Sunshine Coast Council

Regional Economic Development Strategy Annual Report 2023-24

Sunshine Coast COUNCIL

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Acknowledgements

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Reference document

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Cover image: UniSC

Traditional acknowledgement

Sunshine Coast Council acknowledges the Sunshine Coast Country, home of the Kabi Kabi peoples and the Jinibara peoples, the Traditional Custodians, whose lands and waters we all now share.

We recognise that these have always been places of cultural, spiritual, social and economic significance. The Traditional Custodians' unique values, and ancient and enduring cultures, deepen and enrich the life of our community.

We commit to working in partnership with the Traditional Custodians and the broader First Nations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) communities to support self-determination through economic and community development.

Truth telling is a significant part of our journey. We are committed to better understanding the collective histories of the Sunshine Coast and the experiences of First Nations peoples. Legacy issues resulting from colonisation are still experienced by Traditional Custodians and First Nations peoples.

We recognise our shared history and will continue to work in partnership to provide a foundation for building a shared future with the Kabi Kabi peoples and the Jinibara peoples.

We wish to pay respect to their Elders – past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the important role First Nations peoples continue to play within the Sunshine Coast community.

Together, we are all stronger.

Sunshine Coast Council would like to thank the signatories and partners of the Regional Economic Development Strategy and acknowledges the valuable contribution they have made to the implementation of the strategy and the continued growth of the Sunshine Coast economy.

- Allied Health Taskforce
- ASPIRE
- Biosphere Community Advisory Group
- Caloundra Downtown Taskforce
- Chambers of Commerce
- Cleantech Industries
- Critical Infrastructure
- Food and Agribusiness Network (FAN)
- Health Panel
- Industry Alliance (SCTechIA)
- Information Sharing Analysis Center (CI-ISAC)
- Manufacturing Excellence Forum (MEF)
- Nambour Business Groups
- Queensland Government
- Regional Development Australia (RDA)
- Silicon Coast
- Study Queensland
- Study Sunshine Coast
- Sunshine Coast Airport
- Sunshine Coast Business Awards
- Sunshine Coast Business Council
- Sunshine Coast Creative Alliance
- Sunshine Coast Events Board
- Sunshine Coast Music Industry Collective
- Sunshine Coast Screen Collective
- Sunshine Coast Sports
- Sunshine Coast Tech
- TAFE Queensland
- Tourism and Events Queensland
- UniSC
- Visit Sunshine Coast (VSC)

Image: El Bigoton – Latin Street Food at The Whalf Mooloolaba

Image: Mooloolaba Foreshore

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Image: The Curated Plate - Hinterland Harvest at Tiffany's Maleny

A message from our Mayor and Economic Development Portfolio Councillors

As we reflect on the 2023-24 financial year, the Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) continues to steer the Sunshine Coast towards a future of resilience, innovation and sustainable growth.

Since its adoption in 2013, the REDS has provided a vision for transforming our regional economy into one that is forward-thinking, adaptive and globally competitive.

Last year marked a significant milestone, with the strategy given a comprehensive review and refresh, ensuring that it remained relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of our region.

The REDS 2023-24 Annual Report outlines the progress we have made towards our goal of creating a $33 billion economy by 2033. We are well on our way, with our Gross Regional Product (GRP) sitting at $23.73 billion this financial year.

Driving investment and increasing innovation is at the heart of the strategy, with initiatives designed to attract new businesses, grow existing businesses and stimulate job growth.

Sunshine Coast's vibrant tech industry is flourishing. Campaigns like "Testing Tech in Paradise" showcased our smart city infrastructure and position us as a prime location for digital advancement.

In recognition of these efforts, Council's Investment, Trade and International unit received five gold awards in 2023 and 2024 from the International Economic Development Council for its innovative marketing campaigns.

Supporting local businesses remains crucial to our economic fabric. This financial year saw a continued focus on helping businesses grow and scale.

The Local Business Support Program provided guidance to more than 1,200 businesses, while events, such as the Thriving Through Change Business Expo, supported the resilience and growth of our business community.

This report exemplifies the significant progress we've made thanks to ongoing engagement and strong collaboration with the business community, Chambers of Commerce, industry groups and key stakeholders.

Along with a strong focus on advocacy to all levels of government, we remain committed to building an innovative, adaptive, resilient and climate ready economy.

It is imperative other levels of government support the initiatives within the REDS so we can accelerate the economic benefits for our region.

We invite you to read this report to discover the impactful initiatives our Council, the business community and industry partners are driving to help create enduring opportunities that strengthen our local economy, now and into the future.

Mayor Rosanna Natoli
Councillor Terry Landsberg
Councillor Joe Natoli

About the strategy

The Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) was adopted in 2013, with a forward-looking 20-year timeframe and delivers a key focus on “Our Prosperity”. With a decade now passed since its adoption, a comprehensive review of the REDS was conducted in 2023 and the direction of this strategy redefined and updated to reflect the changing times.

Having undergone extensive community consultation in its creation, the REDS Refresh was adopted by Council on 26 October 2023. This holistic approach provided a set of strategic pathways to transition the Sunshine Coast into a regional economy that is innovative, adaptive, resilient and climate ready.

It encourages a more sustainable and equitable future economy by attracting investment and supporting local businesses to innovate, grow, and enable diverse employment opportunities. Additionally, it seeks to act as a mechanism for change, guiding the future evolution and transformation of the economy over time.

Council’s vision for the region is supported by three long-term strategies. These regional strategies collectively provide the strategic framework and desired outcomes for Council to work collaboratively across our community, with business and other tiers of government to advance our vision as Australia’s most sustainable region. To achieve the vision for the region, it is critical to progress our community, environment and economic objectives, understanding that all three are integrated and critical to the success and overall sustainability and liveability of our region.

