

[Regional Research Collaborations]



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[Regional Research Collaborations]

Overview

This workshop will explore the opportunities around collaborative research on regional Australia. Facilitated by Dr Susan Kinnear (CQUniversity Australia) the session will encourage academics, government, industry and the community to combine their ideas on priority research topics and how effective partnerships can be formed. Participants should leave with a better understanding of what drives different stakeholders to participate in research; the importance of research-based evidence in informing regional policy; and the various pathways by which collaborative research partnerships can be approached and funded.

Program

9:00am	Welcome
9.05-9.30	Participant introductions
9.30-10.00	Perspectives on regional research: results from a nationwide survey
10:00-10.15	Morning tea
10.15-11.00	Regional research expert panel: contrasting the needs of different stakeholders The panel will consist of a 5 minute address by each panellist, representing academia, government, R&D funders, community and industry. A question-and-answer session will follow.
11.00-11.20	Workgroup activity 1: <i>Defining, doing and disseminating regional research</i>
11.20-11.30	Regroup and report
11.30-12.15	Workgroup activity 2: <i>Priority projects and partnering</i>
12.15-12.30	Regroup and report
12.30pm	Conclusions followed by lunch

Comment [SK1]: Should this go after the expert panel or before?

Speaker biographies

Dr Susan Kinnear

Dr Susan Kinnear currently leads a research program in sustainable regional development at CQUniversity Australia. Her interests include regional development, regional policy, regional advantage, innovation, environmental management and the challenges of rapid growth in resource-intensive regions. She is a member of the Regional Studies Association (International), and was lead editor for the recent book *Regional Advantage and Innovation* (Springer: 2012).

Associate Professor Allan Dale

Allan has a strong interest in integrated governance systems, with a particular focus on regional development natural resource management in northern Australia. He has had both extensive research and policy experience in these fields and is Chair of Regional Development Australian Far North Queensland and Torres Strait. His past research helped inform the policy and investment foundations for the nation's regional natural resource management system, and he was also responsible for natural resource policy in the Queensland Government. Allan has also been the CEO of the Wet Tropics Regional NRM Body (Terrain NRM) before returning to this international research role. As Leader – Tropical Regional Development at the Cairns Institute of JCU, he also accesses an international network of research expertise in the governance field, with particularly strong linkages through Charles Darwin University, Griffith University and CSIRO.

Mr John Grace

John Grace is the National Manager of the Innovative Regions Centre, which is part of the Australian Government's business support agency Enterprise Connect. He leads a team of 16 Innovation Facilitators based in regions around Australia. The Facilitators are regional economic development specialists who work with stakeholders to help create and implement strategies for business innovation and growth. Prior to taking up his current role in June 2012 John was the Innovative Regions Facilitator for the Illawarra and Shoalhaven regions in NSW. John is an economic development manager/practitioner with a wealth of experience working in regional areas of New South Wales. For 6 ½ years prior to joining Enterprise Connect John was CEO of Regional Development Australia Illawarra and the Illawarra Area Consultative Committee.

John championed the use of place-based entrepreneurship programs by developing an Australian adaptation of the 'Economic Gardening' business growth strategy for use in the Illawarra region. John has acquired substantial skills in engaging regional business communities and building networks to help bring about positive change. Throughout his career John has chosen to work in regional areas, developing knowledge about the needs of regional communities, and the techniques needed to create economic growth and sustainable jobs. Many of these years were spent managing employment and training services, as well as running his own small businesses. John has undertaken post graduate study in sustainable economic development.

[Regional Research Collaborations]

Ms Kristina Cooke

Kristina Cooke is part of the dynamic Economic Development team at Coffs Harbour City Council. Lately she has been working with the business community to create their Economic Strategy which has featured recently in New Start Mag. She is currently focused on building the business case for a coworking space in Coffs Harbour and working covertly to establish a design-led innovation revolution in Coffs Harbour.

Dr Paul Rosair

Paul Rosair is the Director General of the Department of Regional Development and Lands. He has held the position since the department was established on 1 July 2009. Paul has worked in various roles over his career, including Director of Regional Operations for the Water and Rivers Commission and Department of Environment. He was also Director of Business and Regional Operations for the Department of Water before being seconded to the Department of Local Government and Regional Development.

