Prepared for:

G21 CEO & Board

G21 Continuous Improvement Project

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altegis GROUP

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Executive Summary

In 2001, the City of Greater Geelong invited Surfcoast Shire, Colac Otway Shire, Golden Plains Shire, the Borough of Queenscliffe, as well as a range of State Government, community groups and business leaders to come together to discuss the possibility of a collaborative approach to creating a joint Regional plan. Prior to this, there was little formal interaction between the Councils and, as a result, many major regional issues went unaddressed and opportunities to apply for significant funding and grants to achieve regional projects were missed.

G21 is now held up as a model of cooperative achievement and has won a number of awards, including the category winner for Innovation in Regional Development at the 2005 National Awards for Local Government. The success of G21 has been due to a number of factors – most notably the cooperation at a variety of levels with multiple stakeholders in the achievement of major projects. These have included the Princes Highway duplication, Deakin Medical School, Deakin Biotechnology Park, Masters' Games and the Regional Transport Plan. As a result of the goodwill generated, the concept of the 'Region' has now become part of the language used by members of the G21 Alliance.

Cooperative approaches to Government are now being more widespread throughout the world. In South Africa, Governments at all levels have signed an agreement to 'cooperate with one another in mutual trust and good faith'. In the United Stated, local governments are required to 'sign at least two compacts with neighbouring municipalities'. Public-private partnerships are also becoming more prevalent and there are a number at both Federal and State level in Australia. These cooperative processes between Government, community and business organisations lie at the heart of the success of G21, and other Regions are looking to G21 as a model.

In examining the history of G21, membership surveys, interviews and forums identified a number of 'lessons learnt'. These included the benefits of the consultation model. The major strength of G21 was considered to be its ability to engage multiple organisations, highlight important regional issues and propose significant projects. G21 has done this through a strong network of members and stakeholders. Participants discussed the benefits in sharing ideas and learnings with other organisations and individuals. G21 was also seen to have contributed to a higher level of cooperation between staff at many levels within local government.

The bottom up approach to this consultation was also seen as very important, with ideas being contributed by people at all levels through the Pillar Group structure. However, there was a sense that the value of this approach needed to be balanced by clearly articulated direction and goals for G21. There was also a sense that G21 spent a lot of time planning and needed to focus more strongly on implementation of projects. This was demonstrated by feedback that, whilst identification of significant projects was a major strength, completion of these projects was not so successful. This process of achieving project outcomes was seen as an important measure of performance. At the moment, projects generally derive from a 'bottom-up' approach and are most often chosen within Pillar Groups by small groups willing to see them through rather than by criteria identified in the Region Plan. Project participants believed that there need to be more stringent criteria and clearer guidance established for project selection.

Another strength of G21 was seen to be the equal representation of the five participating municipalities within the G21 structure. Through this mechanism, all Councils are strongly engaged in a cooperative decision making process on Regional issues.

A number of challenges were identified by respondents. These included managing the expectations of G21 members and stakeholders. Pillar members identified a lack of clarity with regard to their role within the Pillar Group and were unclear on the scope and focus for the group. The lack of internal links and bridges between Pillar Groups and with the G21 Board was identified as a critical issue, and is causing difficulty for members, who lack awareness of how to engage with the Board to seek their support. This lack of vertical and horizontal communication process also makes it difficult for G21 Operations staff to offer appropriate support.

Structure

In order for G21 to build on past successes, deal with challenges and move towards an implementation paradigm, it will be important for the organisational structure and processes to evolve. This will require a stronger emphasis on the strategic alignment of G21, an emphasis on project delivery and a better structure and communication process to ensure the ongoing engagement of G21 members and stakeholders.

In order to achieve this, a number of changes are recommended to the structure of G21. These include aligning Pillars under the strategic directions of the 2007 Geelong Region Plan to give them focus. Whilst Pillar Groups can maintain their existing specific areas of concentration, those Pillar Groups which are aligned under the same strategic direction can also be structured into informal reference groups which can come together twice a year to discuss common themes and objectives relevant to that strategic direction. This will encourage cross-Pillar communication. In some cases, Pillar Groups may decide to 'collapse' and others may form. The reference group will provide the mechanism to achieve this.

Vertical communication problems would be addressed by the creation of an informal Executive Group for each reference group under a strategic direction. These groups would comprise a Board member, the G21 CEO and the Pillar leaders for that strategic direction. This structure would enable a direct link between the Pillar Groups and the G21 Board. The formation of the Executive Group would re-introduce the original Pillar Leaders' group which was identified as highly effective. There also needs to be consideration given to the title 'Pillar Group'. Many respondents felt that the word 'Pillar' implied a structure which was rigid and unchanging. G21 members should be involved in developing a new name.

In order for this revised structure to work, sessions would need to be conducted by the G21 CEO with each Pillar Group to analyse their connection to the Region Plan. Pillar Groups and Executive Groups would also need to undertake annual strategic planning to ensure ongoing alignment with the Region Plan.

Projects

One of the issues of concern to a number of respondents was the large number of projects currently under way within G21. It is challenging for G21 Operations to actively support so many projects and for the Board to remain current with progress. Pillar member were also unsure of what process was used to prioritise G21 projects. Methods for identifying and implementing projects within the Pillar Groups varied significantly, with projects often being chosen by a small group willing to see the project through. This report recommends a more structured process for identifying and prioritising projects using a 'tiered' system.

Tier 1 projects would be of major significance to the Region, address more than one strategic direction, require cross-reference group engagement, address LGA Strategic Plan outcomes for a number of municipalities, be highly complex and involve a number of

agencies across the Region. Project teams would be formed across the reference groups and a Board member would act as project 'champion'. Tier 2 projects would be of importance to the Region, contribute to one of the Regional Plan strategic directions and require multi-Pillar involvement. Project teams would be drawn from the reference group. Both Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects would receive active support from G21 Operations staff. Tier 3 projects would be Pillar specific, but still contribute to achievement of the Region Plan objectives. Project teams would be formed from within the Pillar and these projects would not normally be supported directly by G21 Operations staff.

Operations

Feedback with regard to G21 Operations staff was mostly very positive. When asked what support Pillar members felt was most useful, respondents identified group facilitation and assistance when barriers were encountered as most important. Future support should include guidance to ensure that all projects are in line with strategic directions, facilitating collaboration and group processes including defining roles, and improving the communication process. There was consensus within those surveyed that the G21 office should be kept small and that G21 Operations staff should not work directly on projects. This report recommends that the vacant Research Officer position in G21 Operations not be filled, but that this function be undertaken by member Councils.

In undertaking the support role described by Pillar members, G21 Operations staff will need to focus the type and level of support available, and these levels should be 'tiered' for the Board, Executive Groups, Pillar Groups and project teams. G21 should also contribute to the objectives of member organisations and individuals. This can be done through building closer ties with peak industry bodies to identify synergies, and through offering set term secondments to individuals with the skill sets needed by G21 at any particular time, enabling these people to work on Regionally significant issues. Where large projects attract funding for project officers, these personnel would also be managed by the G21 CEO.

In order to ensure that G21 Operations staff members are working effectively, the G21 CEO, in conjunction with these staff, should review job descriptions and develop meaningful performance measures. KPI's also need to be developed for Pillar Groups and Executive Groups. It will be important, however, to ensure that these KPI's do not constrain the creative process Pillar Groups bring to G21 through their role as 'think tanks'.

Communication

Communication was rated as one of the most important barriers to success within G21. Communication within Pillar Groups and with G21 Operations staff rated highest, whilst communication between Pillar Groups and with external stakeholders rated lowest. Problems were also identified with vertical communication with the Board. Members suggest that communication needs to be improved with peak industry bodies, local Councillors and the Federal Government. This report recommends that the G21 CEO brief local Councillors as well as State and Federal members on a six monthly basis.

There is also a need for the Board, in conjunction with G21 Operations, to develop a strategic communications/marketing program, and to consider the introduction of a range of electronic communication processes. To further enhance communication within G21 as well as with the broader community, this report recommends the implementation of an annual conference. This would provide G21 with an opportunity to showcase reference groups, project teams and Pillar Groups, involve presentations by highly credentialed speakers, celebrate the achievements of G21 and create an opportunity for members and stakeholders to revisit the Plan and have input into the next year's strategies.

Governance

A number of issues with regard to the Board structure also need to be considered. The Chairperson's role should be elected from within the Board, and both Mayors and Council CEO's should be more formally involved at Board level. Councils should retain the current system of equality of voting. This has been recognised as one of the major strengths of G21, and there would be a risk of losing the engagement of the smaller Councils if the City of Greater Geelong had more votes due to the size of its financial contribution.

There was some concern expressed by members with regard to the role of the independent Directors who are currently not formally connected to the Pillar structure. This report recommends that four of the independent Directors should become responsible for the reference group under each strategic direction. This would address the issue of poor connection between the Board and the Pillar Groups. The remaining independent Director would take on the role of Industry Representative to build stronger ties with the peak industry bodies. The Board needs to consider whether the independent Directors should continue to be elected by the general membership, elected from within the reference groups, or directly appointed by the Board. The Board would also have the option to appoint an independent Director to bring specifically identified skills to the Board. These might include high level accounting, legal, project management or governance capability.

In order to achieve the aims of the Geelong Region Plan, the Board should undertake a strategic planning session once the new structure, operations and governance model has been determined. From this, it will be possible to develop appropriate Terms of Reference and/or Memoranda of Understanding with Pillar Groups and Executive Groups to ensure that there is clear understanding of process, scope and expectations.

To reduce the funding burden on Councils, this report recommends that the G21 Operations Research Officer position not be filled and that the G21 consultancy budget be reduced. This is in line with the expressed aim of moving G21 from a planning phase into implementation.

No specific issues were identified with regard to G21's governance documents and any changes suggested in this report are as a result of the report recommendations.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are contained within the report:

1	That G21 as a successful Alliance continue, but that Pillar Groups to align under Region Plan strategic directions
2	Change the name of Pillar Groups to deter the need to defend inactive groups and reflect the flexibility of the organisation. The membership should be involved in this process.
3	Form an Executive Group for each of the first four strategic directions.
4	Projects are measured against strategic policies and objectives and are tiered in a process that is transparent to all members.
5	Each Tier One project to have a Board member champion/sponsor.
6	Annual strategic planning sessions to be conducted for the Board, reference groups and Pillar Groups.
7	The Research Officer position currently nominated within G21 Operations be abolished and this function picked up through the relevant research areas of the five municipalities.

8	The G21 Operations staff should have as their primary focus the support of the G21 network and project teams. More specifically, they should not be directly engaged in projects, but rather support those who are.
9	Support from G21 Operations staff should be offered through a clearly identified 'tiered' process. These support capabilities should be clearly articulated and communicated to the membership and published in an accessible manner.
10	G21 CEO to work with Operations staff to revise individual job descriptions and develop individual KPI's.
11	G21 to work more closely with organisations such as the Committee for Geelong, Australian Industry Group and Chamber of Commerce.
12	G21 Board and CEO develop the capability to identify and implement KPI's and measuring/monitoring processes for the G21 organisation
13	G21 CEO to conduct six monthly briefings with Councillors from the five participating municipalities as well as with local State and Federal members.
14	A strategic marketing program to be designed and developed between Board, G21 CEO and Marketing/Communications Officer.
15	An annual G21 conference/'trade fair' to be conducted.
16	Board Chairperson to be elected from within the Board.
17	The G21 Board to consider various options with regard to Board composition and decide on the structure which best meets the needs of G21.
18	Each municipality to retain equal voting rights on the G21 Board.
19	That one independent Director takes on the role of Industry Representative, providing guidance on engaging industry groups.
20	Four independent Director positions be changed to Executive Leaders of Reference Groups.
21	The G21 Board to consider various options with regard to election or appointment of independent Director positions and decide on the option which will best meet the needs of G21.
22	The G21 Board appoint one independent Director to bring required specialist skills and knowledge to the Board.
23	The G21 Board to develop Terms of Reference and/or Memoranda of Understanding for Pillar Groups and Executive Groups.
24	That the consultancy allocation within the G21 Operations budget be reduced and future consultancy requirements addressed through specific project funding.

Introduction

On 14 September 2007, the Geelong Region Plan – A Sustainable Growth Strategy was formally launched by Premier John Brumby at Barwon Heads. The Plan is the result of extensive consultation at all levels in the Region as well as strong support from the Victorian State Government. The launch heralded the transition of G21 from that of a 'planning' organisation to one which is much more focused on implementation, and coincides with the appointment of the new G21 CEO, Andrew Scott.

In order to prepare for this transition, the G21 Board has taken the decision to conduct a Continuous Improvement Project to examine the structure, operations and governance model currently in use by G21. This project is designed to:

- Explore and analyse past achievements and lessons learnt in relation to the 2003 Geelong Region Strategic Plan;
- Review stakeholder expectations of outcomes from participation within G21;
- Review barriers and opportunities with regard to achievement of the G21 Geelong Region Plan; and
- Identify the most effective structure, governance and operational improvements needed to move G21 forward.

This report presents the findings from the desktop research and Regional consultations held as part of the project.

Project Methodology

In undertaking this project, the consulting firm Altegis Group has used the following methodology for data collection:

1. Desktop research to examine cooperative models of Government and Public-Private Partnerships.

2. A series of stakeholder forums, attended by sixteen individuals.

3. A workshop with G21 Operations staff.

4. A broad invitation was extended to all Councillors who wished to have the opportunity for input to the project. Specific stakeholders were also approached. Interviews were conducted with thirteen individuals.

