Ready Communities 2025
DISCOVER PROGRAM

Discover the resources, capabilities and capacity in your regional community

READY COMMUNITIES

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands and Elders past, present and emerging.

We work with great respect of the cultural landscape, the knowledge and skills of the community and the dreams of the people we serve.

About Ready Communities?

Dr. Chad Renando and Kerry Grace
Ready Communities Founders

Ready Communities works between community and economic development to support community-led action.

(Ready Macleay) "improved my courage to speak up, make suggestions" Kempsey resident

Founded in 2023 by Kerry Grace and Dr. Chad Renando, Ready Communities combines decades of expertise in regional development, community engagement, and business leadership.

Following successful individual work across Australia, the team launched their flagship Ready Macleay program in Kempsey NSW in 2024.

Ready Communities' approach is simple yet powerful: honour local knowledge, leverage existing resources, and deliver practical solutions and embed capability and capacity.

"Kerry and Chad, in leading Kempsey through the Ready Communities program, have absolutely transformed the conversation around positive place-based change here in the Macleay Valley." Father Jesse Poole

READY COMMUNITIES

How is this different?

Image from Social Impact in the Regions conference Kempsey, 2024

There's a critical space between community aspirations and economic outcomes that often goes unaddressed. It's where dreams meet reality, where social capital meets financial sustainability.

At Ready Communities, we've spent years understanding this vital intersection. Our work across regional Australia has shown us that true regional development isn't just about economics OR community - it's about both working in harmony.

Traditional approaches to community and economic development provide isolated services to regional communities without fully considering the broader contextual and emergent factors that could greatly influence their activities. Gaining insight into these additional factors requires local knowledge, and it requires time.

Our theory of change addresses:

- Regional inequality
- A systemic nature of regional change
- The growing need for place-based solutions

READY COMMUNITIES

Theory of change

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We work with regional communities to address

Regional inequality

CHALLENGE:

- Lack of access to networks, information, resources, and capital
  - Lack of specialist skills and additional cost to source
  - Increased cost in core services, Impacts are compounded for other areas of inequality including First Nations, youth, women, older generations, migrants, and health impacts

READY COMMUNITIES RESPONSE:

- Focusing attention towards shared goals, increasing connectivity within and across regional communities, and building capability and capacity in local leaders, institutions and supply chains.

Systemic approach

CHALLENGE:

Increasing complex pressures including demographic trends, natural disaster events, decarbonisation response, industry transition, and technology advancement.

- Siloed response to complex challenges due to lack of resources, cultural influences, and lack of shared information systems
- Competing and misaligned economic development and community development functions.
- Lacking systems to track, measure and thereby value connectivity and connections that drive change.

READY COMMUNITIES RESPONSE:

- Clarity from shared information, connectivity across community functional areas, collaborative collective response, and a shared voice in the region on addressing complex challenges.

Place-based change

CHALLENGE:

- Uncoordinated approaches to place-based change can be extractive and be counter-productive to the intended outcomes
- Individual initiatives can be isolated from broader change impacts and have unintended consequences in the community
  - Emerging backbone structures require additional support for broader impact
  - Strategic plans can sit in isolation

READY COMMUNITIES RESPONSE:

- Place-based initiatives supported with 'scaffolding' support through shared information, connected initiatives, increased institutional capability and capacity, collaborative structures and clusters, and shared promotion of community transformation.

Program logic

Inputs

- Backbone organisation
- Endorsed community strategy to guide action including a range of actionable initiatives
- Local stakeholders representing broad cross section of community
- Ready Communities program support, coordination and network support

Activities

- **Mapping** Map strategies, policies, programs, investment and stakeholders aligned to identified goals
- **Engagement activities** Bring community members together to form collegial partnerships through action oriented conversations about community goals
- **Nurture entrepreneurial culture** Identify a range of investment opportunities and leverage connections to activate
- **Activation** Support community to activate initiatives. Use public event (SIITR) as example.
- **Capability development** Draw on local and national network to fill capability gaps.
- **Connection** Support a culture of connectivity and provide ongoing access to network.

Outputs

- Community asset map including identification of gaps and duplication.
- Increased community access and participation. Embed positive, goal oriented language (not problem oriented)
- Link programs, identify opportunities, cross-over social enterprise and enterprise development, pitchfest
- Support activation of community identified initiatives by linking resources.
- Support ongoing capability development and identification of networks to provide support.
- Connect people within and external to local community. Shared resources, planning.

Outcomes (Ready Macleay)

- Less waste of funding and community resources as gaps and duplication is identified
- Build positive and collaborative partnerships spanning boundaries, themes and existing silos
- Embed action-oriented approach to support local leaders to activate and drive local programs and enterprises.
- Community members identify skill gaps and a range of pathways to seek support.
- Collective approach to community change.