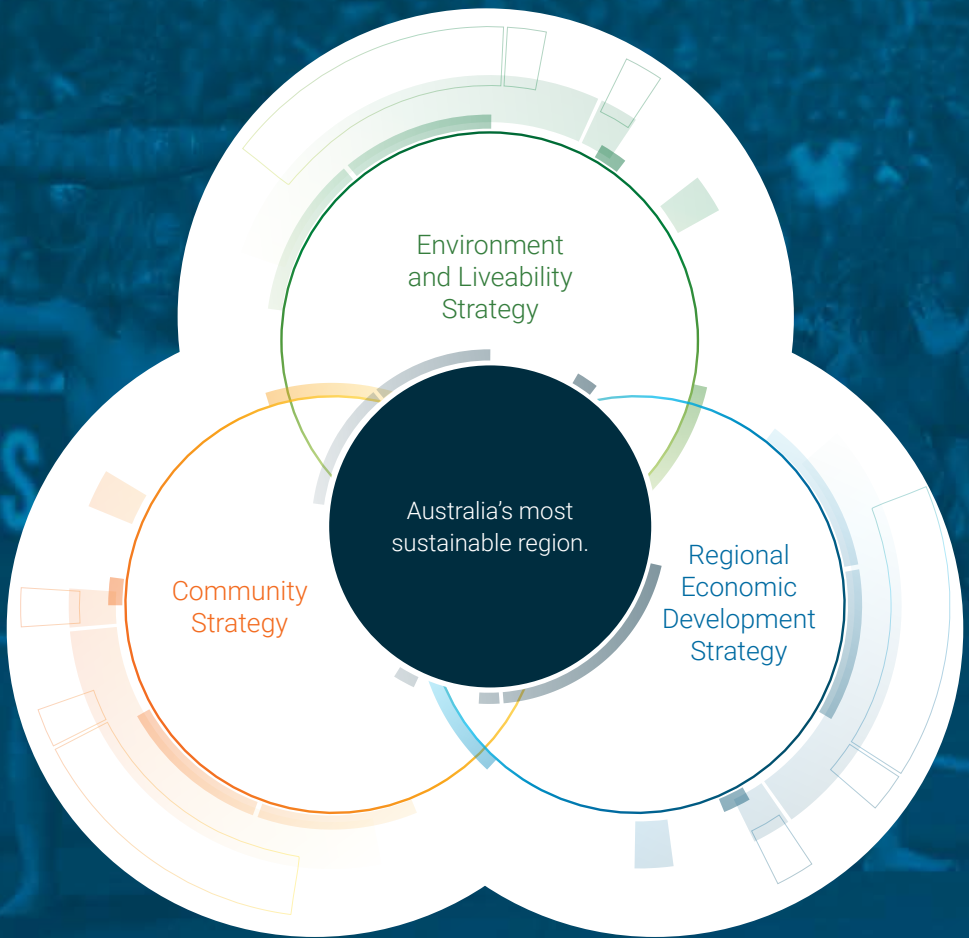

Image: First Nations welcome to country

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals alignment

Industry, business and local government will continue to work together to provide the leadership, direction, sustained commitment and policy settings to deliver on the REDS and ensure the Sunshine Coast economy continues to be responsive to national and global demand, with high value employment and investment opportunities.

Together we will:

- Continue to build collaborative relationships and initiatives with key industry groups.
- Build industry and business capability.
- Identify and support future industries such as screen, game development and digital industries.
- Connect industry with talent and skills and contribute to addressing regional workforce issues.
- Support small businesses to thrive.
- Leverage the SC1 Data Centre and Sunshine Coast International Broadband Network to attract new businesses to the region.
- Review industrial land policy and facilitate land releases and related actions.
- Support and strengthen our region's First Nations businesses and economic development opportunities.
- Facilitate innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Develop economic strategies to capitalise on Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games' legacy opportunities.
- Facilitate and leverage opportunities stemming from the Sunshine Coast Biosphere designation.
- Align our activities with Council's commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and a sustainable future.

Strategy on a page

Our Resilient Economy: Driving jobs and prosperity across the region

Knowledge economy | **Digital economy** | **Production economy** | **Green economy** | **Visitor economy** | **Place based economy**

Industries

Knowledge economy	Digital economy	Production economy	Green economy	Visitor economy	Place based economy
• Knowledge industries and professional services • Education and Research • Health and wellbeing	• Technology • Screen • Cyber security • Defence	• Aviation and Aerospace • Food and agribusiness • Advanced manufacturing • Pharmaceutical	• Cleantech • Circularity • Smart Construction • Green energy • Circular economy • Decarbonisation	• Tourism, sport and leisure • Experiences • Major events • International students	• Construction and trades • Local business • Night-time economy • Music industry • Creative industries • Retail and hospitality

Strategic pathway Leadership, sustainability and equity

Strategic pathway Investment and growth

Strategic pathway Business retention and expansion

Strategic pathway Innovation, technological advancement and scaling up

Strategic pathway Talent and skills

Key delivery partners

Knowledge economy	Digital economy	Production economy	Green economy	Visitor economy	Place based economy
• Allied Health Taskforce • Health Panel • Study Sunshine Coast • Study Queensland	• Sunshine Coast Tech • Industry Alliance (SCTechIA) • Silicon Coast • Sunshine Coast Screen Collective	• Manufacturing Excellence Forum (MEF) • Food and Agribusiness Network (FAN)	• Cleantech Industries • ASPIRE • Biosphere Community Advisory Group	• Visit Sunshine Coast (VSC) • Sunshine Coast Events Board • Sunshine Coast Sports • Tourism and Events Queensland	• Caloundra Downtown Taskforce • Nambour Business Groups • Sunshine Coast Music Industry Collective • Sunshine Coast Creative Alliance

Sunshine Coast Business Council - Chambers of Commerce - UniSC - TAFE Queensland - Sunshine Coast Airport - Queensland Government Critical Infrastructure - Information Sharing Analysis Center (CI-ISAC) - Regional Development Australia (RDA) - Sunshine Coast Business Awards

2033

The REDS sets forth a visionary 20-year blueprint aiming to transition the traditional economy to a new economy that is resilient and globally competitive. The strategy is unique and bold, setting four ambitious goals to achieve the new economy by 2033.