5. A forum with G21 Board members, comprising Mayors and CEO's from the five G21 municipalities.

6. A presentation and discussion with Borough of Queenscliffe councillors.

7. A meeting with the senior management team from Golden Plains Shire.

8. Surveys sent out to all Pillar members, with twenty-three returned.

Background

'The journey that initiated the Geelong Region Alliance started in late 2001.

The City of Greater Geelong at this time had developed a concept to aid improved community well being in the future across multiple industries. No predetermined planning models or structures were initially considered for the idea, though it was quickly acknowledged that, for the idea to come to life, it needed multi-regional expansion and support.

As the idea grew, the City of Greater Geelong hosted a range of meetings in 2002 which saw the Mayors and Chief Executive Officers of neighbouring municipalities Golden Plains, Queenscliffe, Surf Coast and Colac Otway Shire, as well as State Government, community and business leaders brainstorming the initiative.

The purpose of these meetings was to discuss the potential benefits of a collaborative approach to creating a regional plan and to seek and confirm the level of interest and commitment of working together'[1].

Prior to this occurring, there was very little interaction between the five municipalities which now form the core of the G21 Alliance, and any dialogue which had existed between them was informal and often unfocused. As a result, many major regional issues went unaddressed and opportunities to apply for significant funding and grants to achieve large projects were missed.

Past Achievements

'G21 has encouraged a culture of self-help by engaging stakeholders in identifying issues and coming up with solutions, rather than simply putting their hands out to government for money'

Stakeholder comment.

G21 is now held up as a model of cooperative achievement. In 2005, at the National Awards for Local Government, the City of Greater Geelong was the category winner for Innovation in Regional Development, sponsored by the Australian Government Department of Transport and Regional Services, for its role in the development of G21[2]. In 2007, G21's Regional Sports Development Plan and Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Strategy formed the entry that won the Planning category at the Parks and Leisure Australia Conference held in Townsville.

The success of G21 has been due to a number of factors including cooperation at a variety of levels and with multiple stakeholders, building the credibility of G21 through processes of engagement and successful project completion, and identifying and implementing new ways of cooperating with the State Government. As a result of the goodwill generated, the concept of 'the Region' has now become part of the language used by members of the G21 Alliance.

In both the forums and individual interviews, stakeholders were asked to identify some of the past achievements of G21. Responses included:

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[1] Taken from G21 website: www.g21.com.au
[2] http://www.ministers.dotars.gov.au/jl/releases/2005/august/l76_2005.htm

- Engaging the community;
- Developing credibility with the State Government;
- Development and achievement of a number of major projects, including the Princes Highway duplication, Deakin Medical School, Deakin Biotechnology Park, Masters Games, Transport Plan;
- Overcoming overt parochialism;
- Cross LGA investment in regional projects;
- Increased level of information sharing and relationship building between a variety of agencies;
- Brought together a diverse range of people through the Pillar structure to work on planning and projects;
- Built a lot of trust and provided a Regional voice (this accords with the G21 Memorandum of Understanding[3]);
- Become a model of cooperation;
- A move to more integrated planning.

> *'The Shire has appreciated the opportunity for issues, such as the Princes Highway, to be taken on board as a regional priority. Before G21 it would have been a scatter gun approach or there would have been the need to set up a regional group to deal with it. G21 provides the platform for these initiatives to just take off.*
>
> *Stakeholder comment.*

In seeking to modify the structure, operations and governance of G21, it will be critical to ensure that the factors which have led to these past achievements are not lost, but are built on to ensure the long term sustainability of G21 in the rapidly changing environment of the 21st Century.

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[3] G21 Memorandum of Understanding, Clause 4.7, p. 4

Trends in Cooperative Engagement

Cooperative approaches to Government are becoming much more widely accepted. In South Africa, Governments at all levels agree to:

'co-operate with one another in mutual trust and good faith by
  i.   fostering friendly relations;
  ii.   assisting and supporting one another;
  iii. informing one another of, and consulting one another on, matters of common interest;
  iv.   co-ordinating their actions and legislation with one another;
  v.   adhering to agreed procedures'[4].

In its examination of Local Government practices in the United States, the University of Wisconsin found that 'during times of limited and decreasing revenues, cooperative efforts can relieve pressure on local government'. This has now been legislated to require that 'all local governments in Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA's) sign at least two compacts with neighboring municipalities or counties for provision of joint services'[5].

In Australia, at the Federal level, the Council of Australian Governments has agreed that all governments will commit to reform across health, education and training and encouraging and supporting work[6], and Commonwealth Government agencies such as Department of Education, Science and Technology (DEST) and Department of Human Services (DHS) have included cross-agency cooperation in their Strategic Plans.

This is also reflected at the State level with the then Departments of Victorian Communities (now Department of Planning and Community Development) and Education (now Department of Education and Early Childhood Development) also indicating, through their Corporate Plans, their intention to work with Governments at all levels, as well as communities, to achieve whole-of-Government objectives and priorities.

Public-private partnerships are also becoming more widespread. Wikipedia defines these as 'a government service or private business venture which is funded and operated through a partnership of government and one or more private sector companies'[7]. In the United States, 'Public/Private Ventures is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to improve the effectiveness of social policies, programs and community initiatives, especially as they affect youth and young adults'[8]. This move towards Government and the private sector working cooperatively is also reflected in Australia, where there are a number of public-private partnership projects at both Federal and State level[9]. This model is becoming a benchmark in bringing together stakeholders from various sectors to achieve a range of complex initiatives.

> *'There is now unquestionable evidence of the success of working with so many high potential people in the G21 Office, Pillars and Project Teams who often commit to working above and beyond normal work requirements'.*
>
> *Stakeholder comment*

Whilst concepts of cooperative Government and partnerships are often merely rhetoric, the G21

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[4] http://www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/1996/96cons3.htm
[5] www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/polk/cnred/documents/InterCooperativeGovernment.ppt
[6] http://www.coag.gov.au/meetings/100206/index.htm
[7] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public-private_partnership
[8] http://www.ppv.org/ppv/about/about.asp
[9] http://www.mallesons.com/expertise/public_private_partnerships/7141207W-04.htm

model is different as it truly involves partnerships between Government at various levels with community agencies and the private sector to promote projects which are of Regional significance. These innovative, collaborative mechanisms offer cost effectiveness, greater efficiency, less duplication of effort and greater stakeholder engagement than when any one sector or organisation attempts to work alone.

The success of the G21 model is reflected in the interest shown by other Regions in its structure and outcomes, as well as by groups such as the Barwon Region Waste Management Group (BRWMG) which has used a similar model to address waste management issues for the Region.

There are a number of tools and processes which can be used to facilitate this cooperative approach. In the United States, the eHealth Initiative, an 'independent, non-profit organization which brings together multiple stakeholders to improve the quality, safety and efficiency of healthcare through the use of information and information technology'[10], uses electronic media and web-based systems to connect stakeholders with an interest in the health sector. This use of electronic portals is becoming much more widespread as a means of communication for diverse groups of stakeholders.

There are also processes such as forecasting, futuristics and scenario planning[11] which deal with engagement of multiple stakeholders in identifying and working towards desired futures. Some of these processes are already informally in use within the G21 network, but could be conducted more formally as a way to identify relevant project concepts and to evaluate the success of existing projects. Conference/forum sessions using Future Search and Open Space Technology have also been used successfully as a way to engage multiple stakeholders with complex issues, as have knowledge management processes such as appreciative inquiry or appreciative sharing of knowledge in which individuals or groups come together to share ideas and have 'knowledge intensive conversations'[12].

> *'The future is inherently uncertain. In accepting this we should not be fatalistic. Rather, scholars, planners, public officials, and citizens alike should endeavour to engage the future, creating and shaping it via a continuing process of regional and urban planning. The tools available for us to advance this process are forecasts, scenarios, plans and projects.'*
>
> *Engaging the Future: Forecasts, Scenarios, Plans, and Projects* (2007) edited by Hopkins, L.D. and Zapata, M.A.

Dealing with multiple stakeholders requires the ability to understand varying points of view. As stated by Markiewicz (2005, p. 13): 'Attempting to balance multiple stakeholder interests ... presents many challenges. The views of different stakeholders as part of a reference group, or multiple stakeholder voices within a sector, are often diverse and reflect different political and organisational interests. In order to ensure that the (process) is widely accepted, and thereby utilised, these differences need to be recognised and mediated'[13].

Any new structure and operational model chosen by the G21 Board will need to take account of this need.

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[10] http://www.ehealthinitiative.org/news/ehi_expands11805.mspx

[11] www.landscapemodelling.net/blog/2007/10/engaging-future.html

[12] Mengis, J & Eppler, MJ 2005, 'Understanding and managing knowledge-intensive conversations', Institute for Corporate Communication, Paper no. 1, http://www.bul.unisi.ch/cerca/bul/pubblicazioni/com/pdf/wpca0501.pdf

[13] Markiewicz, A. 2005, ''A balancing act': Resolving multiple stakeholder interests in program evaluation', *Evaluation Journal of Australasia,* vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 13-21

Lessons Learnt

G21 has achieved a level of credibility and success based upon a great deal of effort from its many members and stakeholders within the Region. Throughout the focus groups, interviews and surveys, a number of key learnings were emphasised by participants. The following is a highlight of the major themes. It is important to reflect upon these lessons of the past five years as they represent some of the core strengths of G21 as identified by those involved at all levels.

Benefit of Consultation Model

The strength of the consultation model as provided within the structure of the Pillar Groups was often highlighted by the membership as an important capability of G21. In fact, when members were surveyed on the factors most important to Pillar Group success, the top three answers were:

1. Engaging multiple organisations
2. Highlighting important regional issues
3. Proposing significant projects

This engagement model has developed a strong network which has provided a mode of engagement for many agencies that might otherwise not connect. This shared understanding has provided a level of goodwill, trust and commitment that many members openly discuss as a major strength of G21.

On a personal level, many participants spoke of the value in sharing ideas and learnings with other organisations and community leaders. Many senior managers, community leaders and local government officials commented on the value of the new networks provided by G21. Board members attributed to G21 a higher level of cooperation at the officer level within local government.

'The ability of G21 to attract a wide membership to this consultation model has provided a valuable resource to the region. This model of consultation is meaningful on three different levels:

- *State enabler within the Region*
- *Councils have been provided a vehicle for policy delivery*
- *Industry organisations have been able to leverage their achievements for commercial and social aims'.*

Comment from Board member.

Bottom up Approach is Important

The initial strategy for G21 was developed from a targeted approach to gather ideas from the 'grass roots' of the community. This local level of engagement proved more successful than expected for G21 as a whole. With the right leadership, the Pillar Structure provided the platform for organisations to build consensus on issues of regional significance. This ability to raise issues in a shared forum led to a great deal of volunteer effort to champion multi-agency solutions.

Whilst most participants in forums identified this 'bottom up approach' as a significant capability, there was also the acknowledgement that it needed balance. Forum discussions revealed a level of frustration with achieving results and clearly articulating direction and goals. Survey results reveal that while Pillar Groups are very successful in identifying significant projects, they are not always successful in achieving outcomes for

those significant projects. At times, there is 'a lot of leading, meeting and planning … but not a lot of doing'. Many focus group participants feared losing the 'doers' in the group or senior leaders who can champion causes.

Strength in Projects

Many participants in the forums described the importance of projects. For many, the message was clear: 'Implementation of projects equals success'. They see G21 as a vehicle to deliver projects through member agencies.

In its present process, projects generally derive from the 'bottom-up' process. This is a Darwinian process whereby those projects that attract interest, generally get actioned. Those project ideas that do not attract a 'champion' or supporters tend to 'wither on the vine'. Feedback from forums revealed a split in comfort level with this process. Some members offered comments such as, 'if there is no energy to make it happen, then it is not a priority', whilst others commented on the need to do more priority setting within their Pillar Groups and to be more strategic.

Currently, projects are most often chosen within Pillar Groups by the following process:

1. By a small group willing to see the project through
2. By consensus within the Pillar Group
3. By individuals who have a passion
4. Whether funding is available

The answers within these survey results showed a high level of deviation, highlighting the differences in procedures between Pillar Groups.

When asked how Projects should be chosen within Pillar Groups the survey responses revealed the following:

1. By criteria of G21 Strategic Plan
2. By consensus within the Pillar Group
3. By individuals who have a passion
4. By pre-arranged Pillar processes

It is interesting to note that while passionate individuals are still important within a consensus format, many members are looking for some specific processes for choosing projects. This was supported in forums and interviews with comments such as:

- 'There need to be more stringent criteria for selecting activities'.
- 'Important that there is alignment to Strategic Plan, consensus within the group and ownership'.

Equality of LGA's

G21 involves over 150 organisations across the Region, including the five local Councils, namely:

- City of Greater Geelong
- Surfcoast Shire

- Colac Otway Shire
- Golden Plains Shire
- Borough of Queenscliffe

Many Council Board members pointed to the variety of Regional success stories that resulted from their involvement in G21. Despite the fact that each LGA funds G21 on a population representation formula, each of the municipalities still only has one single vote on the Board. Whilst LGA's are continually under pressure to show financial accountability and efficacy in funded organisations such as G21, most of the comments in forums and interviews revealed a belief that one of the major strengths of G21 is the strong sense of cooperation and goodwill between the five Councils. Many saw this as a direct outcome of the parity in voting and were loath to change this balance to reflect actual financial contributions.

