



Closing the digital divide – digital connectivity priorities

GREAT SOUTH COAST

The Great South Coast (GSC) Regional Partnership supports the following proposals across the GSC region as digital opportunities that will significantly improve public safety, productivity, competitiveness and liveability.

The opportunity areas identified by the Partnership are based on the GSC's *Digital Plan and the GSC Economic Futures report*.

The indicative cost to the Victorian Government of these five opportunities is estimated at \$38 million over a four-year period.

Table 1. Summary of Great South Coast Regional Partnerships digital opportunities

Initiative	Indicative cost to government	Output	Proposed timeframe and phasing option
1. Address mobile coverage issues	\$10 million	Up to 20 new mobile towers and/or 10 public WiFi networks/hotspots or new mobile and WiFi delivery options (assumes a matching industry contribution).	Phase 1 (\$5m) Phase 2 (\$5m)
2. Support access to business-grade broadband in significant population areas	\$10 million	Deployment of enhanced broadband networks to up to 5 priority towns.	Phase 1 (\$4m) Implement in first 2 towns Phase 2 (\$6m) Implement in remaining 3 towns
3. Internet of Things (IoT) technology for high-value agriculture	\$3 million	Supporting up to 150 farms to adopt IoT technologies, focused on 1-2 high-value agricultural sectors.	Implementation 2020/21 to 2021/22 with networks operating beyond the 4-year funding period
4. Digital Hubs for education and skills and small business	\$13 million	2 key digital hubs in Portland and Hamilton and an additional 5 smaller scale digital hubs across the region.	Phase 1 (\$7m) Implement 2 key hubs Phase 2 (\$6m) Implement 5 smaller scale hubs
5. Leveraging new energy infrastructure for digital connectivity	\$2 million	TBD - dependent on planned energy infrastructure builds across the region.	Over 4 years 2020/21 to 2024/25
TOTAL	\$38 million	PHASE 1 2020/21 PHASE 2 2022/23	\$21 million \$17 million

* Funding amounts proposed reflect the total estimated costs of implementing the initiative at the scale identified, with the exception of mobile coverage where industry matching funding is assumed. Co-contributions from industry, local and Commonwealth governments and other stakeholders will be sought to leverage State funding provided.

1. Address mobile coverage issues - \$10 million



Seek to address mobile coverage issues utilising mobile and/or public WiFi networks.

Coverage will be improved to support economic development with an emphasis on GSC's strategic sectors, including high-value agricultural areas and high visitation tourist locations. Improved connectivity will also target mobile network issues and resilience issues to foster public safety during emergency situations.

The GSC Digital Plan identifies 18 tourist locations with a lack of adequate connectivity. Many popular tourist locations have either patchy mobile network coverage or challenges in accommodating large seasonal influxes of visitors and do not have good enough connectivity to provide WiFi services.

The ten primary production areas analysed in the Plan were also found to have inadequate connectivity which includes poor mobile connectivity.

Examples of places to target may include:

- Twelve Apostles (2.1 million visitors p.a.)
- Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape (110,000 visitors p.a.)
- Port Fairy Folk Festival (40,000 visitors p.a.)
- Great South West Walk (80,000 visitors p.a.)
- Logan's Beach Whale Viewing Platform (270,000 visitors p.a.)
- Towns where streetscapes are being redeveloped
- Sheep and beef grazing south of Balmoral, between Macarthur and Mortlake, and west of Dartmoor
- Forestry areas east of Nelson
- Grampians Peaks Trail development including Dunkeld at the southern end of Grampians.

The indicative cost of \$10 million assumes a matching industry contribution.

2. Support access to business-grade broadband in significant population areas - \$10 million



Target the five towns of more than 1,000 population across the GSC that have been identified as having a lack of business-grade broadband.

Funding would be used to partner with industry to deliver high-capacity broadband networks where existing NBN services do not meet their needs. Infrastructure projects will be leveraged to deliver both enhanced broadband services as well as public WiFi networks to the town where appropriate.

The design for enhanced broadband networks will emphasise connectivity that is resilient to natural disasters and able to support business continuity and public safety during times of emergency.

Proposed next steps would be the deployment of enhanced broadband to up to five towns, which could include:

- Warrnambool – population 30,709 (2016)
- Portland – population 9,712 (2016)
- Hamilton – population 9,974 (2016)
- Port Fairy – population 3,340 (2016)
- Camperdown – population 3,369 (2016).