Having worked for over 30 years across the government sector through the State, in the portfolios of environment, water, land management, Indigenous capacity building, corporate services and natural resources management, Paul is well credentialed to lead the governments agenda for regional development in Western Australia. A particular focus of his role is the responsibility for administration of the iconic Royalties for Regions program.

Assoc Prof Rick van der Zwan

Associate Professor Rick van der Zwan is Director of Research at SCU Coffs Harbour. He is also Director of RISIR – the Regional Initiative for Social Innovation Research. In those roles Rick leads projects in behavioural sciences, in social innovation, in health, in business, and in economic innovations in the digital economy. He has an international reputation as a researcher having authored more than 60 scholarly articles and numerous other reports and consultancies. He speaks every week with regional ABC radio to make contemporary research accessible to the general public and to help to popularise and demystify science and discovery.

Ms Vanessa Barnett

Vanessa has taken leadership of the Regional Australia Institute's Policy Program. She has a background in urban and regional planning, sociology, policy, economics and project management. Vanessa resonates strongly with regional economic development having been raised with a strong pride in regional living.

Participant introductions

What is your region and/or field of interest?

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What has your experience of 'research' been in the past?

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Have you a research project idea that you would like to see pursued?

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What are your expectations around today's workshop (e.g. desired outcomes)?

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Other

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Perspectives on regional research: results from a nation-wide survey

In September 2013, SEGRA and CQUniversity partnered to deliver an online survey regarding the regional research agenda and collaboration amongst research partners.

The survey was delivered through the SEGRA delegates database and professional networks, as well as via publicly accessible directories and/or membership associations for staff in relevant areas such as Australian local government, NRM groups and Regional Development Australia. It must be pointed out that directories are not readily available for state or federal government departments, nor for community-groups, and this is reflected in the participation rates of these groups in the survey response frame.

The online survey comprised 14 questions focused on research priorities; research dissemination and research translation (use and/or adoption of research outcomes); attitudes to research, research funding and research providers; and preferences for research collaboration.

The following notes provide a summary overview of the results; a more detailed analysis will be prepared and written up as a research publication by the end of 2013.

How is research currently used?

- The importance of **tailored and relevant research that is timely and accessible**
- An **evidence base** for decision-making:
 - Business cases (especially for infrastructure investment)
 - Problem-specific information to guide best practice (e.g. agriculture)
 - Strategy and policy development
 - To demonstrate a case for funding (or other assistance)
 - To guide implementation, intervention and/or service delivery
 - Identifying opportunities, ideas, competitive advantage and disadvantage
 - Other: planning, benchmarking, impact assessment, setting fundraising targets
- Research as a **persuasion tool** – to engage stakeholders; stimulate community debate; and in promotion/profiling
- Research as **misused (politicised) or unused**



BE WHAT YOU WANT TO BE



Brickbats and bouquets



- ⊗ "Fly in-fly out researchers often completely miss the point...good research must be contextualised within the region"
- ⊗ "I've not used [research] – we are not a big enough population base for anybody to worry about or care about"
- ⊗ "...Need greater extension and uptake of actual research results by farmers...not just the academics"
- ⊗ "Quite frankly for most of what I do there is a research vacuum"

- ☺ "When everything else is equal, research provides the 'point of difference' for communities competing for the same investment dollars"
- ☺ "Research has been very useful in helping to focus attention of the importance of sport as a regional community capacity-building platform"
- ☺ "...is essential to prioritise resources in large geographic regions"
- ☺ "Research is fundamental to gain community support for change"



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Attitudes to regional research