Outcomes (Ready Communities defined))

- Clarity and understanding
- Connection and Connectivity
- Collaboration for purpose
- Capability and capacity
- Advocacy and promotion

Impacts

- Economic
- Social
- Institutional
- Infrastructure
- Environmental

Outcomes Framework

Image from Social Impact in the Regions conference

Our programs are guided by the Ready Communities Outcomes Framework which includes the following factors:

Clarity and understanding

- Shared map of assets and funding
- Clear action plan aligned to relevant strategies (e.g. CSP)
- Shared KPIs
- Shared evaluation frameworks
- Common language and community/economic development practice

Connection and connectivity

- Shared event and activity calendars
- Shared communication platforms
- Activated third spaces
- Boundary spanning across regions, roles and sectors

Collaboration for purpose

- Shared challenges identified
- Clusters established for shared challenges
- Investment attraction opportunities
- Opportunities to build connections and embed collaboration as a practice

Capability and capacity

- Local skills development (hard and soft skills)
- Social capital including institutional capability
- A range of funding instruments identified and activated
- Diversity and redundancy
- Community building governance

Advocacy and promotion

- Media mobalised
- Advocacy voice defined and supported
- Evidence base for advocacy
- Shared approach
- Resource sharing

How does it work?

Ready Communities programs work across three delivery phases: Discover, Activate and Evaluate. Community leaders engage in action-based learning through each phase of the program.

Discover

- Initiate mapping software subscription
- Map key local, state and commonwealth policies, programs and funding related to priority areas
- Map key local stakeholders
- Identify a range of funding duplication, gaps and latent resources
- Map key local resources
- Identify a range of potential participants for the ACTIVATE program
- Establish an evaluation framework - understand what matters
- Host three community weeks of community consultation (April, June and August) inviting community members to contribute to conversations on their aspirations for the community

Activate

- Work with community members to activate identified initiatives
- Source support from the Social Impact in the Regions alumni network
- Deliver Social Impact in the Regions conference or contribute to another significant local event
- Continue the work of the DISCOVER program by maintaining the asset database and supporting other identified initiatives in the community

Evaluate

- Collective measurement of shared KPIs and share on Ready Communities dashboard
- Hand over mapping platform data and mapping software licence to identified custodian including training and a further 12-month licence (24 months in total)
- Overall program evaluation including community and Ready Communities identified outcomes and impacts

DISCOVER
Program content

Social Impact in the Regions conference

DISCOVER Program participants will learn a range of transferrable skills throughout the program.

While there is some theory-based learning through the program, it is primarily delivered as participants are actively contributing to the delivery of the co-design and consultation process of strategic community projects and apply their knowledge to a community project they are passionate about.

Through the program participants will learn and apply skills in:

- **Mapping**: Build a map of stakeholders, policies, programs and investment related to the learners work area.
- **Mapping**: Establish a comprehensive map of community assets, stakeholders and knowledge holders
- **Evaluation framework**: Develop a theory of change and measurement framework to guide delivery of initiatives for impact.
- **Facilitation**: Learn facilitation techniques to promote community engagement
- **Communication methodology**: Explore a range of platforms, tools and techniques to share message with community in line with Council's communication protocols.
- **Collaboration for impact**: Identify local and external supporting networks and work together for impact.
- **Strategic context**: Understand the strategic context of the initiative and how it fits within a broader delivery framework.
- **Governance frameworks**: Understand governance at a local, State and Federal level and create appropriate networks.
- **Place-based practice**: Learn about a range of tools which can support place-based practice bridging community and economic development.

DISCOVER
Program structure

Social Impact in the Regions conference

The program structure follows*:

Session 1
- Recruit DISCOVER participants
- Commence mapping consultation and community mapping needs with program investors
- Set dates for public forums (consultations)
- Promote April public forum date/s* and themes

Session 2
- 1-day onsite training for DISCOVER participants
- Establish mapping framework (co-design) and methodology
- Promote April public forums
- Deliver April public forums
- Ready Communities platform training

Session 3
- Online DISCOVER learning program self-paced
- One to one mentoring sessions (online) - 2 / student through duration
- Assess mapping gaps (ongoing, Ready Communities team)
- Promote June Forums
- Deliver June Forums
- Reporting to key stakeholders

Session 4
- Online DISCOVER learning program self-paced
- One to one mentoring sessions (online) - 2 / student through duration
- Assess mapping gaps (ongoing, Ready Communities team)
- Promote August Forums
- Deliver August Forums
- Reporting to key stakeholders

Session 5
- Social Impact in the Regions conference (first Weds-Friday in September)

