

Western Downs Regional Council Annual Report 2023-24

Member information

Details	
Organisation name:	Western Downs Regional Council
Main address:	30 Marble Street, Dalby, QLD, 4405
Main email:	info@wdrc.qld.gov.au
Main phone:	1300 268 624
Main website URL:	https://www.wdrc.qld.gov.au/
ABN:	91 232 587 651
Charter signing date:	20/10/2021

Authorised representatives

The nominated staff members will take on the responsibility for Small Business Friendly (SBF) activities, which includes participation in SBF meetings. They will be the primary contact for receiving program details, updates, and inquiries.

Authorised SBF representative details	
Full name:	Prince Lo
Position:	Economic Development Program Leader
Email:	
Phone:	

SBF Proxy details	
Full name:	
Position:	
Email:	
Phone:	

Report information

Details	
Report date:	02/09/2024
Prepared by:	Prince Lo - Economic Development Program Leader
Stakeholders consulted:	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Report published:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Report URL (if online):	

Charter performance

Actively communicate and engage with small businesses

Commitments	Performance self-assessment			
	● Not yet	● In progress	● Achieved	● Very well achieved
a) Actively engage and be mindful of small businesses, their issues and priorities when making decisions. (e.g., create a business advisory group).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Communicate clearly in a timely manner both formally and informally. (e.g., working at all levels to exceed your customers' expectations).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Engage with statewide partners where appropriate on matters affecting small businesses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Publish clear service standards stating what small businesses can expect from us. (e.g., in service charter, economic strategy, annual plan, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Summary of key activities and achievements in relation to this element:

- Council engages with six (6) Chambers of Commerce in the region. Successfully partnering with three (3) Chambers with a Partnering Agreement signed to provide financial support to Chambers.
- Regular 8 weeks of face-to-face meetings with partnered chamber representatives formally to discuss local business issues and how Council can support the Chamber's and businesses' priorities.
- Council staff members and Councillors regularly attended Chamber of Commerce events. E.g. Dalby Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) Business After Hours, Chinchilla Community, Commerce and Industry (CCCI) Year Ahead Breakfast, Meet the Buyer Session, etc. Actively engage with Chambers and its members informally.
- Engagement with the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) on a regular basis through DESBT events and networks.
- Council provides updates on the Economic Development Strategy on the Council Website and the performance of the respective 5 pillars of the strategy, Jobs and Skills, Liveability and Infrastructure, Population, Productivity and Innovation, and Sustainability and Resilience. The website indicates the initiatives delivered by Council on supporting small businesses in the region.

Raise the profile and capability of small business

Commitments	Performance self-assessment			
	● Not yet	● In progress	● Achieved	● Very well achieved
a) Publicly recognise and value the importance of small businesses to our community and local economy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Encourage campaigns to promote small business and local spending (e.g., buy local).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Help small businesses develop networks, access education, and increase their capabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Assist small businesses to access government, business and industry programs and resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Summary of key activities and achievements in relation to this element:

- Received funding from DEBST to deliver the Local Led Economic Recovery (LLER) Program with the project - Buy Western Downs and #ExperienceWesternDowns. Aim to promote Buy Local initiatives across the region. The program has commenced and will continue until June 2025.
- Continued "It's the people that make it" branding and tourism campaign recognises the value of hospitality and tourism businesses across the region in social and print media and information sessions.
- Bunyarra Wellbeing Co delivered Health & Wellbeing for Biz Roadshow for businesses from 27 to 29 November 2023 across the region to support the mental health and wellbeing of small businesses.
- Western Downs Regional Business Summit held on 16 May 2024 supports small businesses across various topics, delivered by CCCI and supported by WDRC. Businesses have the opportunity to develop networks, learn from various speaker, and increase their capabilities.
- Toowoomba and Surat Basin Enterprise (TSBE) Business Navigators Western Downs is offering free business growth advisory service to small businesses. Currently servicing 35 small businesses through one-on-one coaching and workshops.
- The *Business in Western Downs eNewsletter* provides monthly updates on the latest Western Downs business and tourism information and is available by subscribing to: <https://confirmsubscription.com/h/t/DFFF76468728FDFE>. The eNewsletter includes information to assist small businesses in accessing government, business, and industry grants, programs, and resources.