Keep Pace with Change

The forum groups and surveys were clear in their message that G21 must continue to evolve. Whilst almost every forum participant was able to articulate past successes of G21, there was the warning that G21 is not sustainable in its present format.

Many fear that some of the Pillar Groups are beginning to lose key stakeholders and that G21 must evolve to meet the changing needs of the Region. There was a sense that the individual demands being placed on volunteers, especially the active ones, is draining and unsustainable. Most forum participants commented on the need for a better understanding of their role within the Pillar Groups, the focus for the group and the overall strategic direction for G21.

When asked about factors most important to the success of Pillar Groups, over half of the results related to the need for stronger direction and processes.

Challenges Ahead

In light of the recent launch of the new Region Plan for G21, the members have identified a number of challenges for the organisation. Many are born out of the need to accomplish the new strategic directions, whilst others are a natural evolution of a growing and maturing business structure that is building on success.

Managing Expectations

To a large extent, focus groups with Pillar members identified a lack of clarity with regard to their role as a Pillar Group and in being able to define G21's role in the Region. Whilst many could identify the past successes of G21, they were unclear on the scope and focus for the future. They certainly do not question the validity and importance of G21, but have a hard time describing what it should accomplish for the Region.

Interviews and focus groups presented a range of views on G21 that often crossed boundaries into Local Government responsibilities. To a certain degree, G21 is a victim of its own success. Many members see opportunities for G21 to take a stronger stance and be a more 'vocal' presence in the Region, becoming the Regional spokesperson on a range of important issues. Where G21 does present this 'Regional voice', this needs to be done strategically to ensure that G21 does not overstep its boundaries and usurp the role of Councils in representing their municipalities. As would be expected, the Board had a clear understanding of the mission and boundaries of G21 within the Region and could clearly articulate their expectations.

> *'G21 give us the opportunity to work effectively with State and Federal Governments to get a larger share of funding and to get our priorities into the business/strategic planning and budget programs of the higher levels of government. To do this, we need to ensure that G21 presents a Regional voice'.*
>
> *Comment from Forum attendee.*

Internal Links/Bridges

Internal linkages and meaningful communication between the Board, Pillar Groups and G21 staff were identified as not working as effectively as necessary at the moment and there was strong agreement across all project participants that this was one of the major areas in need of improvement.

At the Board level, there is a need to better engage with the Pillar Groups and their project activities. Many Board members commented on the difficulty in 'keeping on top of things' with regard to the many G21 projects and they felt a sense of frustration about their inability to have meaningful engagement with the Pillar Groups. For Pillar Group members, there is a lack of awareness on how best to engage with the Board and seek their support and lobbying efforts.

Interaction between Pillar Groups is notably lacking and most in need of improvement. Surveys rated communication between Pillar Groups even lower than communication between Pillar Groups and external interest groups.

How Would You Rate Communication?

Between the Pillar Groups and external interest groups	
Between the Pillar Groups and the G21 Board	
Between G21 Operational Staff and the Pillar Groups	
Between Pillar Groups	
Within the Pillar Group	

2.0 3.0 4.0 5.0 6.0 7.0
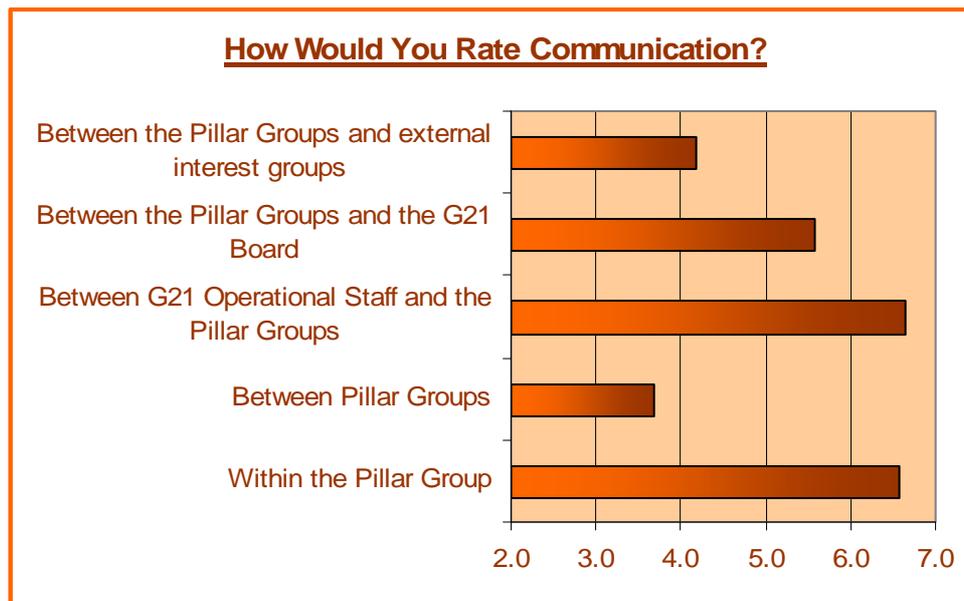
Chart 1 – How Would You Rate Communication?

Pillar Group members identified a lack of process to engage with other Pillar Groups and a need for such communication to identify shared learnings and opportunities. Whilst one or two Pillar Groups have begun to invite other Pillar Group members to present at their meetings, this is reliant on the individual Pillar Leader and many forum participants wanted a more transparent and open process to see what other Pillar Groups are doing.

The current culture and process for engaging with G21 staff is primarily to deal in person. This follows from the strength of G21 in its consultation and Pillar Group meeting process. However, with limited staffing resources, this is, and will continue to be, difficult to maintain. Pillar Group members are looking for direction and help but are conscious of how stretched the staff are in G21. For the G21 staff, it is often difficult to collate Pillar Group information as it involves a lengthy process of update requests and telephone calls that do not always provide value to the Pillar Group objectives and projects.

The Value-Add of G21

At the end of the day, G21 must provide value to its members and the community in order to continue to attract participation and funding. Notwithstanding the mission statement, G21 must answer two important questions on value:

1. What has G21 done for our community/organisation?
2. Could this have been achieved without the cost of G21?

G21 must provide a value proposition that is more than 'just another level of government'. As G21 has evolved and grown, it has attracted a large number of projects under the G21 banner. From an operational point of view, G21 must articulate how they will support and advance these projects with a clear sense of priority.

Funding

As has been stated earlier, at present operational funding is provided by the five local Councils on the basis of population percentage within the Region. There is also State funding provided for the strategic planning process that occurs every four years. The difficulty for funding bodies is the need to provide better clarity of outcomes and

measures of success for G21. In other words, 'what do we get for our money'? This is particularly important as projects tend to be delivered through member agencies and these agencies deserve the credit for delivery. As a result, G21's role may go unrecognised.

When asked what is most important for success within Pillar Groups, the overwhelming response was collaboration between stakeholders. Many described the value of communication and effective partnering that led to commitment at multiple levels within the member agencies. Whilst project outcomes will always remain a determining measure, there are few measures on the supporting success factors identified by these groups.

It will be difficult to maintain funding in a political arena without measures with regard to clearly identified success factors. Many of the G21 projects are, by definition, multi-agency and complex. They may also span a long period of time, especially where there is State funding that may need 12-18 months lead time in order to comply with their funding cycles. This will require an enhanced ability to track projects and measure milestones.

Strategic Direction

G21 strategy is largely based upon State and LGA funding on a four year cycle. The initial strategy was developed almost five years ago and was a bottom-up approach that was developed from extensive consultation. The strategic themes were centred on the projects and formed the basis of the Pillar structure.

The current strategy has involved extensive community consultation but has also involved LGA and State input for strategic alignment to the funding bodies. The newly released Region Plan presents the strategic themes and goals but does not prescribe specific projects. Whilst this presents an important opportunity to align strategic intent, it will challenge G21 to develop tactical and operational strategies to identify and prioritise appropriate project outcomes.

Strategy development will now need to move from a 4 year event to an ongoing process to provide strategic goals and priorities that attract funding. Strategic planning will need to take place at multiple levels: Board, Pillar Groups, and G21 Operations.

The Changing Role of G21

Throughout the focus groups and interviews, it was clear that G21 needed to evolve. The Region Plan has been the catalyst, but there were many who described underlying issues that also needed to be addressed. Despite past success and many accolades, some members and G21 staff described the present situation as unsustainable.

Need to Retain Collaboration and Consultation

Encouragingly, the vast majority of members reflected the continuing importance and belief in the G21 vision statement: 'The Geelong region is Australia's most desirable destination for living, visiting, working and investing; it is renowned for its vibrant, cohesive community, exceptional physical environment and vigorous economy'. They see achievement of this vision as the underpinning driving force for their ongoing involvement with G21.

Members see G21 as a catalyst for regional issues and providing the ability 'to achieve projects that would otherwise be too big for us locally'. They also value the opportunity for discussion, collaboration and the 'forum to be heard'. The grass roots involvement is still very much valued, especially by some of the smaller organisations and agencies. Forum comments included: G21 is a 'mechanism to increase strengths between people and organisations'; and 'It offers the power to talk collectively'.

As previously mentioned, the opportunity to communicate in a collaborative environment was seen as the most important success factor for Pillar Group activities. Most identified this aspect as the core strength of G21 and one that will support it in the future.

Project Delivery

A consistent message that has clearly been communicated across the organisation is the increasing need to deliver on projects. Throughout our consultation, there was strong awareness and support for this emphasis. There is the sense that, while consultation is important, there comes a time when action must follow words.

There was acknowledgement at multiple levels that G21 is often branded as a 'planning' organisation, despite its past successes and the grass roots support from members in the many projects that have been delivered. Part of the expressed belief that G21 needs to move more strongly into an implementation phase may be a reflection of the current lack of performance measures, and the difficulty in attributing success to G21 when projects are delivered through other agencies.

It is, however, hard to ignore the fact that, whilst some Pillar Groups have succeeded in project delivery, others have been less effective. Without engaging in projects that can lead to action and outcomes, many Pillar Groups risk losing the 'doers' and agency leaders. Some members talked about Pillar meetings that are more social than engaging. In the end, some Pillar Groups have lost the engagement of their members and ceased to be active.

Highlighting this discrepancy and diverging experiences within the Pillar Groups was the response to the survey question that asked how successful the Pillar Groups have been within certain activities.

Chart 2 – Pillar Group Achievements

Whilst 'proposing significant projects' rated very high across all Pillar Groups, it is worth noting that 'achieving significant projects' rated near the bottom. This low score was also noteworthy due to the high standard deviation as a result of variations between Pillar Groups, and demonstrating the fact that the low score was an average, with highly inconsistent results. In fact, the following was true:

Results on 'Achieving significant projects':

	Average score / 10
Top Quartile of Respondents	7.2
Bottom Quartile of Respondents	2.2

Table 1 - Pillar Group Achievements Compared between Quartiles

Strategic Evolution

Even before the announcement of the new Region Plan, there has been a growing concern with the Pillar Group structure. Whilst it has provided the platform for consultation and a

forum to be heard, the very name and mental image has been one of a static unchanging structure. True to this image, the ten Pillar Groups have remained in place since the beginning, whether they are truly active or not.

Whilst the consultative process provided by the Pillar Groups remains viable, there are calls for Terms of Reference or Memoranda of Understanding, and general guidance on how to revive and/or dissolve Pillar Groups that are lacking strategic direction, running into barriers or in need of active leadership. With the release of the new G21 Strategy, it has become clearly evident that G21 will need to put in place means and methods for Pillar Groups to modify in accordance with the changing needs of the Region. Strategic change must be supported by structure, process and culture.

'How do you ensure that the key people in organisations are connected (informed, involved, committed) to G21 priorities?'

Comment from Forum attendee.

Over two thirds of those surveyed believed that the structure of the Pillar Groups should be reorganised under the new strategic directions. Many felt it was important to 'do the strategic things well' and that 'strategy [is] necessary to focus energy'. Some of the warnings mentioned by members included: 'don't lose what we already have. Some Pillars have worked well'. One survey comment caught the balancing arguments by stating 'Some believe the Pillar Groups need to evolve on their own. Others warn this is what got us into this mess'.

The G21 role will increasingly require support for change management processes as strategies and regional needs evolve. Most comments from surveys and forums supported the need to be more strategic and focused in what G21 does within the Region. The capacity for change will represent a key capability for G21 to achieve its strategies.

Project Management vs. Facilitating Mechanism

The increased drive for project implementation and results brings into stark contrast the decisions for the G21 Operations staff who support the Pillar Groups, Board and various project teams. The main decision is whether the G21 office should manage projects directly or support others who implement the projects. Influencing this decision is the fact that the overwhelming view was that G21 Operations should remain small rather than growing into a large group and becoming 'another layer of government' or a competing body for project funding in the eyes of its member agencies.

'Operationally, the staff role/skills balance has moved from research and strategy development to facilitating projects and partnerships. It was a 70/30 balance and now has moved to 30/70 (until the next strategy update happens)'.

Comment from individual interview.