- **$33 billion in Gross Regional Product**
- **100,000 jobs in the high-value industries**
- **20% exports from the region**
- **Household income above state average**

Image: Buderim Ginger harvesting

Performance indicators/goals

Regional Economic Development Strategy Aspirational Goals

	2013 Baseline Results[1]	2023-24 Outcomes[2]	2013 to 2024 Progress	2033 Aspirational Goals[2]
Goal 1 Gross Regional Product growth	A **$13.8 billion** economy	A **$23.73 billion** economy	**72%** growth over the 11-year period	Gross Regional Product growth up to **$33 billion** by 2033
Goal 2 Jobs growth in high-value industries	High-value industries provided **59,000** employment opportunities	High-value industries providing **107,283** employment opportunities[3]	**82%** growth over the 11-year period	Jobs growth in high-value industries up to **100,000** by 2033
Goal 3 Regional household income levels to exceed Queensland household income levels	Household income levels were **22.3%** were below the State average	Household income levels **4.8%** below the Queensland average	**17.5%** reduction in income gap over the 11-year period	Regional household income levels to exceed Queensland household income levels by 2033
Goal 4 Increase goods and services produced for export outside the region	**13.6%** of goods and services were produced for export outside the region	**18.1%** of goods and services were produced for export outside the region	**4.5%** increase over the 11-year period	Increase goods and services produced for export outside the region up to **20%**

1. Combined Sunshine Coast and Noosa; 2. Sunshine Coast, excluding Noosa; 3. The 2033 "high-value industries Jobs growth" goal has been achieved 9 years ahead of target, in response to this, Economic Development will establish a new aspirational goal in collaboration with Civic Governance and Council.

Progress indicators

Since 2013, the Sunshine Coast Regional Economic Development Strategy has provided a vision and blueprint for the new economy — a prosperous, high-value economy of choice for business, investment and employment, while offering an enviable lifestyle and environment.

The Sunshine Coast LGA ended the 2023-24 with the following results:

Gross Regional Product
$23.73 billion[1]

Local jobs
172,498[1]

Locally employed residents
186,932[1]

Employment growth **9.2%**[2]

Unemployment rate
3.7% with a 0.9% increase[2]

Exports of goods and services produced in region
$7.4 billion[1]

Businesses
36,811[3]

Consumer spend in local region
Increase 10% year on year to June 2023[4]

Regional Economic Development initiatives resulting in:

$729.47 million
Economic impact
Target: $250 million

3119 Jobs
Supported/created
Target: 1500

12,517
Clients assisted/serviced
Target: 3300

Data sources: 1. National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) ©2024. ©2023 Compiled and presented in economic.id; 2. ABS, Labour force Australia, detailed, released 25 July 2024, 11:30am (AEST). Compiled and presented in QGSO Regional labour force (report); 3. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits. Compiled and presented in ecomomic.id; 4. Spendmapp by Geografia 2024.

REDS pathways

This annual report highlights the program of activities delivered during 2023-24 against the strategy's five critical pathways and their respective priorities.

Pathways	Priorities
Leadership, sustainability and equity	• Advocate to State and Commonwealth Governments to support investment into key catalytic infrastructure • Deliver strong economic leadership and collaboration by government, business and industry • Champion the Sunshine Coast Biosphere, sustainability and support circular economy principles • Support inclusion and equity across the economy for the advancement of First Nations peoples, people with disabilities and residents experiencing socio-economic disadvantage
Investment and growth	• Market and promote the region to attract investment and support local businesses to grow export markets • Ensure sufficient development assets are available and an efficient planning process to support population and business growth • Leverage the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games to create legacy economic assets for the future • Leverage key assets to elevate the region's key sectors and benefit from the utilisation of the foundation infrastructure • Providing a regulatory environment that encourages investment and growth
Business retention and expansion	• Support local businesses and key delivery partners to expand on the Sunshine Coast • Build local business capacity and increase business resilience • Champion local procurement, including supporting local First Nations businesses through the supply chain • Support identified Gateway Precincts and town centres through activation and place making initiatives
Innovation, technological advancement and scaling up	• Promote innovation, research and development activities of local businesses and institutions • Support local entrepreneurship networks and activities to help scale up local businesses • Advance Smart City infrastructure to further support local businesses and leverage the Sunshine Coast International Broadband Network • Identify and expand the Innovation Ecosystem to grow the regions capabilities
Talent and skills	• Support local education and training providers to build pathways for local workforce and connect to local businesses • Conduct talent attraction, development and retention programs to provide a high quality workforce to local businesses • Support youth development and innovation initiatives that foster talent and skills for the future • Attract international students and connect local students to opportunities within the Region

PATHWAY 1

Sunshine Coast Council

Image: Invest Sunshine Coast

Pathway 1:
Leadership, sustainability and equity

Advocate to state and commonwealth governments to support investment into key catalytic infrastructure.

Specialist Economic Development advice and support was provided in relation to a range of key strategic initiatives including the proposed direct Sunshine Coast rail line, Sunshine Coast Public Transport detailed business case, Mooloolah River Interchange upgrade, the Turbine project, Sunshine Coast Innovation Hub, the advancement of manufacturing within the region and the proposed immersive reality digital creative precinct.

Deliver strong economic leadership and collaboration by government, business and industry.

The review of the Sunshine Coast Regional Economic Development Strategy 2013-2033 and associated five-year Implementation Plan was successfully completed with Council endorsing the refreshed strategy in October 2023. Implementation of the refreshed strategy is now underway.

Champion the Sunshine Coast Biosphere, sustainability, and support circular economy principles to drive economic growth, jobs and inwards investment.

The Biosphere Team was supported in the delivery of World Biosphere Day via local industry engagement and assistance with event delivery. Engagement was facilitated between Council's Biosphere Project Officer's and key target industry groups including the Food and Agribusiness Network (FAN), Visit Sunshine Coast (VSC) and Manufacturing Excellence Forum (MEF) who already deliver aligned programs and strategic direction and who are now proceeding with formal partnership arrangements.

Support has also been provided in the development of Biosphere marketing/branding actions and a Biosphere workshop with key industry groups was successfully delivered to identify key areas of action as well as development of a model to drive further engagement and action.