	% agreement	% disagreement	% don't know
1. Accessing research on regional Australia is important for me to do my job	90.1	0.9	0.0
3. Research projects more likely to produce good outcomes if collaborative	87.4	1.8	0.0
15. Need more opportunities to have a research dialogue for regional Australia	85.6	1.8	1.8
6. Cost is a barrier	81.1	4.5	2.7
11. Need to encourage RD as a research field of choice	81.1	1.8	0.0
16. RR priorities are poorly understood and communicated	80.2	5.4	3.6
19. RR needs better coordination	79.3	2.7	3.6
5. Research partnerships are something I want my organisation to be more involved in	78.4	2.7	3.6
18. We need better leadership for RR	75.7	1.8	3.6
12. I would be interested in training/seminars on research partnerships	73.0	6.3	0.0
20. Not enough people/organisations adopt the findings	68.5	3.6	6.3
21. We need a better definition of 'regional development research'	67.6	1.8	1.8
14. I would make use of online platforms if these were available	64.9	6.3	2.7
4. Research underpins many examples of best practice in Australian RD	64.0	11.7	4.5
13. I know of real examples where research has been used to inform policy	64.0	7.2	6.3
17. We ought to engage internationally	63.1	10.8	0.9
10. I usually approach the same people for research issues because I trust them	53.2	13.5	3.6
2. I can find useful research publications quickly and easily	47.7	27.9	0.0
9. I have a go-to network of researchers to approach for work on regional issues	36.9	28.8	1.8
7. I am aware of how to access funding for research purposes	31.5	35.1	1.8
8. Researchers are effective in collaborating with me	30.6	23.4	5.4

Accessing research



- The order of preference for research dissemination is:
Public forums > Journal articles > Feature Articles > Conferences > Conference papers > Policy briefs* > Books
- Strong emphasis placed on webinars, social media or e-platforms; personal networks and meetings (focus groups); mainstream media
- *Are researchers not working hard enough to disseminate in the right places? (and why not?)*
- *A question of length or relevance? (briefs and books both rated poorly)*
- *People prefer the 'human touch' ... but how does this occur with the tyranny of distance?*



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Sourcing regional research: key providers



- (Regional) Universities
- Local, state and federal government (incl. development commissions)
- Industry sectors
- Commercial research companies
- RAI
 - TRA (Tourism)
- RDA
 - HVRF
- CSIRO
 - LMIP
- ABS
 - ARACY
- RIRDC, MLA
 - PRISA
- LGAQ

What is the difference between research and consultancy (and is it important?)

What are the drivers (=incentives) for collaboration?

Whose responsibility is it to do the linking/connecting?



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Improving regional research translation

- Social media, (e-)newsletters
- Regional roadshows
- Central repository (APO lauded)

- Use PLAIN ENGLISH and keep it short ... oversupply is an issue

- Move the decision making into the field (not 'in an plush office in Canberra')
- All regional development is effectively local development...get the information to local governments, business and industry networks
- Invest in professional development (upskill researcher's communication skills)
- Expand the regional statistical networks (State/National)
- A role for RDA (?)

"Learn to listen first"

"It feels like we are being studied, not engaged"



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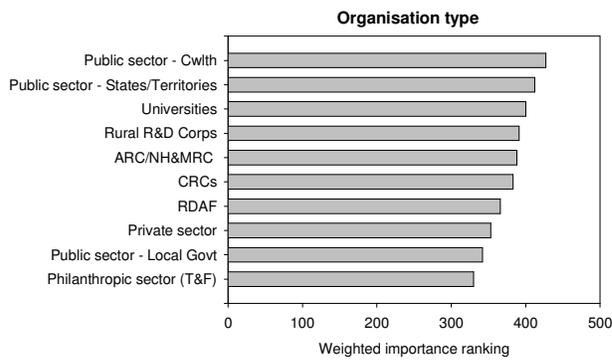
Ideas for improving regional research capacity

- Universities
 - “All the Regional universities should work together rather than competing [with] each other”
 - “Universities must start to truly understand and value their role in regional development”
 - “change university KPIs”
 - grow the graduate base in key disciplines and with ‘regional’ nous
- Incentives-based approach (... encourage private sector involvement)
- Federal Government to coordinate data (BTRE, ABS, Tourism, BOM, ABARES, DRET)
- Undertake an audit of agencies that conduct regional research [RAI stocktake?]
- Expand the Regional Industry Capability Network to include research
- Learn from international experience (overseas placements, study tours)
- Adopt ongoing (multi-year) research programs that outlive election cycles (...perpetual trust fund)



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Funding regional research



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Are the funds adequate?