Feedback from the forums and interviews reflect the view that the role for G21 is primarily one of supporting projects that are implemented by member agencies. In fact, the term that was most often used was 'facilitating' Pillar Groups and project leaders. Survey results reveal that the most important role for the G21 staff is to 'facilitate groups to develop projects that are aligned with the G21 Strategic Plan'.

The Most Important Future Roles of G21 Operational Staff

Role	Scale
Collate and make available regional data	8.3
Measure G21 success	8.4
Promote G21 to the larger community	8.3
Promote G21 to member organisations	8.2
Lobbying for funding	8.1
Intervention when Pillar Group projects run into barriers	7.3
Monitoring ongoing projects with little direct activity in project	6.3
Ongoing support for Pillar Group projects during project implementation	7.6
Facilitate groups to develop projects that are aligned with G21 Strategic Plan	8.5
Facilitating Pillar Groups to develop their own project opportunities of interest to them	5.8
Working on key strategic projects that have not been picked up by any group	5.7
Working on all key strategic projects directly	7.2
Working on all projects directly	3.8

Scale of 1-10

Chart 3 – Future Roles of G21 Operational Staff

Within this role of facilitation, members felt it was important for G21 staff to promote G21 to the larger community and member organisations, measure and track the success of the organisation, and collate and provide regional data. When asked what further support members would like to see from the G21 Operations staff, the top answers were:

- Guidance to ensure all projects are in line with G21 direction
- Provide support to oversee projects, help set direction, and provide feedback from other groups

Most other comments centred around managing the process to focus and collaborate on the key issues, facilitation, broadening the communication strategy, clarifying roles and providing support when there are problems within Pillar Groups and project teams. In providing this support, those surveyed identified the most important capabilities required by the G21 Operations staff as being:

- Ability to manage the interface with government and lobbying efforts
- Facilitation skills
- Research and data collection

Structure

The current structure of G21 evolved from the original process that canvassed regional organisations, agencies and local government for needs and project ideas. The Pillar Groups were developed around these common concerns and project ideas and formed the main thrust of the 2003 Region Plan. In other words, the projects were collected first and then the strategy was formed.

The current 'Geelong Region Plan – A sustainable growth strategy' was developed in a different manner. Whilst still consulting widely, the current plan has focused on the development of a regional strategy rather than a list of projects. It is a more focused strategic process that intends to ensure that regional goals are set before activities begin.

As with any change in strategic direction, it is important to consider the structure of the organisation to ensure it supports that strategic direction and does not create barriers to implementation.

Pillar Groups and Strategic Directions

The initial structure of G21 was very successful in bringing together agencies with common concerns and interests, and in introducing a consultative process that was refreshing and liberating for many of the participants.

Members acknowledged the importance of the consultative approach and do not want this to change. The trust, commitment and goodwill that have been generated through multi-agency efforts have clearly been a bonding experience that has encouraged a great deal of effort and input. Whilst there are a number of past successes clearly attributed to the model of G21, there are also some warning bells.

Surveys have revealed a level of frustration within the Pillar Groups that generally involves a lack of focus. Whilst the experience is varied between Pillar Groups, most of the membership feels that there is a greater need for strategic focus. In fact, overwhelmingly, members felt that projects should be chosen based upon their strategic importance to G21. Feedback from members, reflect that the current processes for choosing projects are ad hoc and do not involve processes that align them to the Region Plan.

Survey respondents believed that the Pillar Groups should be restructured around the Region Plan strategic directions. In fact, 68% of respondents felt this was the best way to structure the Pillar Groups. Comments from members included:

- The need to focus on 2-3 major regional projects;
- Keeping a focus on doing the 'strategic things' well. This was perceived as difficult as no-one 'owns' the Pillars;
- The need for Pillars to determine how they should align with the Region Plan;
- The need for members to put aside their own agendas and focus on broader issues;
- Using the opportunity of a restructure to revitalise Pillars and refocus them on the needs of the Region;
- The need for G21 to clearly articulate the purpose of the Pillars and its expectations of them.

The Geelong Region Report 2005 reviewed the success of the Pillar Groups, Pillar Projects, and Foundation and Lighthouse projects. One of the Foundation projects reviewed in this report was the Regional Growth Strategy, and this project eventually formed the basis of

the current G21 Region Plan. For the first time, this strategy connected the Pillar Groups to the evolving strategic directions, and it is this connection which has been used as the basis for the recommended structure.

As has been stated, the Geelong Region Plan has been developed after consulting and reflecting the needs of the region. Many of the G21 agencies played an important part in developing this Plan, so it should not be surprising that reorganising the Pillar Groups under strategic directions is the preferred option. To that end, there is a logical argument that suggests there is likely to be a great deal of interest in projects that fall within the strategic directions listed in the Plan.

Following from this, it is the recommendation of this report that the Pillar Groups are aligned under the Strategic Directions. As discussed later in this report, it is recognised that some Pillar Groups will relate to more than one strategic direction. However, it is suggested that this alignment relate to the strategic direction which is of primary relevance to that Pillar Group as shown below.

Recommendation 1:

That G21 as a successful Alliance continue, but that Pillar Groups align under Strategic Directions

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G21 Region Plan 2007

Five Strategic Directions

1. Protect and enhance our environment	2. Create sustainable settlements	3. Strengthen our communities	4. Refocus our economy	5. Make it happen
Environment	Transport	Arts, Culture & Heritage	Economic Development	G21 Operations Board
		Health & Wellbeing	Research	
		Lifelong Learning	Telecom-munications	
		Safety & Security	Skills Taskforce	
		Sport & Recreation		

Diagram 1 – Alignment of Pillar Groups under Region Plan Strategic Directions

The Fifth Strategic Direction

It is worth making comment on one of the strategic directions that has a direct impact on the operations of G21. There are five strategic directions listed in the Geelong Region

Plan. The fifth direction is: Make it Happen. The policies included under this direction are:

- Influence the way we think and act
- Work together to deliver region-wide community benefits
- Use data to plan and measure progress

This direction sits very comfortably with G21 as an organisation and will largely represent the role that the G21 organisation performs for the Region. Whilst there are many groups that may have an involvement in this area, it is easy to see how G21 Operations has a strong relationship to this function. To a large extent, many of the measures of success within this strategic direction will be the important measures for G21 as an organisation.

Diagram 2 - Make it Happen Direction

Pillar Groups – What's in a Name?

A number of project participants and G21 staff made comment on the label of 'Pillar Groups'. It is understandable that the original intent was meant to convey strength, support, perseverance and maintaining a position. However, most of the comments from forums and interviews described some of the barriers perceived in the term 'Pillar'. These include:

- Unchanging
- Old and not dynamic
- Rigid

There is the sense that the number of Pillar Groups is unchanging and G21 has been forced to defend Pillar Groups that are no longer active. Many members have questioned the relevance of some Pillar Groups, whilst others have formed Task Forces and Committees that more resemble a Pillar Group than a project group.

The Pillar Group concept is not in question here. The value of Pillar Groups as a consultative forum for multi-agency collaboration on regional issues is at the core of what G21 does. However, the number of comments from members regarding the title of 'Pillar Groups' reflects that the name is a barrier to change.

Whilst the title of these groups may be more appropriately called task forces, strategic committees, etc. it is in keeping with the nature of G21 that the membership should be involved with the choice of name.

Recommendation 2:

Change the name of Pillar Groups to deter the need to defend inactive groups and reflect the flexibility of the organisation. The membership should be involved in this process.

Moving Forward with Pillar Groups

As an award winning organisation that is evolving to meet the changing needs of the region, G21 has a rich legacy of achievements. Whatever name is chosen in the future, the Pillar Groups are at the heart of G21's success. Over the past four years, many committed individuals and organisations have begun to talk and think regionally in how they discuss opportunities and cooperative solutions. The key success factors for Pillar Groups, as described by members, included:

- collaboration
- key stakeholder involvement
- sharing and communication
- commitment
- effective partnership
- inclusive attitudes
- trust and goodwill amongst members and stakeholders

Keeping this in mind, the process of aligning Pillar Groups under strategic directions must be well considered and respect the strength of the current networks. Imposing structural change without membership involvement will risk undermining many of G21's core strengths.

However, whilst specific Pillar Groups may connect most strongly to one particular strategic direction, in actual fact, there is significant overlap between them as displayed in the following diagram.
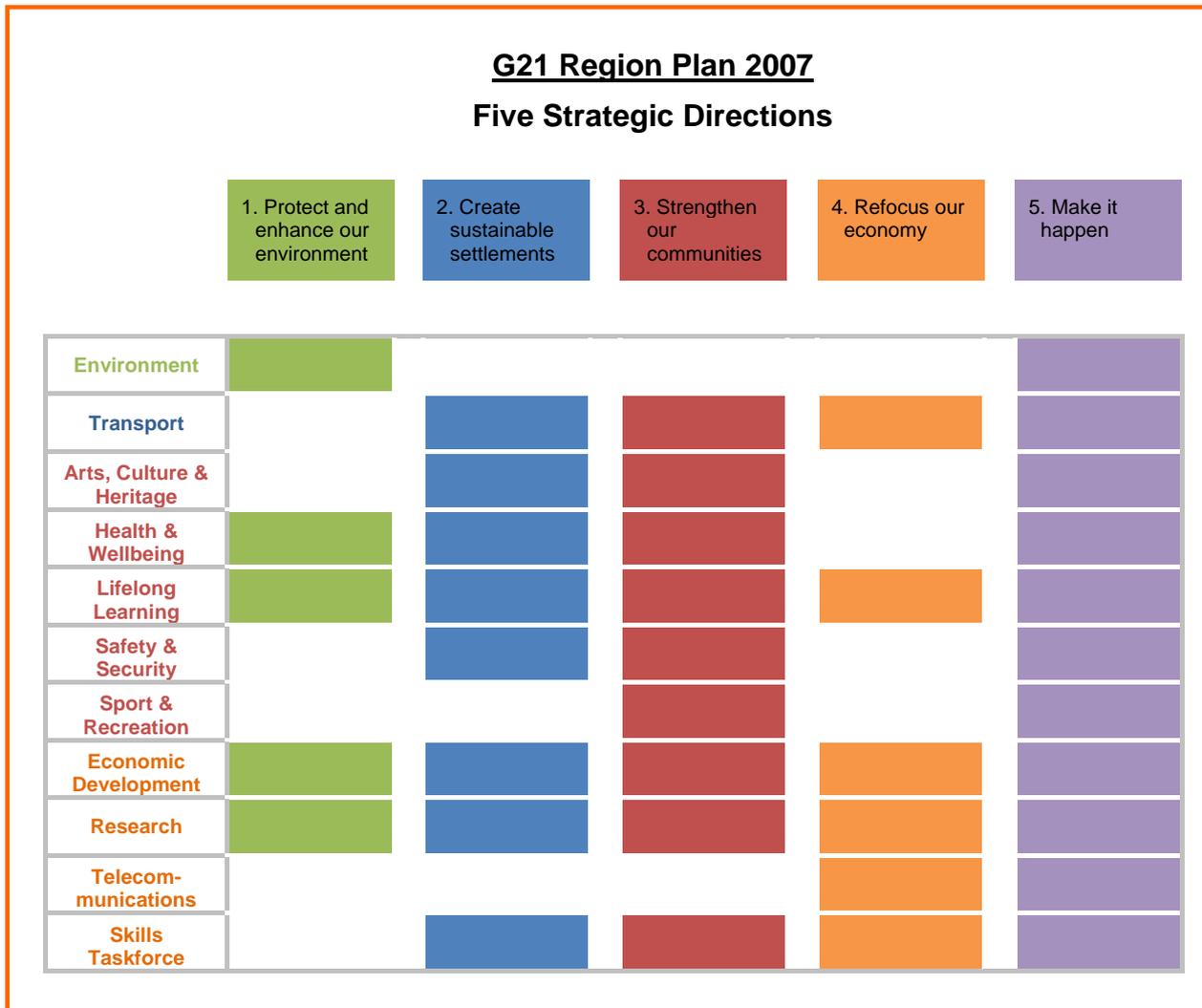
G21 Region Plan 2007

Five Strategic Directions

	1. Protect and enhance our environment	2. Create sustainable settlements	3. Strengthen our communities	4. Refocus our economy	5. Make it happen
Environment	■				■
Transport		■	■	■	■
Arts, Culture & Heritage		■	■		■
Health & Wellbeing	■	■	■		■
Lifelong Learning	■	■	■	■	■
Safety & Security		■	■		■
Sport & Recreation			■		■
Economic Development	■	■	■	■	■
Research	■	■	■	■	■
Telecommunications				■	■
Skills Taskforce		■	■	■	■

Diagram 3 – Comparing Pillar Groups to Strategic Directions

In the current structure which isolates Pillars or by connecting them solely to a single strategic direction, the existing 'silo' structure will continue with its poor communication and disconnect from the Board and other strategic groups. This report therefore recommends a revised structure. This would involve the following processes:

1. The G21 CEO to present to each of the current Pillar Groups on the 2007 Region Plan so that all members clearly understand the priorities and strategic directions. Each Pillar Group can then determine whether its current focus and structure are appropriate and, if necessary, make any required structural changes or collapse the Pillar entirely. This is in accordance with the G21 Memorandum of Understanding[14].