ASPIRE

The **ASPIRE** Circular Economy platform continues to gather momentum delivering significant outcomes for the region and achieving significant milestones. During the 2023-24 financial year over 178 organisations registered, creating more than $1.84 million in savings delivered to local businesses and organisations, plus more than 3,800 tonnes in CO2 emissions saved making the Sunshine Coast a clear leader in the rollout of this nationally relevant program.

Over **178** new registered organisations

more than **$1.84 million** in savings

more than **3,800 tonnes** in CO2 emissions saved

PATHWAY 2

Sunshine Coast Council

Image: Walker Corporation – artist impression

Pathway 2: Investment and growth

Market and promote the region to attract investment and support local businesses to grow export markets

The Testing Tech in Paradise marketing campaigns were run in North America from 25 October 2023 to 25 January 2024 and in Australia from 9 January to 9 April 2024. These campaigns were promoted through Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn to showcase the Sunshine Coast as the ideal location for tech companies to test and trial their emerging technology on Council's unique WiFi 6 network. This network is the only one of its kind that allows testing in a 'real world environment'. The objective was to use this value proposition as an incentive to attract new high value investment into the Sunshine Coast.

The Testing Tech in Paradise campaigns ran for six months and achieved:

- **1,233,117** impressions,
- **1,033,711** video views and
- **200** new leads.

The 'Give your business a boost of Vitamin SC (Sunshine Coast)' video series was created to attract businesses to the region, drive investment and jobs growth. Each video in the series highlights a key benefit: work-life balance, lack of traffic, digital connectivity, thriving and collaborative business community, innovation, international airport, amongst others. Initially, four videos were produced and a "behind the scenes" video. These were promoted in a multi-channel digital marketing campaign. The project was highly innovative and creative in its approach to economic development marketing. By leveraging the power of video content, storytelling and visual narrative, the project effectively communicated the unique value proposition of the region.

The Vitamin SC Series 3 campaign ran for six months and achieved:

- **2,109,040** impressions,
- **1,065,746** video views and
- **424** new leads.

Council was awarded two gold 2024 International Economic Development Council (IEDC) Awards for the Testing Tech in Paradise marketing campaigns in the categories of Paid Advertising and Multimedia/Video Promotion. IEDC is a global industry organisation of over 5000 professional economic development members who are tasked with promoting economic wellbeing and quality of life for their communities by creating, retaining and expanding jobs that facilitate growth.

Council was awarded two gold 2023 International Economic Development Council (IEDC) Awards for the Vitamin SC marketing campaign.

Council facilitated an Intellectual Property Law and Trademark Workshop hosted by the Manufacturing Excellence Forum on the topic 'Freedom to Operate – what you don't know and how to avoid losing your business.' Exceptional feedback and seven complementary half hour sessions were provided for attendees.

An AI in Manufacturing Workshop (for manufacturers and exporters) was held with 17 local businesses in attendance.

Council collaborated with Trade and Investment Queensland to attend business site visits for exporters in the region, to share information, business' export journeys and upcoming grant and other opportunities available to help local businesses expand into new markets.

The Sunshine Coast was showcased at the Asia Pacific Cities Summit bi-annual event in Brisbane. Over 100 Mayors, delegates from 140 cities and 130 speakers from across the globe participated in presentations and deep dive sessions.

Council hosted the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade including consular officials and Trade Commissioners from China, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Korea, United Kingdom and Canada. The program included an overview of local investment and trade opportunities, a presentation from a successful local exporting company as well as site visits to other local export businesses.

Ensure sufficient development assets are available and an efficient planning process to support population and business growth.

Targeted support and specialist Economic Development advice was provided in relation to a range of key strategic initiatives including the Sunshine Coast Infrastructure Summit, New Planning Scheme project, SEQ Regional Plan Review, Mass Transit Solution and Caloundra Aerodrome. Advocacy was also enacted regarding industrial land assets for the region with the state government binging forward major new land releases at Coolum and Caloundra. Advocacy regarding the latter also encompassed accommodating the Turbine project focussing on collaborative agribusiness manufacturing and innovation.

Leverage the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games to create legacy economic assets for the future.

Council promoted the Sunshine Coast region and key infrastructure at the SportX Connect meeting in Brisbane to build contacts and networks in the sports tech industry. There were 50 attendees at the event to identify opportunities to grow the sports tech industry on the Sunshine Coast and as a result, three follow up ideation sessions have been held. Theme 1, Effective Management of People and Services - identified the opportunity to use technology to help disabled people find carparks; Theme 2, Enhanced Community and Engagement - identified a technology platform to be proposed 'accessible information anytime, anywhere for anyone'; and Theme 3, Monitor and Management of Competitor Performance and Events - saw the working group progress to scope a problem or challenge looking at 'community engagement with athletes using real time data'.

Council promoted Sunshine Coast key infrastructure at "Something Fest" and "Something Digital" events in Brisbane and presented at the STWS SportsTech Conference in Brisbane (part of the 2023 Australian Sports Innovation Week), pitching the region as 'the' place to test and trial technology in Australia. Outcomes included international and national investment leads and contacts including three "test and trial" leads. The interest from the conference confirmed the SportsTech sector as a target for investment attraction and opportunities to work in collaboration with UniSC, promoting their technologies and capabilities with opportunity to engage new investors as commercial partners.

Leverage key assets to elevate the region's key sectors and benefit from the utilisation of the foundation infrastructure.

As a precursor to the inaugural Xplore XR Healthcare Summit held on the Sunshine Coast, 10 VIP international delegates and summit sponsors received a tour of the Sunshine Coast Health Precinct (Sunshine Coast University Hospital and Sunshine Coast Health Institute), followed by a health industry, technology and investment-focused presentation and an inspection of NEXTDCs SC1 Data Centre in Maroochydore.

Council hosted Trade and Investment Queensland (TIQ) and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade representatives, during the TIQ Regional Commissioner Program visits. This was an opportunity to update the delegation on the regions Innovation, Health and Education industries, together with the latest investment attraction initiatives including the Testing Tech in Paradise promotional campaign.