- Around 20% of participants stated 'unsure' – indicating that they didn't know the current spending figures
- Only a handful of 'yes' responses
 - 'Yes, but not in all fields of research'
 - 'Yes, but the research is compromised by vested interests'
 - 'By global standards (for statistics) we do pretty well'
- Overwhelming majority stated 'no' – but concerns not necessarily linked with the quantum...
 - Competing agendas – lack of cohesiveness/integration - pockets of research rather than a national agenda
 - Industry research is concentrated on commercialisation
 - Political motivations
 - Poor dissemination practices; limited capacity to engage communities
 - Funding to 'high profile researchers in metro areas'...regional universities find it difficult to access competitive grants
 - STEM favoured over HASS



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Priority research topics



- Respondents were asked to nominate up to five challenges and/or opportunities ... this resulted in 500+ pieces of data (!)
- Macrothemes were developed using 'discourse analysis' (Some answers could be labelled as more than one macrotheme)
- The macrothemes were then examined by first-priority ranking, or by weighted ranking



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'Top-priority' research topics

Rural/Agricultural futures (food security)	24
Workforce, Education, Training, Skilling	17
Regional economic development	13
Health (including sports development)	9
Demographic trends / Population growth	9
Infrastructure (transport)	8
Policy and governance	8
Climate change (adaptation)	6
Enabling sciences	5
Business futures / viability	4
Building community capacity	4
'Regional constructs/philosophy'	4

'All-priority' research topics

Rural/Agricultural futures (food security)	256
Workforce, Education, Training, Skilling	186
Regional economic development	130
Demographic trends / Population growth	114
Health (including sports development)	112
Infrastructure (transport)	112
Innovation	97
Business futures / viability	90
Policy and governance	82
'Regional constructs/philosophy'	76

- Priorities are broadly similar irrespective of first or multi-preference



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#1 - The usual suspect: Agricultural futures & food security

- May reflect the strong participation by NRM groups
- Many nominated areas were highly specific
- Truly multidisciplinary :
 - Economics: value-adding, export opportunities (Asia), rural debt levels.
 - Social: population mobility, aging, youth retention, urban sprawl, mental health, succession planning, leadership.
 - Environmental: pest biocontrol, climate change, water management.
 - 'Underpinning science': livestock breeding, soil biology, pasture & crop development.
 - Plus: marketing, foreign ownership, skills development, land use change, protection of prime agricultural land, new technologies, regulatory barriers (fresh produce).



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#10 The curio: Regional constructs and philosophy

- What do we understand by 'regional' – in practice and in policy?
- The contributions of regions to the nation – metrics?
- The ideal 'size' of a region (of a local government?)
- How to approach decentralisation
- Governance models across the [four] tiers of government
- Collaborative frameworks, leadership and community capacity



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Falling off the radar.... Or still emerging?

Liveability / Wellbeing / Social services	
Climate change (adaptation)	←←←
NRM/Environ sustainability (not including water)	←←←
Telecommunications and technology	←←←
Strategic investment/funding models	←←←
Tourism	
Building community capacity	←←←
Water security	
Enabling sciences	
Land use change	
Manufacturing futures	
Supply chain	
Indigenous issues	←←←
Resource development	←←←
FIFO	←←←
Financial structures/assistance	
Energy security	←←←
Northern Australia	←←←
Revitalising town centres	
Access to statistics	
'Tyranny of Distance'	



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Collaboration priorities

- 250+ responses
- Macro to micro level: 'Northern Australia agenda' of 'dung beetles'
- Comprehensive listing available in workbooks

BE WHAT YOU WANT TO BE



Possible areas of collaboration

The following list has been developed from the e-survey responses collected during September 2013. The list is not exhaustive and not all responses are verbatim.

- arid rangelands plant production
- abattoirs/humane animal processing
- Aboriginal employment programs
- ageing
- ageing population
- ageing populations - support from local government
- agricultural chemicals & health
- agricultural markets & value add industries
- agriculture
- animal health
- application of regional policies
- asset benchmarking
- Australian Early development Index (AEDI)
- better use of retirees
- broadband availability
- building community resilience
- business attraction
- business development - attracting and maintaining skills and key industry
- changing economies
- changing populations and social conditions
- child care flexibility to assist casual and shift-working workforce
- climate change (x4)
- climate change adaptation (x2)
- collaboration
- collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries
- collaboration/campaigns between regional cities and rural areas
- community asset management
- community capacity building
- community wants vs needs
- competitive advantage (x2)
- costs of promoting the region overseas
- CSG environmental impact
- customer satisfaction
- data sharing across jurisdictional boundaries
- demographic profiling
- developing a culture of optionality
- developing a set of criteria to identify regional catalytic growth infrastructure
- digital divide
- disengagement from education
- dung beetles
- economic development (x3)
- economic empowerment
- economic growth
- economic investment
- economic viability
- ecosystem health and sustainability
- education to employment pathways
- educational completion rates
- educational opportunities and the link to population reduction
- emerging global agriculture opportunities
- employment multipliers
- energy coatings
- entrepreneurialism
- environmental sustainability
- escape spending