2. Where there are multiple Pillars under one strategic direction, these Pillars could maintain their specific focus dependent on any potential restructure as above, but form a part of a larger, more informal reference group which can come together when necessary to discuss their mutual engagement with their 'parent' strategic direction. These meetings could be held every six months. Where there is only

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[14] G21 Memorandum of Understanding, Clause 5.2.2, p. 5

one Pillar under a strategic direction, other key stakeholder groups could be invited to become part of the reference group. This introduction of the 'reference group' is not intended to create another layer of G21, but is simply a mechanism to bring Pillar Groups together when appropriate to enable cross-Pillar communication and development of cross-Pillar projects. Further, providing a mechanism for Pillar Groups to meet provides members with the ability to discuss new directions and shared interests across Pillar Groups. Managed appropriately, this will lead to the dissolution of some Pillar Groups and the introduction of new Pillar Groups. By providing a 'Reference Group' format, there will be a strong strategic link to this process.

3. Alternatively, Pillar Groups may decide that it is more effective to dissolve the current Pillar structure and replace it with the reference group. This would need to be negotiated between the G21 Board, CEO and Pillar Groups.

Executive Groups

Whilst a reference group will bring communication and project ideas together across a range of Pillar Groups aligned under the same strategic direction, lessons have been learned from the conduct of some of the more successful Pillar Groups, which have found it hard to gain momentum with the larger membership and have therefore formed executive groups or smaller task forces to drive forward the work of the Pillar Group.

This report therefore recommends a similar strategy for the reference groups with the creation of an Executive Group under each of the first four strategic directions. A number of project participants pointed out that, in the past, Pillar Leaders were members of the Board and conducted their own regular Pillar Leaders meetings. This was seen to have been very successful and the creation of the Executive Group would re-introduce this process. The Executive Group would comprise a Board member (see Governance section), the G21 CEO and the leaders of each of the Pillar Groups which are aligned with that strategic direction. The Executive Group leader and G21 CEO could therefore oversight the workings of the Pillars and be the conduit to the Board. Once again, this is not designed to add more layers to the G21 structure, but is a vehicle to connect Pillar Leaders with Board members. The Executive Groups could either be kept informal, meeting only when appropriate, or could come together regularly, even bi-monthly, to discuss Regional issues and projects which cross over strategic directions.

Whilst it may seem from the diagrams in this report that we are suggesting the creation of additional layers within G21, this is not the intent of this report. It is important to emphasise that, when we talk about 'reference groups' and 'Executive Groups', we are simply indicating a mechanism for bringing Pillar Groups together with each other and with the Board and G21 CEO in a more structured manner to ensure that the horizontal and vertical communication problems identified by many project participants are clearly addressed. As time goes by, it may be appropriate for the current Pillar structure to be completely replaced by the reference groups, which would then become the active driving structure for G21. In this case, reference groups would have to meet more regularly and oversight projects more directly. However, it is not expected that this is likely to occur in the short term, particularly where Pillar Groups are working effectively.

Recommendation 3:

To form an Executive Group for each of the first four strategic directions.

All Executive Groups, the Board and G21 Operations would contribute to achievement of the fifth strategic direction 'Make it happen'.

Diagram 4 - Executive Groups

Projects

Members reported a lack of transparent process for prioritising projects and a level of frustration when projects were not supported at the Board level. When asked how Pillar projects are currently chosen, members described the following processes:

1. By a small group willing to see the project through
2. By consensus within the pillar group
3. By individuals who have a passion
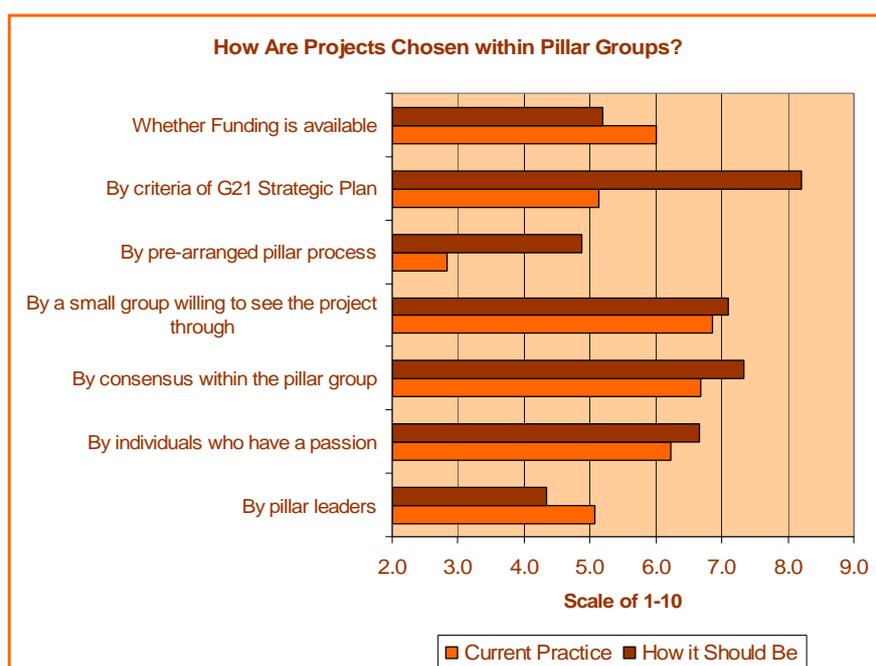4. Whether funding is available.

Chart 4 – Choosing Projects within Pillar Groups

There was also a very large deviation in the results, highlighting the differences between Pillar Group processes.

However, when asked what would be the most appropriate process for choosing projects, the members clearly identified choosing projects based upon the criteria of the current Region Plan. Not only was this the highest score, but it also represented a higher level of consistency across the group (i.e. the lowest standard deviation when compared to other answers).

Project development should therefore involve a simple process whereby projects are measured against the priorities listed in the G21 Geelong Region Plan. This process should be promoted, accessible and form the basis of support levels from G21.

There was a lack of understanding about the process for approving projects and the Board's role in that process.

Members were asked, 'Should the G21 Board be involved in the activities and/or directions of the Pillar Groups?' The following chart provides an overview of the responses.

Board Involvement with Pillar Groups
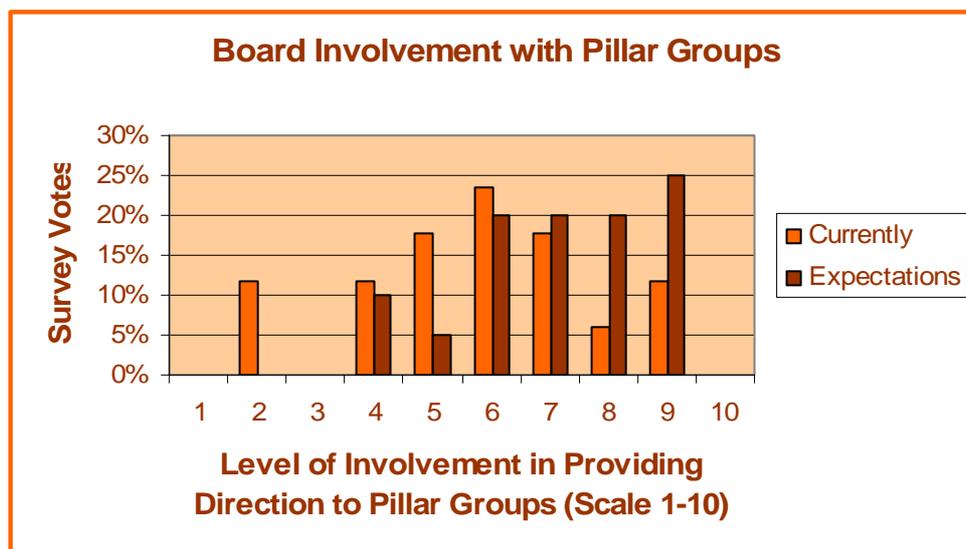
Chart 5 – Board Involvement with Pillar Groups

Expectations of the Board were explored with the membership and highlighted a need for a more engaging process that provides links between the Board and Pillar Groups to support project outcomes.

Many of the comments from survey respondents and forum attendees indicated a lack of awareness of the level of current involvement of the Board, as well as little understanding of the process for information sharing between the Board and the Pillar Groups. The average rating of communication between the Board and the Pillar Groups was 5.5 out of 10.

To clarify expectations a modified process could be implemented to 'tier' the priority of projects:

- **Tier 1** projects could be of major significance to the Region, address more than one strategic direction, require cross-reference group engagement, address LGA Strategic Plan outcomes for a number of municipalities (as per G21 Memorandum of

Understanding[15]), be highly complex and involve a number of agencies across the Region. These projects would be identified by the Board and Executive Groups. Project teams would be formed across the reference groups, with a Board member acting as the project 'Champion'. Tier 1 projects would attract significant support from G21 Operations staff.

- **Tier 2** projects would be of importance to the Region, contribute to one of the Region Plan strategic directions and require multi-Pillar involvement. Suggestions for these projects could come from the reference group, but would still need to be approved by the Board. Project teams would be drawn from across the reference group. G21 Operations would also support these projects.

- **Tier 3** projects could be Pillar specific, but still contribute to achievement of the Geelong Region Plan. These projects would not need Board approval but would involve CEO approval to fly the 'G21 banner'. Project teams would be formed from within the Pillar Group. These projects would not normally be supported directly by G21 Operations staff.

Tier 1 Projects (2-5 Projects)

Tier 2 Projects (8-10 Projects)

Tier 3 Projects (Many)
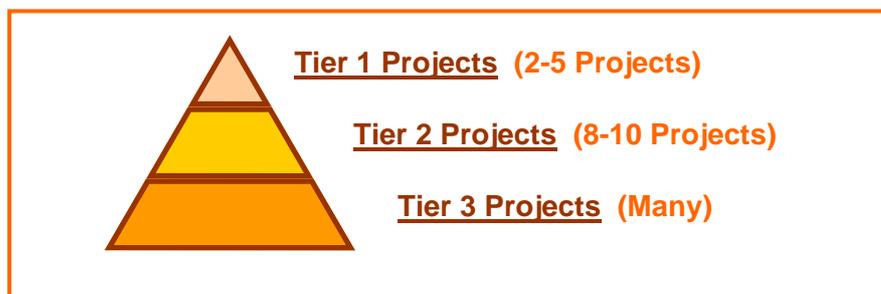
Diagram 5 – Tiered Projects

Recommendation 4:

Projects are measured against strategic policies and objectives and are tiered in a process that is transparent to all members.

Recommendation 5:

Each Tier One project to have a Board member champion/sponsor

Whilst Pillar Groups have shown great success in highlighting important regional issues and proposing significant projects, what has been less consistent is the capability of achieving significant projects.

Members were asked in a survey, how successful has the Pillar Group structure been in achieving a number of identified goals. The results are presented in the following chart.

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[15] G21 Memorandum of Understanding, Clause 5.5.2, p. 5

How Successful is the Pillar Group Structure?

	Scale 1-10
Meeting your personal goals	
Meeting the goals of your organisation	
Meeting the strategic goals of G21	
Developing community leaders	
Developing individual capabilities	
Achieving significant projects	
Planning significant projects	
Proposing significant projects	
Highlighting important regional issues	
Engaging multiple organisations	

Chart 6 – How Successful is the Pillar Group Structure?

Pillar Group leaders also spoke of the challenge where Pillar Group members saw themselves as a de facto steering committee. From the Pillar Group Leaders' perspective, this sometimes had dire consequences for project completion, as the project was pulled in too many directions and often would 'come off the rails'. Project teams will therefore need to have a clearly identified brief and measures to ensure that everyone is clear on expectations.

For Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects, it will be vital to have a suitable Steering Committee appointed. Members of the Steering Committee will come from all relevant parts of the G21 network and may also include other external stakeholders. A Board member and the G21 CEO should be members of these Steering Committees and project teams should be given clear guidelines on the processes and milestones needed to keep their Steering Committees informed of progress and problems.

Individual Pillar Groups need to determine whether there is a need for a Steering Committee for Tier 3 projects. In many cases, it will be sufficient for the project team to report to the Pillar Group. If this is the case, it will be vital to ensure that there is a clear understanding within the Pillar Group of desired project outcomes and that processes are clearly defined and agreed. G21 can support these endeavours with appropriate templates, processes and guidance. Once this is done, the Pillar Leader will need to ensure that the project is not sidetracked by individuals with their own agendas.

Supporting Strategic Thinking

Whilst the most recent Region Plan for G21 has been released, it is also acknowledged that the impact on G21 is more than just a new strategy. The project process has been 'turned upside down'. Instead of developing the strategy to fit the projects, the projects will need to fit the strategy.

To this end, G21 will need to develop strategic thinking at all levels to actively interpret the current plan and how best to introduce appropriate projects. Strategic planning sessions will be needed, as a minimum within the following groups:

- Board

- Reference Groups
- Pillar Groups

Ideally, the Operations team should be driving these sessions with strong direction from the CEO. How to achieve the strategies of G21 will ultimately be the main measure of success for the organisation.

Recommendation 6:

Annual strategic planning sessions to be conducted for the Board, Reference Groups and Pillar Groups

Operations

Feedback with regard to the G21 Operations staff was mostly very positive. When asked what support Pillar members felt was most useful, respondents identified group facilitation and assistance when barriers were encountered as the most important. Future support should involve guidance to ensure that all projects are in line with strategic directions, facilitating collaboration and group processes, including defining roles, and improving the communication process.