Council hosted potential investors from Vietnam who are looking to establish a health and wellness resort in Queensland. This provided an opportunity to showcase local products from COYO and QCamel, introduce the company to Food and Agribusiness Network and highlight the region's other opportunities.

Council hosted TIQ North America and TIQ Japan at Sunshine Coast City Hall. Economic Development and Smart City Framework teams showcased Sunshine Coast investment opportunities, informed and educated delegates on major projects in the region and updates were given by UniSC and Sunshine Coast Airport.

The Sunshine Coast hotel demand study was updated showing the mid estimate demand for hotel rooms in the region has climbed from 1800 rooms in 2022 to approximately 2150 in 2023. Council briefed Queensland Government departments including Queensland Treasury on Council's intent to attract hotels to the region. Council engaged a researcher to interview business leaders across the region to better understand missed opportunities due to the current shortage of hotel accommodation options within the region. By better understanding this issue, along with the demand study, this will provide a more robust business case for presenting to potential hotel investors.

Key Council staff attended the Hotel Investment Conference Asia Pacific in Sydney on 30 August 2023 to promote the Sunshine Coast and build a network of key hotel developers, operators, service suppliers and hotel brokers. Council has now received development applications for the construction of a new hotel product on the Sunshine Coast.

Providing a regulatory environment that encourages investment and growth.

Investment outcomes for 2023-24 achieved an estimated total economic impact to the Sunshine Coast economy of $623 million and 1934 jobs

Genpact established their Australian Global Centre of Excellence on the Sunshine Coast on 9 August 2023 after a competitive nationwide place-based search. Genpact is one of the world's leading professional services companies. Genpact's investment is estimated to deliver a minimum of 250 jobs for the region within five years, having a total economic impact on the Sunshine Coast economy of $170 million and 558 jobs.

Kilcoy Global Foods expansion to their $80 million purpose-built facility in the Sunshine Coast Industrial Park and 250 new jobs has a projected economic impact of $336 million to the Sunshine Coast economy and 982 jobs.

The Mayor officially opened Oly Homes' business expansion on 19 September 2023. This re-investment over the next three years has a projected economic impact of $18 million to the Sunshine Coast economy and 49 new jobs.

BFX, a leading national furniture manufacturer, announced a ground-breaking $20 million expansion at Yandina Industrial Park on 12 December 2023 with the Mayor. The significant 9000 square metre expansion at its new global distribution centre takes BFX's total manufacturing footprint to a massive 22,000 square metres under roof. This reinvestment is projected to inject $39 million into the Sunshine Coast economy, generating 160 new jobs once the facility is fully operational.

Council received a gold award for the Sunshine Coast Incentive Assistance Program at the 2024 International Economic Development Council (IEDC) Awards under the Category of Recovery, Resiliency and Mitigation. In the shadow of a dramatic slowdown in economic activity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Council sought to implement an economic intervention and support plan to fast track economic recovery. Under the umbrella of Council's Economic Resurgence Plan, Council launched the Sunshine Coast Incentive Assistance Program to stimulate economic recovery by accelerating large shovel-ready projects to begin work faster than they would have otherwise. The purpose was to expedite projects that could start as soon as possible to rapidly increase capital expenditure and job creation.

Council announced financial and non-financial incentives and collaborated with the planning and development community to bring projects forward. The program achieved an anticipated total economic impact (direct and indirect) of $1.77 billion and 5,853 new jobs. Five completed projects at the financial year end 30 June 2023 with a total economic impact (direct and indirect) to the region of $412 million and 1271 new jobs. There are 12 projects still underway and should all 12 remaining projects proceed to completion the region will benefit from a further total economic impact of $1 billion and 3118 new jobs*.

*Based on the initially reported direct investment

Note: economic impact (direct and indirect) is determined through economy.id

PATHWAY 3

Sunshine Coast Council

Image: Grease. Owner Tim Hall (left) and Jack Gosdschan (right)

Pathway 3:
Business retention and expansion

Support local businesses and key delivery partners to expand on the Sunshine Coast.

The Local Business Support Program delivered specialist advice to 1,271 businesses across the region. There were 37 events delivered in support of the Regional Economic Development Strategy involving 2,357 participants included the Thriving Through Change Business Expo, the Queensland Small Business Commissioner's Small Business Friendly Conference; business planning, social media and procurement workshops; the Sunshine Coast Business Awards and the Buy Local Day campaign.

The regions' Chambers of Commerce and key delivery partners were supported through regular communications and capacity building as well as through Council's Community Grants Program. A Grants Writing Workshop was delivered to Chamber of Commerce and Industry Group leaders with 14 attendees. This workshop provided specific tips, guidance and information on the Council Grants Program including hands on activities and specific case studies aimed to increase the confidence of Chambers and Industry groups when applying for a grant. Business group leaders walked away with a comprehensive understanding on how the community grants process works and high to complete a high scoring grant application.

In partnership with the jointly funded Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, the Local Business Support team delivered an eight week Buy Local campaign incorporating social media, TV, radio and print media, and utilised our 22 Chambers of Commerce and industry networks to build consumer and business awareness. The campaign focused on inspiring consumers to support their favourite local business and businesses were encouraged to leverage the campaign via various digital marketing and Buy Local Day store activations. Business precincts including Caloundra, Nambour and Eumundi took up the opportunity to host precinct activations. The campaign engaged over 10,000 local businesses, generating 3,082,748 impressions across social platforms with 209,934 video views, 2,266 landing page visits and eight media opportunities.