- event evaluations
- facilitating entrepreneurship
- facilitating economic diversity
- farm business planning / succession planning
- feral animal control
- fertiliser options
- fire management
- fixing wetlands
- food & fibre - gate to plate
- food security (x2)
- forecasting potential impacts of technologies on Australia's regions
- global liveability
- governance models for regional development (x2)
- Grants Commission horizontal equalisation to Local Governments
- grazing land management
- growing jobs in dying communities
- growing local regional economies
- habitat restoration
- health & medical improvements in regional Australia
- health and well being
- health economy
- health service delivery
- higher education

- how to leverage off the ageing population issue
- how to partner effectively
- how to reduce cost of production
- human capital development
- identified regional development opportunities
- impacts of disadvantaged peoples on community in regional areas
- impacts of NFP's in regional areas
- implementation of best practice injury prevention
- improved communication of benefit from regional communities
- improving business standards
- improving health outcomes
- improving regional service delivery
- Indigenous development
- industry clustering (manufacturing)
- industry specific economic research
- infrastructure agreements between govt and industry
- infrastructure requirements
- innovation (x3)
- innovation through technology to create new business in rural areas
- innovative linkages and collaborations in regions

[Regional Research Collaborations]

- integrated management of woody weeds
- integrating knowledge across sectors and improving research input into decision making/policy development
- integrating traditional knowledge in to land management
- international engagement
- knowledge transfer conduits with Asia
- lack access to technology
- Landcare
- legacy benefits of hosting major events
- liveability
- local food systems
- Local Government's role in regional economic development
- local produce and ease of obtaining it
- lucerne varieties
- maintaining and growing regional centres
- maintaining food production
- manufacturing support to the rural sector
- mapping NFP service providers
- mapping regional/remote regional capital in new ways

- market analysis of export commodities to influence what's grown profitably
- market and other mechanisms to drive rural and regional development
- marketing for investment
- meaning of place in regions
- meeting industry skill needs in regional areas
- migration to Cities for work of education
- mining 'debris' (heavy metals & health)
- mobile populations
- new formula replace per head of population decision making
- new options for funding public infrastructure in regional Australia
- new technologies
- Northern Australia - energy, water and food futures
- NRM
- occupations in demand
- on line business sales / volume
- opportunities to increase agricultural processing
- passive atmospheric ventilation to enhance/reduce evaporation
- pasture research

- perceptions of place character
- pest animal control
- pest management
- place-making
- planning
- planning for tourism in protected areas
- plant nutrition
- pool resources to address common issues in small regional councils
- population profile restructure - what are the regional stimuli?
- positive ageing
- productive profitable grazing landscapes
- promoting health through sport
- promoting healthy lifestyle, nutrition in regional Australia
- promoting rural/ regional tourism
- public health
- recreation facilities and community wellbeing
- regional commercial transport
- regional contribution to GNP versus investment returned to region
- regional data gaps - enabling access to sub regional data with tools to analyse and apply

[Regional Research Collaborations]

- regional development and expansion of agriculture to support communities
- regional development in constrained fiscal environments
- regional economic analysis
- regional funding models
- regional gateways (ports and airports)
- regional labour market analysis
- regional tax breaks
- regional variations
- regulations regarding the distribution of local produce
- relationship between provision of services (public transport and population growth)
- remote social issues
- removing export barriers
- river management
- role of education
- triggers or ratios to provide community infrastructure for growth areas
- rural ageing population
- service population estimation
- services to at -risk youth
- skill shortages
- skills and workforce to meet industry needs

- skills audits
- skills development
- small business
- smart work centres
- social and community engagement in rural issues
- social impacts of development in northern Australia
- soil fertility
- soil health
- special economic zones
- sport in regional Australia
- sports injuries
- sports promotion, sports participation, injury prevention in regional Australia
- sports safety policy
- startups
- strengthening capacity in remote regions
- support required for seniors
- sustainability
- sustaining businesses in regional/rural towns
- tactics for increasing the pace of innovation
- tax reform - landcare rebate to stimulate on-ground land condition improvement