Survey respondents were asked, 'What roles are most important for the G21 Operations staff for the future of G21?'

Responses included:

- Facilitating groups to develop projects that are aligned with G21 Strategic Plan. This was the highest rated item with a score of 8.6 out of 10, and the smallest standard deviation at 1.10.

Other functions that rated highly included:

- Promote G21 to the larger community.
- Measure G21 success.
- Collate and make available regional data.
- Promote G21 to member organisations.
- Lobby for funding.

The item which rated lowest was 'work on projects directly' with a score of 3.8. This reinforces comments made by a number of forum attendees and those who were interviewed individually that G21 Operations should not directly manage or work on projects, but should actively support the Pillar Groups and reference groups, and facilitate project teams to undertake this work.

Whilst commenting very favourably on the existing capabilities of the G21 Operations staff, the following additional capabilities were identified as being needed:

- manage the interface with Government and lobbying efforts; and
- advanced facilitation skills.

Part of the project methodology involved conducting a workshop with G21 Operations staff. This workshop involved identifying current roles and responsibilities and mapping internal processes against desired outcomes through the use of a Logic Mapping tool. The Logic Mapping process enables groups to understand their work in terms of the following:

- inputs
- actions/strategies
- outputs
- short term outcomes
- long term outcomes

In this way, it is possible to ensure that the work being done by the group is actually contributing to achievement of organisational goals and objectives.

Outcomes of the Logic Mapping process completed with G21 Operations staff during the project workshop showed the following:
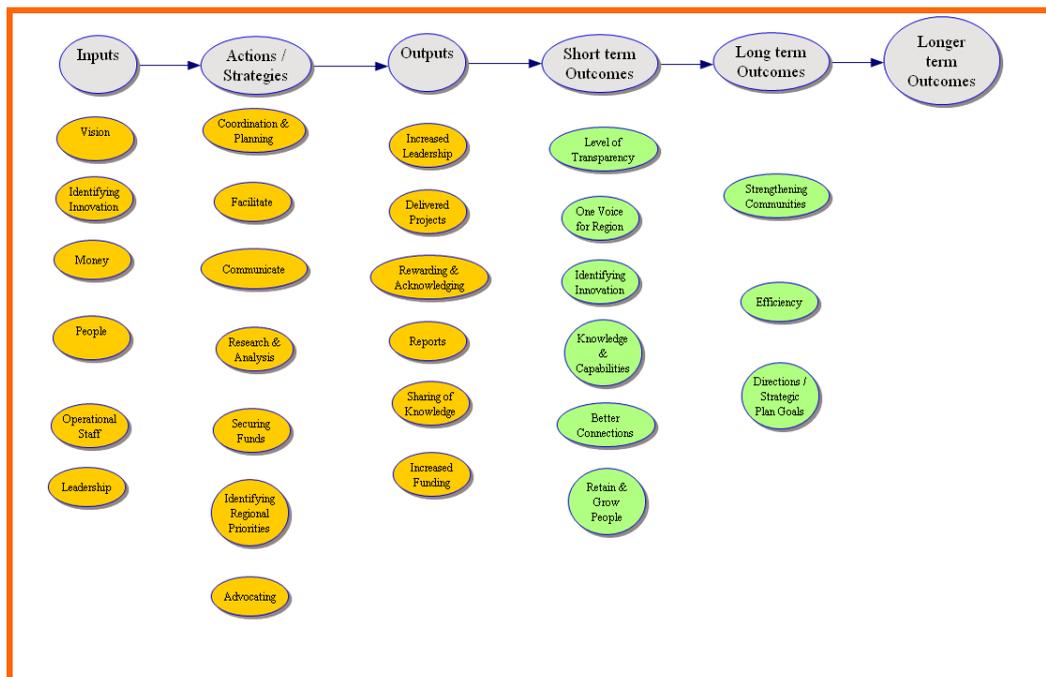

Diagram 6 – G21 Operations Logic Map

Whilst the above process enabled G21 Operations staff to clearly articulate how they currently work, the structure of G21 Operations needs to be reviewed in order to bring the Operations area into line with the new direction of G21. There are currently five positions within G21 Operations. These are:

1. CEO
2. Executive Assistant
3. Marketing/Communications Officer
4. Project Officer
5. Research Officer

Since the resignation of David Spears, the Research Officer position has remained vacant and it is recommended that this position not be filled, but that the research and data analysis function be picked up through existing capabilities within the five member municipalities. This would contribute to a decrease in the funding burden for Councils, whilst still enabling delivery of the research function.

Recommendation 7:

The Research Officer position currently nominated within G21 Operations be abolished and this function picked up through the relevant research areas of the five municipalities.

As mentioned earlier, there was a strong feeling that G21 Operations staff should not directly work on or manage projects, but should rather, offer support to those groups which do. This supporting role might include:

- facilitating strategic planning for Pillar Groups and reference groups
- offering Pillar Groups and reference groups a process for developing project ideas
- use of project tools/methods
- conflict resolution and mediation
- marketing strategy
- lobbying plans
- leadership workshops
- sharing awareness of networks that might be useful
- development of a knowledge management strategy/system which can be used directly by Pillar Groups
- capability for intervention support for problems as they may arise

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Recommendation 8:

The G21 Operations staff should have as their primary focus the support of the G21 network and project teams. More specifically, they should not be directly engaged in projects, but rather support those who are.

This would involve G21 Operations providing support at a number of levels:

1. The Board
2. The four proposed Executive Groups
3. Support for Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects
4. Limited direct support to Pillar Groups
5. Limited direct support for individuals.

In undertaking this support role, the functions of the G21 Operations staff will need to change, and it will be very important for Operations staff to focus the type and level of support available, and to communicate this to the various groups and members so that it is clearly understood and expectations can be managed effectively. The level of support should be 'tiered' for the Board, Executive Groups, Pillar Groups and project teams.

Recommendation 9:

Support from G21 Operations staff should be offered through a clearly identified 'tiered' process. These support capabilities should be clearly articulated and communicated to the membership and published in an accessible manner.

Support to the Board

G21 Operations already supplies significant support to the Board in the form of preparation and coordination of Board meetings, preparation of reports and information papers, and financial management. Additional support could be provided through the development of a strategic G21 marketing and communications plan.

Pillar Groups

Whilst the Project Officer position currently offers support to the Pillar and project teams, the sheer number of these makes it almost impossible for significant support to be offered to each group. As discussed earlier in this report, it is recommended that the support offered at the Pillar level and for Tier 3 Pillar specific projects is restricted to facilitating and bringing together of relevant stakeholders where individual Pillar Group members are encountering barriers, and providing interventions where Pillars are experiencing difficulties.

Executive Groups, Reference Groups and Project Teams

It is suggested that the G21 Operations staff, particularly the Project Officer position, offers significant support to the four Executive Groups and, to a lesser extent, to the four reference groups. Support to the Executive Groups could involve secretariat functions, coordination of bi-monthly Executive Group and six monthly Reference Group meetings, and support to project management teams for Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects. Through this engagement, the Project Officer would become aware of any issues relating to Reference and Pillar Groups at an early stage and could then coordinate with the G21 CEO and Board to offer appropriate interventions. By being able to focus on Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects and the four Executive Groups, rather than spreading effort over the many existing groups and projects, support could be of a much higher level, particularly in establishing project milestones and measuring progress towards successful project completion.

Support could also be given to the Executive Groups through the Communications/Marketing role. This would enable clear communication protocols to be established, and give that staff member the current information needed to prepare briefing papers to be presented to Local Members and Councillors by the G21 CEO. Support could also be offered in the coordination and running of the annual conference discussed later in this report. This would involve a similar process to that used for the recent launch of the 2007 G21 Region Plan and could be used to showcase G21 within and outside the Region.

It is difficult for the current G21 Operations staff to know exactly what expectations there are from the various groups. Outcomes are provided in the staff job descriptions, but there are no KPI's and no meaningful measures attached to their roles.

Recommendation 10:

G21 CEO to work with Operations staff to revise individual job descriptions and develop individual KPI's.

Contribution to Member Organisations and Individuals

If G21 is to continue to build upon its past successes, it must offer opportunities for member organisations and individuals to achieve their own objectives as well as those of G21. In selecting priority projects, G21 should work with member organisations and industry (e.g. through organisations such as the Committee for Geelong, Australian Industry Group, Chamber of Commerce, etc.) to identify synergies and common interests and objectives. Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects could then be designed to ensure that these mutual goals are met, thus encouraging additional stakeholders to become engaged with G21 and its projects. In this way, project teams will include committed members who can meet personal and organisational KPI's as well as contributing towards addressing Regional issues. Where industry can see an organisational benefit, they may also be more willing to contribute financially to these projects, thus providing an alternative funding source. Governments at all levels are also far more likely to commit funding where they see an industry commitment to a proposed project. By also ensuring that Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects meet the business objectives of the member municipalities, there is more likelihood of gaining the support of those individual Councillors who have, in the past, questioned the benefits of G21.

Recommendation 11:

G21 to work more closely with organisations such as the Committee for Geelong, Australian Industry Group and Chamber of Commerce.

The Committee for Geelong currently conducts a Leadership Program, which requires participants to undertake a relevant project. Individuals undertaking this program could be invited to participate in Tier 1 and Tier 2 project teams. By giving them this opportunity to work on major Regional issues, G21 will be assisting in the long term development of these people and building strong networks for the future.

As G21 moves from an organisation which is heavily involved in planning to an organisation which is focused on achieving project outcomes, the work of G21 will become more complex. This will occur in an environment in which member Councils are seeking economies of scale with a reduced funding burden. There has been consistent feedback from project respondents that G21 Operations should not become larger, despite the demand for stronger project outcomes. One option available to address this is to offer set term secondment to individuals with the skills sets needed at any particular time.

> *'I would be interested in a secondment to G21. However, I don't want to just end up being overworked on administrative stuff. I would want the opportunity to work on strategic Regional issues, and it would have to enhance my career'.*
>
> *Stakeholder comment*

This process is encouraged in the G21 Memorandum of Understanding[16]. G21 would have to be able to demonstrate a benefit to the organisation from which the individual comes and there would have to be a clear indication of the work that the seconded person would be doing. These seconded positions would be managed by the G21 CEO and supported by

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[16] G21 Memorandum of Understanding, Clause 5.3.1, p. 5

G21 Operations. However, if managed correctly, this would be a way to enable vital work to be performed whilst at the same time addressing some of the issues mentioned earlier with regard to the perceived lack of contribution to addressing the development needs of individuals and organisations involved with G21.

Project positions

As mentioned earlier in this report, G21 should be actively working to identify and implement Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects. Funding for these large projects will be substantial and complex and this will require high level oversight by the G21 CEO and Board. These projects may also involve, from time to time, the appointment of a dedicated project officer. This will be largely dictated by the project funding body, as G21 does not provide direct project funding. Rather, it supports others who implement the projects.

Whilst the previous section of this report discussed the need not to increase the number of G21 Operations staff, there will be instances where project officers appointed for these Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects are physically located within the G21 Operations office and administratively supported by G21 Operations staff. It is important, however, to note that they are not permanent G21 Operations personnel, but appointed to work on specific tasks, either for set terms or on a recurrent basis, and the funding for these positions should be included in the project budget and not come out of the G21 Operations budget.

As suggested earlier in this report, it is recommended that the G21 CEO should be a member of the Steering Group for all Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects. As such, these project officers could report to the G21 CEO and be managed through the G21 office to ensure clear lines of accountability. This is likely to be the case if the funding body seeks to have the project run under the G21 banner.

Measuring Success

As also mentioned earlier in this report, there has been a sense of frustration identified by many Pillar members with the perceived lack of progress of individual Pillar Groups and with the successful completion of a number of G21 projects. In order to address this problem, particularly with the highly complex nature of the Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects, it will be important to have a clearly defined structure and objectives for the Executive Groups, Reference Groups and Pillar Groups, supported with well designed project briefs which include project measures, milestones and KPI's. The Pillar Groups provide a valuable 'think tank' process for identifying Regional issues and proposing projects. The development of KPI's will need to be carefully considered to ensure that they do not stifle this creative process.

Whilst not wanting to overlay an additional administrative and bureaucratic system onto an already hard working volunteer organisation, this report strongly suggests that a more 'business like' structure and process is required. This could involve the Board negotiating the Terms of Reference for the Executive Groups, and those groups conducting a similar exercise with the Pillars Groups. This process would need to be handled sensitively in order not to alienate Pillar Groups which are already operating at a high level and which neither want nor need a 'Big Brother' approach. However, if negotiated in a consultative method to ensure that the objectives of the Pillar Groups are being met, this process could enable a more efficient and effective system to be implemented and managed, as well as building in processes to enable early intervention if groups get into trouble.

This system would require the establishment of some KPI's for each group as well as project milestones and measures, in order to enable appropriate monitoring and evaluation to occur. Indicators could also be put into place to measure the 'health' of the Pillar Groups to enable early intervention where necessary. Examples of these types of measures include satisfaction surveys for members, numbers of stakeholders and types of organisations engaged in a Pillar Group, etc. G21 Operations could manage this monitoring and reporting process and suitable communication protocols could be designed to ensure that feedback was provided to relevant groups in a timely manner.

The creation of a strong structure with clearly articulated measures which are transparent, simple and easy to understand will build better awareness across the G21 network and will be useful for the Board in maintaining oversight of multiple projects at varying levels.