3. Internet of Things (IoT) technology for high-value agriculture - \$3 million

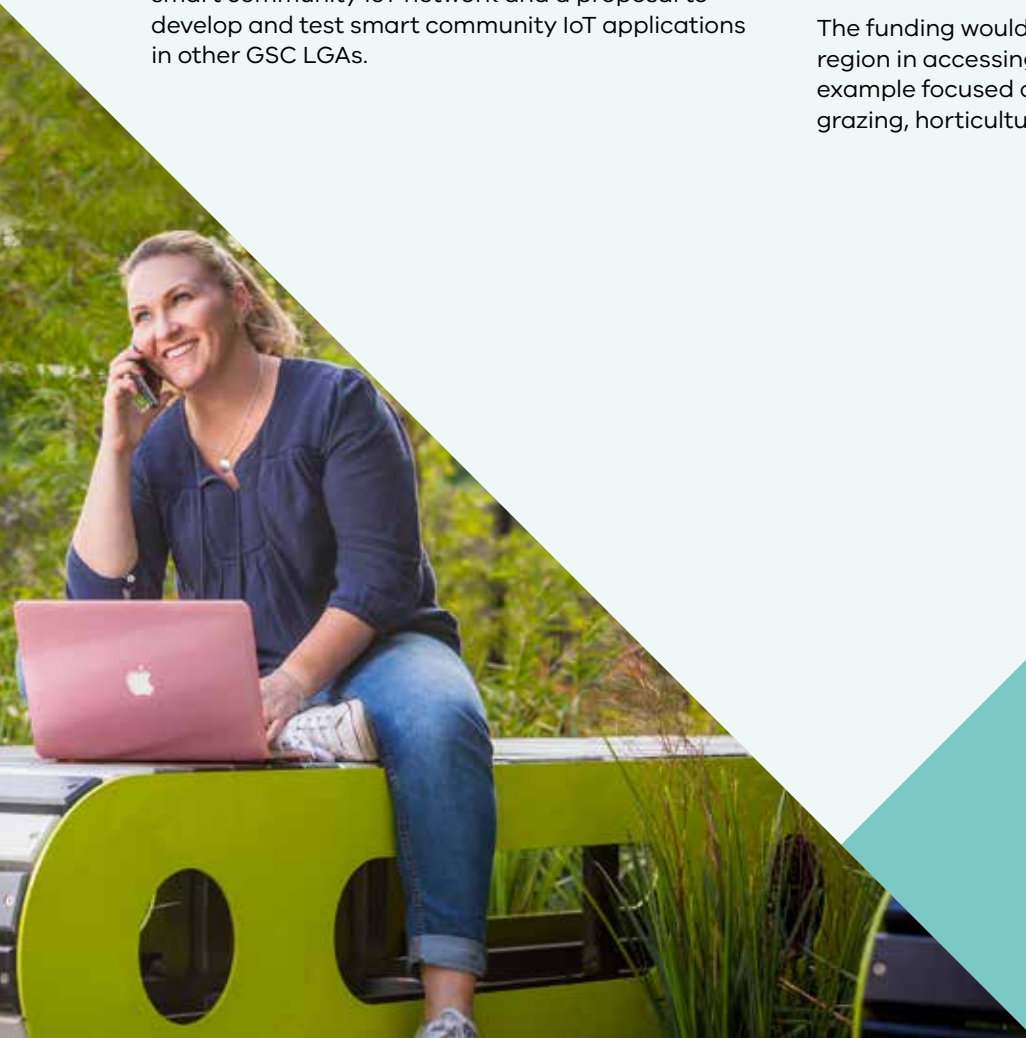


Accelerate the uptake of IoT technologies across GSC with a focus on high-value agricultural sectors.

Look to leverage related IoT initiatives across the region, such as the Southern Grampians Shire's smart community IoT network and a proposal to develop and test smart community IoT applications in other GSC LGAs.

Maximise the benefits of IoT initiatives through direct assistance to farmers with expertise and advice on technology applications relevant to their sector, support in accessing information and analytics platforms, support to establish adequate IoT network connectivity across agricultural areas and a subsidy to encourage adoption of new technologies.

The funding would support up to 150 farms in the GSC region in accessing and utilising IoT technologies, for example focused on sheep and beef grazing, dairy grazing, horticulture and aquaculture.



4. Digital Hubs for education and skills and small business - \$13 million



Provide digital services, facilities and digital skills according to place-based needs of Great South Coast towns.

GSC Regional Partnership has identified the need for state-of-the-art community-based facilities and support to improve education outcomes and skills development.

South West TAFE working with the GSC Regional Partnership has developed a blueprint to replicate a campus-like environment - Study-Hubs - in Hamilton and Portland to provide GSC students with similar facilities to their metro peers to encourage them to stay and study in the region.

Whilst these two Study Hubs would aid tertiary and secondary students, there is currently an opportunity to build on the Study Hubs proposal to create digital hubs scaled to meet smaller communities' needs.

Taking into account their capabilities and specific industry and community skills gaps, these small digital hubs will be available to young people, on-line and life-long learners, workers and businesses with skills needs to maximise benefits to the region. GSC Regional Partnership has prioritised an investigation for five well-resourced digital hubs across GSC.

5. Leveraging new energy infrastructure for digital connectivity - \$2 million



Take advantage of new energy infrastructure projects to expand access to high-capacity digital infrastructure across the region.

New energy facilities and infrastructure require high-grade digital infrastructure connectivity.

This focus area will leverage new energy infrastructure rollouts and their civil works activities to extend the fibre-optic network across the GSC region to improve connectivity to nearby towns and users.

Activity will focus on coordinating with energy infrastructure deployments to lay fibre or acquire rights to use excess capacity on fibre installed to serve the energy facilities.

Contact Us

If you would like to discuss the Great South Coast Regional Digital Plan please contact the Great South Coast Regional Partnership on:

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We look forward to hearing from you.