- technology
- technology to optimize freight transport/ logistics
- the real cost of skill shortages in regional centres
- the value of mining to regional economies
- tourism (x3)
- tourism statistics
- traffic flow and consumer destination habits
- translation of research into practice
- transport issues for bulk goods and livestock
- transport needs in regional communities
- understanding the benefits of regional economic development
- upgrade of utilities to regional areas
- use of fragmented landscapes to enhance/reduce evaporation
- value add
- value of infrastructure inland rail
- value of sustainable industries and encouraging like-minded industries to relocate/collaborate/form joint partnerships
- value/applications of technology

[Regional Research Collaborations]

- viable farming land
- visitor economy
- volunteerism in decline
- water infrastructure
- weed control
- weed eradication
- weed invasion and extreme events
- wharf loading and harbor access
- what are relocators looking for?
- who is visiting our region, for what purpose
- workforce development
- workforce planning
- youth attraction
- youth migration patterns
- youth retention & education (x2)
- youth retention and career pathways

Regional research expert panel – understanding the needs of different stakeholders

Panellists

Associate Professor Allan Dale

Chair, RDA Far North Queensland and Torres Strait
Leader – Tropical Regional Development, The Cairns Institute, James Cook University

Mr John Grace

National Manager, Innovative Regions Centre
Enterprise Connect Division, Australian Department of Industry

Ms Kristina Cooke

Strategic Development, Economic Development Unit, Coffs Harbour City Council

Dr Paul Rosair

Director-General, Department of Regional Development and Lands, Western Australia

Assoc Prof Rick van der Zwan

Director of Research, Southern Cross University (Coffs Harbour)

Ms Vanessa Barnett

Manager (Policy), Regional Australia Institute

Thinking prompts

- What are the different research needs across academia, government, business/industry and the community? (... cost, timeliness, confidentiality, type of outputs....)
- What gaps are there in understanding how different parties view research?
- How does each group adopt and/or apply research outcomes?
- What typifies a successful collaboration?
- What resources and/or planning is needed to bring groups together on topics of mutual benefit?

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Workgroup activity 1: Defining, doing and disseminating

Comment [SK2]: They will have 20 minutes to split into small groups and work on these three questions, Then appoint a speaker to report back.

1.1 Our working definition of 'regional research' is:

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1.2 If you had a \$1 million budget, what platform(s) for regional research collaboration would you develop?

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1.3 Imagine you are the editorial team for a new magazine on regional Australia research. How would you develop this publication? (Be creative! ...title, content, style, readership, authorship, distribution, business model...)

Comment [SK3]: May need to be clear about expectations here Would SEGRA or RAI or RIRDC or others have interest in actually taking on any ideas generated? Where does the IP sit if so?

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Workgroup activity 2: Priority projects and partnering

Based on today’s discussion, the entire group will identify up to four priority research topics. Participants will then self-select to one topic area to discuss in-depth, including developing a project plan with possible partners.

Comment [SK4]: They will have 45 minutes to work through this.

Either use 4 small groups, or 2-3 larger groups (depending on preferences on the day, and the particular topics that people are interested in).

People who don’t wish to partner directly in a specific project can still contribute to the discussion as a learning process in terms of how research ideas are developed?

Project 1:

Project 2:

Project 3:

Project 4:

(probable – Asia Food Futures, Northern Australia, Economic Development, Regional Governance.....?)

2.1 What are the research question(s)?

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2.2 What research data is already available (or where could it be sourced)? Are new data needed?

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[Regional Research Collaborations]

2.3 What is the proposed methodology for exploring this issue? How can the project be made more innovative?

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2.4 Who are the project partners, and what can each one bring?

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2.5 Project planning (apply as appropriate to your project timelines):

- **Short term outcomes (e.g., by end of 2013):** building relationships, recruiting regions

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[Regional Research Collaborations]

- **Medium term (e.g., something that could be reported on by SEGRA 2014):** funding application, discussion paper (early publication?), pilot project?

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- **Long term (e.g., 2,3 or 5 year plan):** how will the results inform policy and practice?

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