The development of more effective and efficient methods of support delivery will make it possible to streamline a number of current operational functions. Existing staff workloads can thus be rationalised and this will enable the capability to take on the additional facilitator, monitoring and intervention roles mentioned earlier. However, this will require the establishment of more effective system capabilities such as electronic access to information and networks, more use of the existing project database by project teams, and an easy to use but comprehensive monitoring system. There are a number of such systems available. One such system is Performance Manager©. This system is currently used by the Gordon Institute of TAFE and personnel there were kind enough to demonstrate this system for the project consultants. Performance Manager© appears to be a simple, easy to use system which enables tracking at various levels for both groups and projects. Should G21 consider the purchase and use of such a system, Gordon Institute staff have offered to assist with mentoring of G21 staff in the use of the system.

Recommendation 12:

G21 Board and CEO develop the capability to identify and implement KPI's and measuring/monitoring processes for the G21 organisation

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Communication

In an organisation such as G21, the major asset and output is knowledge. Whilst much of this knowledge can be recorded in project briefs, meeting minutes and policies, equally important is the knowledge of networks, effective collaboration, effective partnering and leading a volunteer group, which are much harder to record. And yet, these aspects are critical to the sustainability of G21. There is a large body of work on the subject of knowledge management and many organisations now have dedicated knowledge management systems in place. Knowledge management involves both the interpersonal processes for sharing and interpreting information and the electronic systems needed for storage and management of that information. For G21, communication systems need to link members horizontally

> *'Knowledge management is a discipline that seeks to improve the performance of individuals and organizations by maintaining and leveraging the present and future value of knowledge assets. Knowledge management systems encompass both human and automated activities and their associated artifacts'.*
>
> Newman, B. 1999, 'A Framework for Characterizing Knowledge Management Methods, Practices, and Technologies', *The Introduction to Knowledge Management*, George Washington University

between Pillar Groups, and vertically between Pillar Groups and the Board, as well as with external agencies and individuals.

As usual in most organisational reviews, communication was rated as one of the most important factors for success within G21. In such a diverse organisation, involving such a wide range of volunteer stakeholders, effective communication will be vital for the ongoing viability of G21. Perceptions of the effectiveness of existing communication processes varied widely between individuals and Pillar Groups.

As discussed in a previous section, survey respondents were asked, 'How would you rate communications in the following situations?' Responses are shown in the chart which is repeated below.
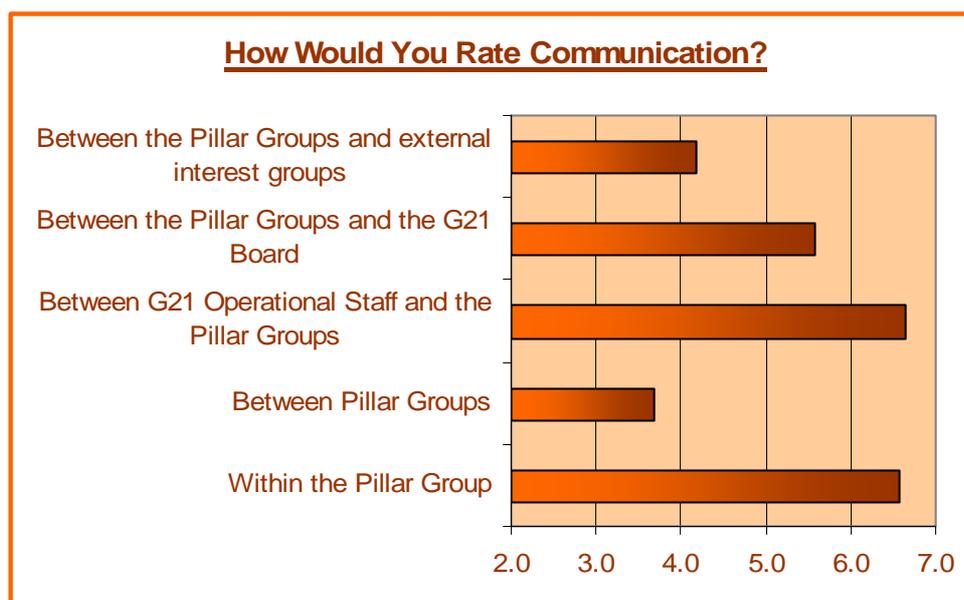

How Would You Rate Communication?

Chart 7 – Rating Communication Between Pillar Groups

As can be seen, communication between the Pillar Groups and G21 Operation staff and communication within the Pillar Groups rated highest, although even here ratings were only 6.5 out of 10. However, communication within the Pillar Group also contained the greatest deviation due to varying degrees of effectiveness between the different Pillar Groups, with some rating very highly and others very poorly.

Communication within individual Pillar Groups, between Pillar Groups and with external interest groups rated lowest, confirming problems with the 'silo' structure of the Pillars.

There was discussion at both the Board level and through the forums as well as individual interviews about the need to improve communication processes. Current communication tools including the Pillar to Pillar magazine and the G21 website were seen to be effective. However, most of the members were looking for methods to communicate across levels and groups to network and learn as an organisation.

Issues concerning Board to Pillar communication have already been discussed earlier in this report. As mentioned, these issues could be addressed through the implementation of the Executive Group structure led by a Board member, and by the involvement of Board members as champions and on steering committees of Tier 1 projects.

With the creation of the State Government Interdepartmental Committee (IDC), communication processes between G21 and the State Government need to be formalised. At this stage, the exact process for engaging with the IDC is still somewhat unclear - involving the Regional Managers' Forum as well as individual State Government Departments. It will be necessary for G21 to ensure that the process is clarified so that member expectations can be managed and the best use can be made of these opportunities.

Other groups with which the Board needs to increase dialogue include local industry organisations such as the Committee for Geelong, Australian Industry Group, Chamber of Commerce, etc. There was some concern that although G21 had been very successful in engaging with State, Local Government and community agencies, it had been much less successful at engaging with industry - particularly large organisations.

The Committee for Geelong has very strong networks with industry and also plays a significant role in lobbying with both State and Federal Government on behalf of the Region. There are many synergies between G21 and the Committee for Geelong, and their differing objectives mean that there should not be any duplication of roles or conflict over areas of responsibility. At the moment, a Board member from the Committee for Geelong is also a Board member of G21. The CEO's of these two organisations also meet at the

'We don't want a situation of a lobbyist from Committee for Geelong arriving at a meeting in Canberra and finding a G21 person sitting across the table'.

Stakeholder comment

moment. It may, however, be useful to formalise these arrangement, which currently rely on personal relationships, to ensure integration of effort between the two organisations. This same process could be undertaken with other potential strategic partners, such as the Australian Industry Group and Chamber of Commerce.

As mentioned earlier in this report, individuals taking part in the Committee for Geelong's Leaders for Geelong program could also be invited to become project team members for Tier 1 or Tier 2 G21 projects. This would not only bring valuable resources to the projects, but would also give these individuals the opportunity to contribute to significant Regional outcomes.

Better communication links also need to be established with Councillors from each of the five G21 municipalities. There has been feedback that some individual Councillors are concerned about the value of G21. To alleviate this problem, Councillors from each municipality should be briefed by the G21 CEO every six months. This will ensure that all Councillors are aware of G21 priorities and progress of the various Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects. It should also address the issue of continuity when a Mayor steps down and a new Councillor takes up the roles of Mayor and G21 Board membership.

Whilst G21 is building strong networks with the State Government, mention has been made of the need for G21 to connect more strongly with Federal Government agencies, through building relationships with relevant Departmental officers. It is also important to keep local State and Federal Government members apprised of G21's operations. This could take the form of a briefing similar to that described above for Councillors. These individuals provide an important conduit into Government and should be actively engaged by G21.

Recommendation 13:

G21 CEO to conduct six monthly briefings with Councillors from the five participating municipalities as well as with local State and Federal members.

Engagement with the media is also vitally important to raising the profile of G21 itself as well as the profiles of the G21 members. A strategic marketing program should be designed and developed between the Board and the G21 CEO and Marketing/Communications Officer. This could involve development of good news stories for the media, strategic decisions about conference speaking engagements by the CEO and various members of the Board, as well as external representation with Government, peak industry bodies, and other relevant groups.

Recommendation 14:

A strategic marketing program to be designed and developed between Board, G21 CEO and Marketing/Communications Officer.

Communication with the broader G21 community is also a critical issue. Whilst this report recommends that the Board takes on a much more active role in approving and oversighting priority projects, it is also very important for G21 not to lose the bottom up engagement which has been such a strength. This consultation was a critical factor in the development of the 2007 Geelong Region Plan. However, this was also a costly process and took a long time. Having spent a considerable amount of time in developing this Plan, it should not be necessary to repeat the process every time a new Plan is formulated. Rather this engagement could be addressed through the development and conduct of an annual G21 conference which could take the form of a 'trade fair'. This conference could be open to any interested stakeholders to attend and could involve a number of functions.

There are many benefits to this public conference. Firstly, it would give the G21 reference groups, project teams and Pillars an opportunity to showcase their achievements. Secondly, it could involve presentations by highly credentialed speakers on a range of issues relevant to the Region. Thirdly, it could celebrate the achievements of the past year. Finally, it could create an opportunity through workshops to revisit the Plan and seek input for priorities and project concepts for the upcoming year. This conference would also form the Strategic Forum required by the Constitution[17]. In this way, whilst the overarching structure and strategic directions of the Plan should not need to change, interested individuals and organisations would still have the opportunity to give feedback and input to the development of the next year's operations.

Recommendation 15:

An annual G21 conference/'trade fair' to be conducted.

A more structured meeting timetable would also contribute to better communications. However, it will be important to ensure that this does not become a burden on members. A proposed meeting schedule is shown below:

1. The G21 Board to meet every two months
2. Meetings of the Executive Groups and the G21 CEO to be conducted every alternate months.
3. Reference groups to come together every six months. One of these meetings could be incorporated into the annual conference. This would therefore only mean the coordination of one additional meeting during the year.
4. Councillors and local State and Federal members to be briefed every six months by G21 CEO.
5. Pillar Groups to meet on a schedule determined by the Pillar Group.

Electronic communication tools such as portals should also be available for those Pillar, Reference and Project Groups who would find them useful. An electronic database of projects is already available and, with some instruction, would provide a useful tool for sharing information on the current status of the various projects.

Communication within G21 Operations is also of critical importance. At the moment, due to differing job roles and a lack of suitable process, there is little cross-communication between staff. It is important for all staff to be aware of what each member is doing so that everyone is working towards the same priorities. This requires having a formalised process in place so that each person is updated on what is happening in other parts of the Operations area. Due to the convergence of a lot of their work, it is particularly important for the Project Officer and Marketing/Communications Officer to ensure that the processes currently in place to keep each other informed are working effectively.

The G21 Memorandum of Understanding calls for the formation of a Communications and Public Relations Work Group 'consisting of one officer from each Member Council and G21'[18]. This Work Group could form the core group for oversighting effective communication protocols.

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[17] G21 Constitution, Clause 3.4, p. 29
[18] G21 Memorandum of Understanding, Clause 5.6.2, p. 6

Governance

In reviewing the governance of G21, this project has examined the following issues:

1. Board structure
2. Strategic management and representational duties
3. Funding
4. Pillar Group governance
5. Governance documents

Board Structure

When G21 was first formed into a Company Limited by Guarantee and not having a Share Capital, an interim or 'first' Board was established[19].   This Board, which is due to reform into the ongoing Board after this Annual General Meeting, comprises an independent Chairperson, five Council nominated Directors, five elected Directors, and up to two appointed Directors. This Board structure was to stay in place for a period of three years, with the independent Chairperson retiring at the end of that time and the new Chairperson to be elected by the Board at its next meeting[20].   At this stage, four of the municipalities have elected to have their Mayor as the Director, whilst one Council has opted for their CEO.   The five independent Directors are elected by the membership at the Annual General Meeting in November.

There was significant discussion around the role of the Chairperson.   Three different options with regard to this position were identified. These included:

1. That the Chairperson's position remains independent as is the current situation. If this is to happen, it will require an amendment to the Constitution, and it is important that that person brings relevant strengths to the position (see Chairperson's competencies in G21 Board Charter[21]).   These would include extensive networks which could be used to further the work of G21, a deep understanding of Regional issues and stakeholder groups, and the ability to oversight the operations of the Board.

2. That the Chair be held permanently by the City of Greater Geelong (COGG). This option, which would also require an amendment to the Constitution, was raised as a result of the awareness of the size of the financial contribution made by COGG, as well as the number of COGG personnel who are actively engaged on G21 projects.

3. That the position of Chairperson be elected from within the Board on a 2 year basis, with the option for a second two year term. This is the structure currently approved in the Constitution[22] and would ensure that parity was maintained within the Board.

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[19] G21 Constitution, Part Two, Clause 9, p. 14
[20] G21 Constitution, Part Two, Clause 17, p. 20
[21] G21 Board Charter, Chairperson Competencies, p. 18
[22] G21 Constitution, Part Two, Clause 17, p. 20

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This report recommends Option 3 as the most useful process for ensuring that the Chairperson's role is available to any Board member with the capability and passion to take on the role.

Recommendation 16:

Board Chairperson to be elected from within the Board.