Promote and showcase small businesses

Commitments	Performance self-assessment			
	● Not yet	● In progress	● Achieved	● Very well achieved
a) Encourage and promote small business engagement via marketing and communication channels (e.g., engaging with local small businesses, collaborating with local chambers of commerce, industry groups etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Create awareness by promoting the Small Business Friendly Councils (SBFC) program (e.g., using the SBFC identifier online, in marketing collateral and in communication materials).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Sharing successes, ideas and learnings with other Small Business Friendly Councils and other stakeholders.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Allow the Queensland Small Business Commissioner to promote our Small Business Friendly Council activities and achievements.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Summary of key activities and achievements in relation to this element:

- Economic Development Team has responded to enquiries from and provided advice for local residents starting up a new business, small businesses, and developers via the economic.development@wdrc.qld.gov.au email account.
- A wide range of small businesses have been featured in LIVE Western Downs Magazine and the Magazine is due to launch in Quarter 1 2024.
- The Economic Development Team creates weekly informative email updates which are distributed by email to all Chambers of Commerce in the region for their respective members.
- Support DCCI to facilitate the 31 Faces of Small Businesses campaign to promote 1 small business per day in Dalby during Queensland Small Business Month through Chamber of Commerce Partnering agreement funds.
- Regular attendance of the SBF Program Roundtable Meeting to engage with other Councils organised by the SBFC Team.
- Council staff members share information and updates regarding Small Businesses on LinkedIn and allow the SBFC Team to reshare it to promote the information, activities, and achievements.

Develop and promote place-based programs for small business

Commitments	Performance self-assessment			
	● Not yet	● In progress	● Achieved	● Very well achieved
a) Identify, develop, promote and deliver at least two existing or new place-based programs to support businesses to start, grow and become more resilient.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Summary of key activities and achievements in relation to this element:

- Young Entrepreneur Summit was delivered on 14 February 2024 at Chinchilla and supported participation the of 350 students, celebrating entrepreneurship.
- WDRC has partnered with TSBE and AgForce School to Industry Partnership Program (SIPP) to host the annual Protein Jobs Fair on 6 September 2023 and highlighted careers in the intensive agricultural industry for job seekers and school students with the presence of businesses in the region. Local Intensive Agriculture businesses are invited to have a trade stall free of charge and promote their vacancies within their organisation.
- Council supports the BEST (Bringing Employers & Schools Together) groups in Chinchilla and Dalby, a collaborative relationship bringing together schools and businesses across the region, and its initiative includes Small Business Dinner on 15 May 2024, Ignite Your Future Tour on 12 October 2023 to support small businesses to connect with school students and the future workforce.
- WDRC partnered with TSBE to deliver the 2024 Protein Conference on 20 June 2024 with pork, poultry, beef, and dairy producers, processors, researchers, and transport operators sharing best practices and advocating for common policy changes.
- WDRC delivered the 2024 Accelerate Manufacturing Conference on 29 May 2024 to bring industry experts and manufacturing businesses together to share knowledge and opportunities including business transformation models, workforce attraction, future strategies to reach net zero, and new technologies such as AI, automation, and robotics.

Simplify administration and regulation for small business (red tape reduction)

Commitments	Performance self-assessment			
	● Not yet	● In progress	● Achieved	● Very well achieved
a) Limit unnecessary administration and take steps to ensure continuous business improvement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Make it easier for small businesses to comply with administrative and/or regulatory requirements.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Administer requirements in a consistent manner in collaboration with key stakeholders.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Regularly review and streamline administrative and/or regulatory arrangements to reduce red tape. (e.g., digitisation projects, process improvement).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Maintain a simple, timely and cost-effective internal review and complaints management system. (e.g., actioning feedback, reviewing practices).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Summary of key activities and achievements in relation to this element:

- The Western Downs is open for business branding.