Council collaborated closely with the Food and Agribusiness Network (FAN) across a diverse range of initiatives for the agribusiness sector to build, strengthen and profile the region's innovative and collaborative agrifood ecosystem. Key highlights included:

- profiling the Sunshine Coast as a leading proponent of agrifood ecosystems to national and international audiences.
- securing $500,000 of state government funding to support regional economic development growth (with $475,000 of that funding distributed to other local organisations including Visit Sunshine Coast, Manufacturing Excellence Forum, Glasshouse Country Chamber and four locally based consultants to support the delivery of collaborative projects).
- delivering a regional destination campaign and supported industry development in agritourism, benefiting over 30 local Sunshine Coast-based businesses.
- achieving steady growth of 16 additional members across the Sunshine Coast RDA.
- hosted 15 Sunshine Coast-based events with over 600 participants.
- rolled out the Grow National Program, including a one-day workshop and a ten-week accelerator program, with 15 Sunshine Coast businesses participating.
- working as a key service delivery partner to the Turbine precinct, developing and delivering stakeholder, industry and engagement activities.

This year also saw the value of the Sunshine Coast agrifood industry reach $1 billion, underscoring its position as a high-value industry. As one of Australia's leading agrifood clusters, FAN continues to proudly deliver activities, connections and opportunities in concert with Council and other key stakeholders that drive regional economic development and importantly support the growth and resilience of our local food industry.

The growth in scale and diversity of collaborative initiatives with the Manufacturing Excellence Forum (MEF) escalated further this year. Productivity in the manufacturing industry has become crucial, driven by digital, AI and automation technologies to maximise existing resources whilst seeking competitive edges and cost-efficiency. Events and workshops delivered included Lean Manufacturing, Intellectual Property Law, Production Simulation, Circular Economy and Sustainable Transport, Defence Innovation as well as AI in manufacturing. For MEF itself, the year was very positive with nearly double the new partnerships, a thriving electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) team and capability directory/database and excellent event attendance including consistently 250+ registrations for their monthly events. Memberships are nearing 300 and subscribers nearing 2,000.

Economic Development facilitated and supported the launch of the Cleantech Network which represents the new brand, strategic plan and leadership committee of what was formerly Cleantech Industries Sunshine Coast, which had been successfully supporting the cleantech industry in the region for over 13 years. The Cleantech Network is intended to become the peak industry driver across sectors for the Green Economy, a key pillar of the Sunshine Coast Regional Economic Development Strategy 2013-2033. The successful launch attracted over 160 people with the Cleantech Network now proceeding to progress key initiatives and engagement activities.

Build local business capacity and increase business resilience.

The Economic Recovery Local Advisory Group has been created with an online portal to facilitate information sharing between Council and key industry stakeholders during times of major weather events and disruptions. An Economic Recovery Fact Sheet has been developed along with a plethora of Continuity Planning resources and connections to the Small Business Disaster Hub and Council's Disaster Hub platform. This will create greater efficiency during times of upheaval and provide direct insight to inform timely recovery actions, efficient direction of resources and advocacy for financial support programs.

The Local Business Support team attended a Tourism Disaster Resilience Forum with the workshop centered around preparing Tourism businesses for disaster events, A Tourism Operator's Crisis Toolkit and Communications resource has been developed and shared with the business community to support disaster preparedness.

Council was a silver sponsor of the 2023 Sunshine Coast Business Women's Network Awards where 31 outstanding business leaders were celebrated and recognised for business excellence, sustainability and contribution to community. Winners were announced over six categories including an overall 'Outstanding Business Woman of the Year', award, receiving a media package as well as a year of recognition, publicity and personal and professional growth opportunities.

850 attendees came to celebrate the 137 outstanding finalists from across 17 categories at the the Sunshine Coast Business Awards Gala Dinner and Awards Ceremony Business of the Year was awarded to Amaze World and five businesses were inducted into the hall of fame. Council is a Platinum Sponsor of the awards program and have supported them since their inception.

Image: First Nations Supplier Day

Champion local procurement, including supporting local First Nations businesses through the supply chain.

The Support Local, Source Local campaign was launched internally to further encourage Council staff to choose a local business when sourcing good and services for Council projects. Three local businesses who are suppliers to Council were profiled in video content to help promote the message.

Council's Local Business Support Team provided advice and assistance to more than 100 businesses at the Growing Queensland Business Roadshow. The roadshows provided practical information, tips and tools to help businesses get what they need to succeed when supplying to the Queensland Government, the Australian Government and local councils.

Support identified Gateway Precincts and town centres through activation and place making initiatives.

The Place Activation team delivered key events and initiatives across the identified gateway precincts of Nambour, Caloundra and Mooloolaba which attracted more than 77,000 community members and consumers to these key activity centres. Caloundra initiatives included the Winter Wunderland event, festive season events, the Shopfront Improvement program, support for the Top Tourism Town Award and coordination of the Downtown Caloundra Taskforce. Mooloolaba saw a significant business engagement process delivered to understand how to best support the business community before and during construction of the Mooloolaba Foreshore Revitalisation Project and assisted to inform the development of the Mooloolaba Business Activation Plan. Nambour activities included leveraging major events such as the Nambour Rodeo and the Queensland Garden Expo as well as community events such as Nambour Forecourt Live and Tram Fest to bring people into town.

PATHWAY 4

Sunshine Coast Council

Image: eVTOL

Pathway 4:
Innovation, technological advancement and scaling up

Promote innovation, research and development activities of local businesses and institutions.

The inaugural Xplore XR Healthcare Summit, supported by Council, attracted 79 delegates with the majority interstate or international attendees. This was a significant business event for the region in that it attracts influential speakers and delegates who have the potential to enhance and invest in the growth of health tech on the Sunshine Coast, and was a catalyst for regional collaboration between innovators, the tech and health industries. The event raised the profile of the Sunshine Coast as a hub for healthtech innovation in Australia.

12 delegates from across Australia and Asia extended their AusBiotech 2023 Conference trip to join the pre-conference site tour which showcased the Sunshine Coast's strengths and capabilities in the life sciences industry. Starting at the UniSC Clinical Trials Centre in South Bank Brisbane, the group travelled to Sunshine Coast University Hospital for tours and presentations from the hospital's clinical trials team, Sunshine Coast Health Institution, UniSC's School of Health, Thompson Institute and UniSC's Centre of Bioinnovation, finishing at the biopharmaceutical production facilities of Servatus. The site tour was organised by Queensland Government, supported by Sunshine Coast Council and key partners.

