prepare a report on regional population dynamics. The RAI will be releasing the findings of this research and the likely implications for regional Australia in early 2014. The findings will continue to shape and contribute to further work at the RAI throughout 2014.

Theme 2: Realising Opportunity

This will be continue to be a major research focus given the outcomes from [the Stocktake of Regional Research](#) which identified this as the major gap in regional research. Priorities under this theme include:

Entrepreneurial ecosystems:

The ability to lead and identify opportunity is central to realising and developing potential in regional Australia. This project would aim to develop a better understanding of the role entrepreneurs and leaders play in realising opportunity and how to encourage and foster this type of behaviour.

The proposed research would form part of and contribute to the 'potential' model, in particular the entrepreneurial and leadership sphere. The project proposes to examine entrepreneurial ecosystems in regional Australia and identify the elements which contribute to the creation and success of new business.

Case studies:

The case study library will be developed with specific projects and evidence that supports and informs the development of the entrepreneurial behaviours and to provide a strong evidence for the development of existing and future policy papers.

Continuing projects:

RAI Policy paper series:

In 2013 the RAI commenced a series of policy papers to explore the central policy issues surrounding regional Australia and regional development. In 2014, the RAI will continue to develop these and further policy papers to remain engaged in and to continue to make a meaningful contribution to the policy debate surrounding regional Australia.

Theme 3: Successful Transitions

This will be a lesser research focus with extensive work having been completed in the previous 18 months. The team will continue to work on these projects yet they will not form a new research project for pursuing in 2014.

Case studies:

The case study library will be developed with specific projects and evidence that supports and informs the work surrounding successful transitions and in particular those relating to economic change.

Continuing projects:

Natural Disasters

In 2013 the RAI released its report 'From Recovery to Renewal'. In 2014 the RAI will continue to explore the findings revealed in the report and seek the implementation of the key recommendations. This will include continued liaison with policy and decision makers as well as those communities affected or likely to be affected by natural disasters.

Structural Adjustment

In 2014 the RAI will complete its research into the affects and successes of structural adjustment policy by looking forward to how to deal with potential change in the future.

As part of this the RAI is considering hosting a conference to explore the complex and often poorly understood mechanisms of economic change and structural adjustment in regional Australia. The conference would provide a unique opportunity to explore past approaches but to most importantly look to the future of economic change and how it is dealt with at a regional, national and global scale.

The extension of this project would provide an exceptional opportunity for exploring one of the largest issues facing regional Australia and to ensure that future transitions are successful.

Theme 4: Better Services and Engagement

Priorities under this theme include:

Developing Human Capital in Regional Australia to Achieve Prosperity

The proposed research would form part of and contribute to the 'potential' model in particular the mobile resources and comparative advantage spheres.

[In]Sight's major findings identified high levels of human capital as a key characteristic of highly successful regions. This project would explore how services can be improved to enhance human capital in regional areas. This includes educational services as well as other services and policy mechanisms to improve overall human capital. Potential areas for further investigation include, leveraging workforce strengths, skill shortages and regional "returners".

Optimising the Outcomes of Governance for Regional Australia

This project would explore and analyse the differing methods of providing services and governance to regional Australia. The work would support the potential model in the specific context of our regional leadership as well as the governance options within the model. This work is central to exploring the role of multiple actors in the regional development space.

Infrastructure Investment

This project would look at how to address the significant back log of infrastructure projects in regional Australia through innovative approaches to prioritising, funding and delivering infrastructure projects. The project will build on the issue and ideas raised in the RAI's Infrastructure policy brief and Northern Australia paper 2013. The project would explore how regions can make the most of limited resources and large demand for services.

Case study library:

The case study library will be essential in understanding the outcomes of service delivery for regional Australia. Developing effective approaches requires a strong bank of evidence to ensure that new approaches can seek to achieve more for regional Australia with increasingly limited resources.

Across all themes

Papers, briefings and analysis that respond to regional policy issues

In addition to large research initiatives, it is important that RAI is a regular contributor to the debate surrounding national and regional issues.

In 2014, RAI will undertake smaller pieces of research and policy analysis that respond to policy issues and key stakeholder interests alongside major research initiatives.

The development of projects in consultation with stakeholders.

Projects developed under this approach will be consistent with the Research Agenda. During the development of additional projects the Research Advisory Committee will provide advice on each project's quality and potential contribution

Enquiries

If you have any questions or enquiries about any of the content contained within this document, please contact the Regional Australia Institute on the below details:

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