- WDRC has a new streamlined development assessment (DA) approval process under the Planning Act thereby development assessment processes only take 13.5 days.
- WDRC \$5 Million Housing and Land Incentive to stimulate construction by offering fee discounts on applications and infrastructure charges to approved developers across the region to support economic growth, workforce attraction, and migration to the region.
- The Economic Development Team acts as a point of contact between business and Council and can liaise with relevant departments enabling opportunities to build relationships. This includes assistance with site selection, development approvals, facilitating connections with relevant industry bodies, and training organisations, and leveraging state and federal programs.

Ensure fair procurement and prompt payment terms for small businesses

Commitments	Performance self-assessment			
	● Not yet	● In progress	● Achieved	● Very well achieved
a) Implement a procurement policy that gives small businesses a 'fair go' to supply goods and services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Help small businesses find local procurement opportunities and make tendering quick and easy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Pay all valid invoices from small business suppliers within a stated reasonable period (e.g., 20 calendar days from receipt of invoice).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Summary of key activities and achievements in relation to this element:

- Council hosted Black Coffee Indigenous Business Network event in Dalby on 5th October 2023 during Indigenous Business Month. Council Chief Procurement Officer engages with local indigenous businesses and suppliers to discuss the Council's procurement opportunities.
- TSBE Indigenous Business Expo on 26th October 2023. A one-day event centred around networking opportunities and showcasing the diversity within Indigenous businesses.
- WDRC Procurement Policy allows for payment of invoices by Corporate Credit Card, enabling prompt payment.
- Council maintains a maximum 30-day payment term which is often achieved in 7 to 14 days.

Support small business resilience and recovery

Commitments	Performance self-assessment			
	● Not yet	● In progress	● Achieved	● Very well achieved
a) With support from statewide partners, deliver short, medium, and long-term activities to support small business recovery and resilience following significant business disruption and disasters.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Implement policies and practices for managing business disruption (e.g., supporting and working with small businesses to minimise disruption during capital works projects, transformational change etc).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Summary of key activities and achievements in relation to this element:

- Council has promoted financial grants and support services available for people affected by the Western Downs bushfires in October 2023. Individuals, primary producers, and businesses have accessed information on funds, grants, and loans available from the government and other entities.
- Council coordinates additional feed or water assistance for impacted small-scale (hobby) farms, including small livestock holders or domestic pets during disaster.
- Western Downs Regional Council's Economic Development Team has been actively attending affected areas to assess the direct and indirect impact of businesses in the region, including home-based businesses and primary producers. Council team provided business impact information to the DESBT and Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA). Council actively supports the relative State Departments to engage with businesses that are impacted.
- Council facilitates having the Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) present in Tara during bush fire to support eligible residents to access residential insurance.
- Received funding from Shell QGC to deliver the Disaster Resilience Project, Western Downs region. With specific workshops and one-on-one support provided to small businesses. The program will commence in FY24-25.



Measure and report on our performance

Commitments	Performance self-assessment			
	● Not yet	● In progress	● Achieved	● Very well achieved
a) Seek regular feedback from small businesses to help drive continuous business improvement (e.g., surveys, engagements, councillor walks etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Monitor our performance against this charter and ensure we are meeting our commitments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Publish a report about our performance in relation to this charter once every financial year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Complete the SBF Accelerator Pack within 6 months of signing the charter. (for new members after 28 April 2023).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Summary of key activities and achievements in relation to this element:

- Post-event surveys following community engagement sessions and conferences.
- Councillor monthly information sessions and support by Business Strategy & Economic Development Portfolio Meeting.
- Council information and updates available on social media monitored by the Council's Marketing and Communications Team.
- Council is working on updating the Economic Development website to have the Charter and report about our performance in relation to the charter published.

Member requirements

Requirements	Performance self-assessment			
1. Authorised representative and proxy nominated and current.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>		
2. For new members - Submitted Accelerator Action Plan to the QSBC within 6 months of joining the program.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
3. Actively participated in at least four Roundtable meetings in the previous FY.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1-2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3-4 <input type="checkbox"/>	>4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4. Provided at least one Showcase submission to the QSBC in the previous FY.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1-2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3-4 <input type="checkbox"/>	>4 <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Attended the Annual Conference in the previous FY.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>		
6. Attended the Community of Practice workshops in the previous FY.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1-2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3-4 <input type="checkbox"/>	
7. Submitted Annual Report to the QSBC by 30 September for the previous FY.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>		