The Centre of Excellence for Synthetic Biology (CoESB) conference was held on the Sunshine Coast, bringing together over 200 research leaders from across Australia for four days of science-based networking, collaboration, inspiration and changemaking. Visit Sunshine Coast's Business Events Team partnered with Sunshine Coast Council to bring this event and thought-leadership to our region.

The UniSC Global Reach Famil Tour welcomed 18 education agents from key source markets of India, Nepal and Bhutan to showcase UniSC's commitment to the opportunities available to international students across our region. This event provided a spotlight on key teaching areas and priority programs at the university. With support from Sunshine Coast Council, the reasons why the Sunshine Coast is the most exciting place for students to live, learn and kick start their futures was highlighted. This collaboration further enhanced our relationship with Global Reach and demonstrates Council's longstanding commitment to international and local partnerships and the international student journey.

The Sunshine Coast is positioning itself as a hub for the future of aviation with a focus on Advanced Air Mobility (AAM), including electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft. The AAM initiative was launched at UniSC on 23 August 2023 with over 80 students, mentors and project supporters under the project designer and lead from Manufacturing Excellence Forum (MEF). The project continues to gather momentum and national profile as a unique initiative complemented by involvement in the eVTOL project led by the SEQ Council of Mayors focusing on implementation and facilitation.

Support local entrepreneurship networks and activities to help scale up local businesses.

The 2023 Sunshine Coast Screen Summit brought together 80 industry members along with representatives from Screen Queensland, UniSC, Sunshine Coast Screen Collective and Council to launch the 'Screen Production on the Sunshine Coast' report, the new Sunshine Coast film locations gallery and the Sunny Coast Showdown 2024. Sunny Coast Showdown is a not-for-profit talent and idea incubator where successful applicants receive funding, support and mentoring to develop and produce their projects. The Summit provided a valuable opportunity to advocate for the local industry and showcase and celebrate the extraordinary amount of progress over the past 12 months. The Sunny Coast Showdown Showfest attracted over 900 participants across their new two-day showcase program. In 2024, Sunny Coast Showdown was a recipient of the Major Events Emerging Events Fund which has enabled the organisers to offer an expanded program, now including the Pacific Islands Film Fest and Lights, Camera, Lunch.

A delegation of 12 local industry members was supported to attend the Something Fest, Australia's Digital, Innovation and Technology Festival held in Brisbane from 28 August to 1 September 2023. This major innovation event is a key platform on which to raise the profile of the Sunshine Coast innovation ecosystem with state and national stakeholders and will support the outcomes of the Innovation Ecosystem Mapping Project.

Council was a key partner and sponsor of Forward Fest 2023 and the Sunshine Coast Innovation Showcase, attracting 780 industry members, education and government delegates from across South East Queensland. Forward Fest provides an opportunity for the Sunshine Coast business community to showcase their ingenuity and share unique solutions with public and private sector business leaders. The Sunshine Coast Innovation Showcase provides a dynamic platform for local businesses to showcase their cutting-edge products, services and digital solutions.

In partnership with Council, Silicon Coast launched Forward Fest 24 at the sold out 'Venture Forward' Business Breakfast, attracting 112 industry guests comprising local businesses, investors and government. Discussion focused on how the Sunshine Coast innovation ecosystem is powering forward on the back of infrastructure investment, growing skilled talent, a thriving ecosystem and new venture capital investment opportunities and highlighted the region's potential to be a leader in sustainable innovation.

The 2023 GovHack Sunshine Coast Node event was held in partnership with Unitywater, UniSC and Silicon Coast. The event attracted nine team entries and 62 registrations to innovate with Open Government Data. The Sunshine Coast Council challenge received five entries from a combined 20 engineering and computer science students.

A Sunshine Coast industry delegation participated in the 2023 Global Entrepreneurship Congress in Melbourne. Held for the first time in Australia, the annual congress brought together over 1,500 ecosystem builders, founders, investors and government from 123 countries to discuss the economic and community development benefits of building entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Advance Smart City infrastructure to further support local businesses and leverage the Sunshine Coast International Broadband Network.

Working in partnership with Australian company Geospatial Intelligence, Council hosted an ideation session to explore the potential for creating a Centre of Excellence in Geospatial Technology on the Sunshine Coast. With the aim of working with local, national and international organisations to apply geospatial solutions to complex problems, the Centre of Excellence would have the unique ability to access Geospatial Data in near-real-time. This means quicker and more effective decision making across all challenges for local, national and international customers. Facilitated by tech expert and author, Brad Howarth, attendees explored a range of use cases that could be enhanced through the application of geo-int, including bushfire management, protection of critical infrastructure from natural disasters and support for initiatives relating to the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Testing Tech in Paradise program and marketing campaigns were developed to attract technology-focused businesses to the region and drive investment and job growth. Council's Smart City Framework has driven early adoption of new network technologies, creating opportunities for businesses to become cutting-edge creators and users of technology. The new Maroochydore City Centre has been designed with next-generation digital connectivity at its core, including east coast Australia's fastest data connection via submarine cable. City-wide deployment of advanced digital infrastructure includes fibre broadband, WiFi 6, LoRaWAN wireless network and multi-function pole infrastructure.

Significant deployment of similar technology, especially in large-scale urban environments, has yet to be seen in Australia, restricting testing opportunities for innovative businesses elsewhere in Australia.

The Testing Tech in Paradise program has created an opportunity to work with innovative local businesses and host a series of collaborative events, including ideation sessions and tech summits with tech company representatives from Australia and around the world.

Council, in conjunction with MySecurity Media, is delivering a Testing Tech in Paradise promotional series throughout 2024. The series features two live webinars with industry guest presenters and a networking event. The first webinar held in March 2024 promoted the Sunshine Coast's capabilities in tech, critical infrastructure and smart cities and promoted the Testing Tech in Paradise Program with30 national and global guests were in attendance.

Identify and expand the Innovation Ecosystem to grow the region's capabilities.