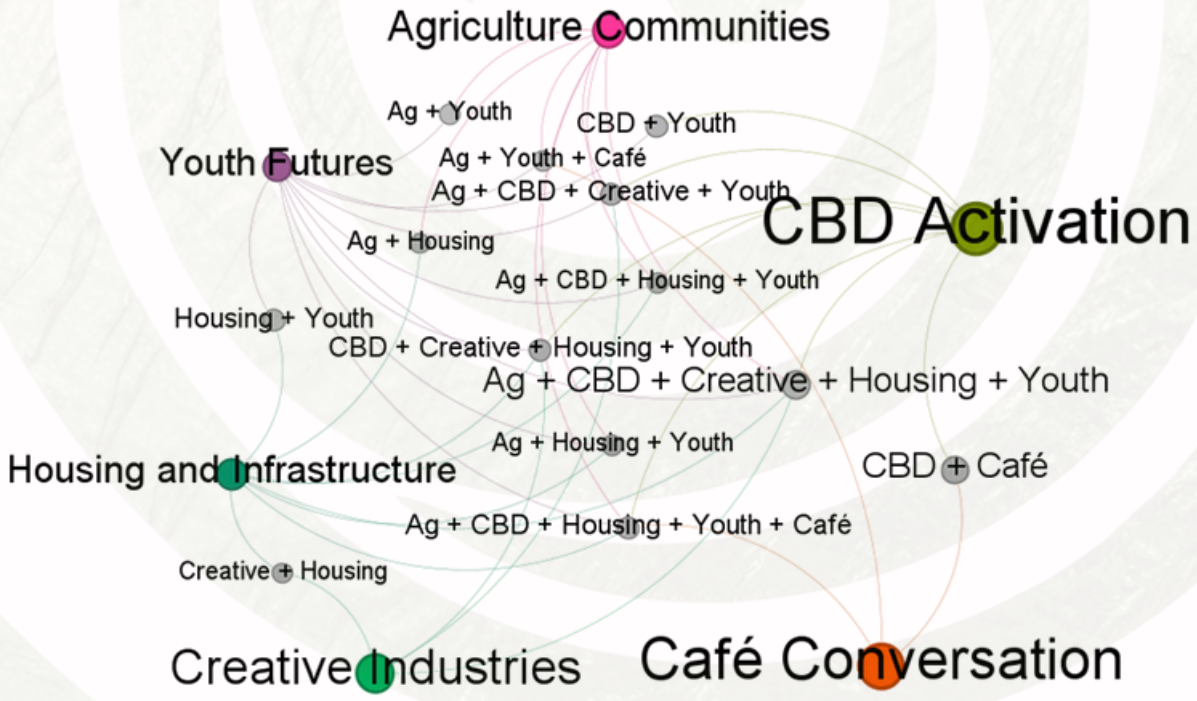
* Pending investment the public forum/s will either be one concentrated forum or one forum. Each block of forums will have multiple opportunities for DISCOVER participants to participate noting some may have work and other priorities.

DISCOVER
program technology

Social Impact in the Regions conference

Mapping

DISCOVER is driven by our mapping and evaluation platform. The platform enables a simple visual tool which highlights service gaps and duplication and also key stakeholders. This information is important as it bridges local myths and provides an evidence base in decision making and future planning.



DISCOVER Delivery

The course - DISCOVER

- The DISCOVER course will enable course participants to learn as they create a comprehensive map of the local community including:
  - Policies and programs
  - Funding
  - Local assets and resources
  - Skills
- DISCOVER participants will coordinate three public forums all of which will contribute to community engagement and co-design of a range of community projects (aspirations).
- DISCOVER participants will also lead a further four focus groups

Partnering community programs

- Up to five organisations can contribute as key stakeholders in the process
- Key stakeholders will assist the development of the consultation methodology and content, understanding of data ownership and access to agreed upon data
- Each of the identified programs will require various levels of community engagement, co-design and consultation.
- Not only will the process provide a valuable learning opportunity for DISCOVER participants, it also reduces consultation fatigue among participating community members and simultaneously builds social licence for the participating programs.

Community forums

- The program includes three weeks of community forums which are ideally delivered in April, June and August.
- There will be 1-2 forums each day pending investment and stakeholder direction
- The forums are designed to progress community engagement and co-design for the partnering community programs.
- The Ready Communities team will map the needs of each of the community programs and design an engagement, co-design and consultation process which fits around the three forums.

DISCOVER Program will deliver:

- An evaluation framework incorporating identification of the consultation needs of partnering stakeholders
- Three public consultation meetings
- Four further focus groups
- A report generated by the Ready Communities platform

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Contact Us

We look forward to hearing from you:

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