The Sunshine Coast Innovation Ecosystem Mapping Report was finalised and presented to industry stakeholders. The culmination of 10 months consultation and research, the findings highlight how innovation and entrepreneurship can be a key driver of sustainable economic development. The report provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of our ecosystem, frameworks on which to benchmark and further develop regional innovation and key recommendations to move forward, including the key regional advocacy priority to request funding from the state government to develop the Sunshine Coast Innovation Hub network.

PATHWAY 5

Sunshine Coast Council

Image: BiG Day In 2023

Pathway 5: Talent and skills

Image: MTIA 2024 1st place - Fundies - Glasshouse Christian College

Support local education and training providers to build pathways for local workforce and connect to local businesses.

The Sunshine Coast Regional Jobs Committee is an initiative funded by the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) which aims to support workforce and skilling needs in the region. The committee is hosted by the Caloundra Chamber of Commerce and includes members from UniSC, TAFE Queensland, Council and local schools as well as business leaders from Kilcoy Global Foods, Tony Kelly Restaurant Group, Country Chef, Sunshine Coast University Hospital and Construction Skills Queensland. The committee has met on four occasions and supported four Local Workforce Forums to gather input from industry on workforce challenges and opportunities. The feedback from the sessions will be used to create an Action Plan which will be released in July 2024.

Conduct talent attraction, development and retention programs to provide a high-quality workforce to local businesses.

The Sunshine Coast Jobs Hub and Student Jobs Hub continues to grow with 1,575 total users on the sites. The top five locations for jobs in the region remained Birtinya, Maroochydore, Buderim, Caloundra and Nambour. The top five jobs by industry were: Health, Medical & Pharmaceutical; Education, Childcare & Training; Retail 4. Hospitality, Travel & Tourism; and Government, Defence & Emergency. The Sunshine Coast Tourism and Hospitality Jobs Summer Campaign was delivered in partnership with Visit Sunshine Coast and Study Sunshine Coast to promote the job opportunities on offer through the Sunshine Coast Jobs Hub (scjobs.com.au) to help support the industry during the region's peak tourism period. The campaign achieved 621 leads, 27,000 impressions and 2,100 clicks from job seekers.

Support youth development and innovation initiatives that foster talent and skills for the future.

The Mayor's Telstra Innovation Awards were delivered to support youth innovation. Three winning teams and an Emerging Entrepreneur were chosen after 13 student teams pitched to four judges and an audience of 130 people. On top of a share in $10,000 worth of prizes, the top two teams were awarded a money-can't-buy mentoring scholarship program to get them ready to commercialise.

RoboRAVE Australia attracted a record-breaking 1100 competitors and 140 volunteers and for the first time marked international participation with teams from China, the Philippines and Ecuador joining a total of 500 teams from across Queensland. A total of 42 local teams represented the Sunshine Coast across 27 schools.

Youth Innovation Sunshine Coast brought together key stakeholders to coordinate the range of youth STEM, business and entrepreneurial programs and activities that happen across the region. The never-ending opportunities in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) were showcased to 400 Sunshine Coast students, teachers and parents at the ACS (Australian Computer Society) Foundation BiG Day in STEM careers day. Students had the opportunity to speak directly to over 20 different education providers, companies and organisations about their future career pathways, as well as hear the inspirational career stories and insights from local industry representatives.

Attract international students and connect local students to opportunities within the region.

Study Queensland and Migration Queensland, supported by Study Sunshine Coast, held the Diversifying your Talent Pools with Skilled Migrant Talent event. Local businesses were invited to learn more about building a diversified talent pool, accessing skilled migrant talent, the skilled visa process and the benefits of diverse teams.

Study Sunshine Coast hosted three Trade and Investment Queensland (TIQ) Latin American Business Development Managers for a site visit. The visit included tours of our key ELICOS (English Language) and Vocational Education providers as well as a stop at the beach. This was part of a full state site tour arranged by Study Queensland to highlight the educational and tourism offering for students coming to Queensland for study.

Study Sunshine Coast held a free First Aid and CPR course for 17 students as part of the Student Ambassador Program. Student Ambassadors were treated to a Jet ski experience and picnic at Caloundra and Pumicestone Passage and created content to share with their networks on tourism experiences available for students in the region.

The Study Sunshine Coast Project Global Citizen program has been delivered with 25 participants attending the online program that helps build cultural competencies and prepares students for the global workforce.

TAFE Queensland and Study Sunshine Coast welcomed a Korean Study Tour group from Seo-il High School to the Sunshine Coast for a week in September 2023. The 10 high school students joined in English improvement and cookery classes each day, followed by a site visit to Falls Farm in Mapleton with a chance to stop at the Glasshouse Mountains and beaches. This is the second year a cohort has travelled to the Sunshine Coast and both groups have all expressed a desire to return to Australia to study once they have finished high school, making this a valuable recruitment connection for TAFE Queensland.

The Queensland International Education and Training Forum led by Trade and Investment Queensland and Study Queensland was held at the UniSC Innovation Centre. Sixty-three stakeholders attended the forum, representing thirteen parts of the IET ecosystem, including Government and Council, universities, vocational education and training, English language training, student accommodation, industry representatives and peak bodies. The first half of the forum focused on context setting to allow attendees to gain a broader perspective on the current landscape for IET locally and across the state. A detailed report has been produced to help inform future programming for Study Sunshine Coast and the broader international education sector to consider.

Over 300 international and domestic students from UniSC and TAFE Queensland participated in First Aid and CPR training. The bi-annual training is a part of Study Sunshine Coast 'Student Employability and Industry Engagement Program' and is fully subsidised.

Image: International students, barista training

Sunshine Coast Major Events Strategy 2018-2028 - 2023 Refresh

Implementation of the Sunshine Coast Major Events Strategy 2018-2028 - 2023 Refresh is measured against a suite of Key Performance Indicators which were developed to monitor the achievements of the strategy. The Sunshine Coast Events Board provides an annual report detailing the results, with the 2023-24 report to be produced following the completion of acquittal reports for events that received major events sponsorship funding. Annual reports produced by the Sunshine Coast Events Board can be found at sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au.

Image: Mooloolaba Triathlon

START

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