There was some discussion about the need for the Mayors to be the political representative for the Council. This discussion related to the issue of continuity of knowledge with regard to G21 matters. With some Councils experiencing a changeover of Mayors on an annual basis, problems have been encountered with continuity on the G21 Board, and a suggestion was made that each Council should nominate one Councillor to be the permanent G21 Board member, rather than whoever happened to be Mayor at that time. This would enable Councils to select a representative to be involved with G21 on an ongoing basis.

However, there are many advantages to having the mayor on the G21 board. Whilst nominating a non-mayoral Councillor would certainly address the issue of continuity, it would tend to isolate the G21 role to a single person on Council and could result in G21 not being seen as an integral Council interest. There is also a significant amount of credibility and prestige for G21 in having the Mayors on the Board and involved in the representational duties of G21. The lobbying effect from this alone is an important strength of G21, especially as it pertains to pathways to State and Federal government.

The problem of continuity would be partially addressed by the six monthly briefings recommended to be conducted by the G21 CEO with Councillors from each municipality. These briefings would ensure that all Councillors are aware of G21 operations and the progress of G21 projects and would reduce the 'learning curve' for newly elected Mayors in trying to bring themselves up to date on taking up the G21 Board Directorship.

This issue has been further addressed by inviting the remaining one Mayor and four CEO's to also attend Board meetings as observers, and the success of this strategy is indicated by the high attendance of these individuals. Whilst it is not desirable to have a Board which is unwieldy due to its size, it is more important to make sure that both the political and operational decision makers from each Council are involved in making strategic decisions with regard to the future directions and priorities of G21. The Board composition could be amended in one of two ways:

1. The current process could be formalised with the observers becoming non-voting Directors. Each Council would decide whether the Mayor or CEO would be the voting Director. This would involve a change to the Constitution to allow five non-voting Director positions to be nominated by the member Councils.
2. Alternatively, both the Mayor and the CEO could be voting Directors on the Board. This would also require an amendment to the Constitution to increase the number of Director positions on the Board.
3. Continue with the current process whereby the additional non-directors are invited to Board meetings as observers.

Recommendation 17:

The G21 Board to consider various options with regard to Board composition and decide on the structure which best meets the needs of G21.

Depending on the decision with regard to the above points, this report also recommends that each Council maintain the equality of having only one single, or two, votes on Board issues. Whilst recognising the disparity in actual financial contribution, the current process of equal representation has been one of the major strengths of the G21 structure, and has ensured the ongoing strong engagement with, and commitment to, G21 by the four smaller Councils. Were this situation to change, there would be a significant risk of some or all of these Councils choosing to opt out of the Alliance. Whilst COGG undoubtedly does contribute the lion's share of funding, this is done on a proportional basis related to a Regional population formula[23]. While there is a large difference in actual dollar terms, there is not a lot of difference as a percentage of Council budgets. Whilst there is an obvious benefit to all participating Councils from the major G21 projects, COGG obviously also gains the greatest benefit from these as evidenced by the Deakin Medical School, the Sports Academy, the Masters' Games and the Deakin Biotechnology Park, all of which are located in Geelong.

The recommended development of appropriate KPI's and measurement tools will enable clearer definition of these benefits to each municipality, and should go some way to allaying the concerns of individual Councillors about the value of G21 to their electorates.

Recommendation 18:

Each municipality to retain equal voting rights on the G21 Board.

There was also some concern about the function of the independent Directors. Whilst in no way criticising the current incumbents of these positions, there was comment about the lack of structure to ensure a strong connection between the Board and the Pillar Groups. The current process relies on elected independent Directors bringing passion and commitment to the role and there was agreement throughout the project consultation that this process needed to be more formalised. This report recommends that the five independent Directors positions be modified as follows:

- One Director who acts as the Industry Representative and who may hold multiple Board positions with both G21 and various other stakeholder groups such as the Committee for Geelong, Australian Industry Group, Chamber of Commerce, etc. This Director would hold major responsibility for liaising between G21 and these other organisations to maximise benefits for all, and would report to the Board on issues and opportunities identified as a result of this liaison. As mentioned earlier in this report, one of the current independent G21 Directors also happens to be a

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[23] G21 Memorandum of Understanding , Clause 3.4, p. 3

Committee for Geelong Director. This report recommends that this be formalised in negotiation with the Committee for Geelong, and the process extended to other suitable organisations. This would bring benefits to all groups who could discuss mutual goals and objectives and then work cooperatively to achieve these.

Recommendation 19:

That one independent Director takes on the role of Industry Representative, providing guidance on engaging industry.

- The remaining four Director positions would be filled by the leaders of the Executive Groups discussed earlier in this report. This would ensure a strong connection between the Board, the large Reference Groups and the individual Pillar and Project Groups. This would address one of the major concerns expressed by many survey respondents and forum attendees about the current disconnect between the Board and the Pillars. The Executive Group Directors could present at each Board meeting on the workings of their own groups and progress made towards achievement of their specific strategic direction, as well as cross Executive Group initiatives and issues. The Board would be fully informed about what is happening within the G21 Alliance and could therefore be better placed to make informed strategic decisions.

Recommendation 20:

Four independent Director positions be changed to Executive Leaders of Reference Groups.

- There needs to be consideration given to the way in which these five Director positions are filled. The Constitution currently states that only two Directors may be appointed[24], with the five independent Directors being elected by the members through the Annual General Meeting process[25]. Should the Board decide to accept the proposed changes to the G21 Alliance structure, they will be looking for specific areas of expertise and interest from these five Directors, four of whom will manage Strategic Direction alignment and one of whom will manage external relationships. The Board therefore needs to decide whether to:

    a) continue with the current voting process, which gives G21 members the ability to democratically elect five Board members,
    b) opt for a change to the Constitution to enable four of these Directors to be elected from within the relevant reference groups, and the remaining one independent Director to be appointed, or
    c) opt for a change to the Constitution to enable all five Director positions to be appointed.

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[24] G21 Constitution, Part Two, Clause 13, p. 17
[25] G21 Constitution, Part Two, Clause 12, p. 16

If the Board decides to stay with the current system, it will be vital to have a clearly defined role and responsibilities for each of these positions, so that anyone nominating will clearly understand Board expectations. If the Board decides to move to change the Constitution to allow appointment for all five positions, then they will need to recognise that the G21 members will have no input into Board representation and there may be repercussions from this decision.

Recommendation 21:

The G21 Board to consider various options with regard to election or appointment of independent Director positions and decide on the option which will best meet the needs of G21.

- Should the Board opt to take up Option 3 with regard to the Chairperson's position, there would be ten voting Directors on the Board if each Council only retains one vote. Although, to date, the Board has been able to come to a consensus on issues without needing to vote, it is advisable to retain an odd number of Directors so that, should there be a need to vote, a clear majority can be identified. The eleventh Director's position could be nominated as an appointed Director who brings specific knowledge or skill sets to the Board. These skill sets might include legal or accounting capability or a high level project management or governance background for example, and could change over time depending on the priorities of the Board at the time of re-appointment of this position. The Board also needs to retain the ability to temporarily appoint a new Director should a current Director resign as specified in the Constitution[26].

Recommendation 22:

The G21 Board appoint one independent Director to bring required specialist skills and knowledge to the Board.

Strategic Management

In order to achieve the objectives of G21, the Board needs to map out the strategic management process for the G21 Alliance. As stated in the G21 Board Charter, the Board must 'ensure that the Board makes the best possible use of its meetings by dealing only with matters that have governance-level significance, by focusing primarily on the future'[27]. Whilst much of the strategic direction is spelt out in the 2007 Geelong Region Plan, the Board needs to identify and decide on organisational focus and priority projects. It is therefore suggested that, once the Board has completed its planned goverance training, it undertake its own strategic planning process to determine how best to address Regional issues and to ensure that the work of G21 supports achievement of the goals and

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[26] G21 Constitution, Clauses 15.3 and 15.4, p. 19
[27] G21 Board Charter, Board Focus, p. 5

objectives of the individual municipalities. In more clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of Directors, the Board will be complying with the G21 Board Charter requirement to 'oversee succession planning through maintaining an up to date "skills matrix" identifying the pool of capabilities and attributes needed to discharge the Board's responsibilities and identify and develop members of G21 capable of assuming governance roles in the future'[28]. The G21 Board Charter gives clear direction as to required Director competencies[29], and these will be useful in defining Board expectations of Directors.

The Board also needs to give some considerable thought to the development of Terms of Reference and/or Memoranda of Understanding for the Executive Groups, Reference Groups, Pillar Groups and Project Groups. These need to include, but not be limited to:

- the relationship of that group with other groups and with the Board;

- the roles and responsibilities of Group Leaders;

- appointment/election processes for Group Leader positions;

- Expectations of that Group;

- Processes for creating and dissolving Groups;

- Facilitated planning days to ensure that strategic planning is undertaken at each level;

- Key Performance Indicators and measurement systems;

- Risk Management processes in accordance with the G21 Board Charter[30];

- Reporting and communication processes and protocols.

Recommendation 23:

The G21 Board to develop Terms of Reference and/or Memoranda of Understanding for Pillar Groups and Executive Groups.

As recommended earlier in this report, the Board also needs to consider development of a significant strategic marketing and communications plan, to ensure that it is getting the right message out to the right people. Representational duties should be shared amongst Board members so that both G21 itself as well as the five Councils are able to raise their profiles.

It is important not to impose too harsh a burden on G21 Directors by having to attend too many meetings. As mentioned earlier, this report therefore recommends that the Board meet bi-monthly (this would accord with Constitutional requirements[31]), with the alternate month being used for meetings of the Executive Groups and nominated Board sub-committees.

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[28] G21 Board Charter, Board Responsibilities, p. 4
[29] G21 Board Charter, Director Competencies, p. 17
[30] G21 Board Charter, Risk Assessment, p. 5
[31] G21 Constitution, Part Two, Clause 20.1, p. 22

Funding

A number of Board members raised concerns with the issue of funding and the need to rationalise the amount of their financial contributions to G21. This could be partially addressed by abolishing the Research Officer position as recommended earlier in this report and having this function taken up through participating Councils.

A significant allocation is also made for consultancy services within the G21 budget. In the past, this has been an important item. However, with the extensive work which went into the development of the 2007 Geelong Region Plan and the intention to move G21 from a planning phase to an implementation phase, there should be much less need for G21 specific consultancy projects. Tier 1, 2 and 3 projects will bid for funding in their own right and should include a component for project management. G21 itself should not need to be undertaking extensive consultancy projects and the allocation for this item could therefore be reduced significantly.

Recommendation 24:

That the consultancy allocation within the G21 Operations budget be reduced and future consultancy requirements addressed through specific project funding.

These two items would save a considerable amount of money over the four year funding cycle.

For instance, if the Research Officer position attracted a salary of $60,000 per year (an indicative estimate for the purpose of this report), a savings of $240,000 would be made over four years.

The current consultation budget for G21 is $138,000 per year (excluding the Financial Audit Services). $52,000 of this is used for advocacy and should be maintained. However, following from the reduced need for consultation, it is estimated that consultancy costs can be reduced by $40,000 per year. This would reduce the budget from $138,000 for consultancy to $98,000.

Savings for G21 would be as follows:

	Annual Savings	4-Year Savings
Research Officer	$60,000	$240,000
Consulting Costs	$40,000	$160,000
Total Savings	$100,000	$400,000

Table 2 – Savings from Research Officer and consultancy reductions

Savings for each of the five municipalities is on the following chart:

	4 Year Savings
City of Greater Geelong	$305,400
Colac Otway	$32,600
Golden Plains	$23,640
Surf Coast	$33,320
Queenscliffe	$5,040
	$400,000

Table 3 – Savings related to percentage of Council contributions

Governance documents

There are three formal governance documents used by G21. These are:

1. The Constitution
2. The Memorandum of Understanding between the five participating municipalities.
3. The Board Charter

Discussions with Board members and Pillar Group representatives raised no specific issues with the governance documents, therefore any changes suggested will be as a result of the recommendations within this report. Whilst there appears to be no need to vary the Memorandum of Understanding or the Board Charter, some changes will be required to the Constitution depending on which options the Board chooses to take up.

Recommendations Overview

Recommendation Number	Recommendation
1	That G21 as a successful Alliance continue, but that Pillar Groups to align under Region Plan strategic directions
2	Change the name of Pillar Groups to deter the need to defend inactive groups and reflect the flexibility of the organisation. The membership should be involved in this process.
3	Form an Executive Group for each of the first four strategic directions.
4	Projects are measured against strategic policies and objectives and are tiered in a process that is transparent to all members.
5	Each Tier One project to have a Board member champion/sponsor.
6	Annual strategic planning sessions to be conducted for the Board, reference groups and Pillar Groups.
7	The Research Officer position currently nominated within G21 Operations be abolished and this function picked up through the relevant research areas of the five municipalities.
8	The G21 Operations staff should have as their primary focus the support of the G21 network and project teams. More specifically, they should not be directly engaged in projects, but rather support those who are.
9	Support from G21 Operations staff should be offered through a clearly identified 'tiered' process. These support capabilities should be clearly articulated and communicated to the membership and published in an accessible manner.
10	G21 CEO to work with Operations staff to revise individual job descriptions and develop individual KPI's.
11	G21 to work more closely with organisations such as the Committee for Geelong, Australian Industry Group and Chamber of Commerce.
12	G21 Board and CEO develop the capability to identify and implement KPI's and measuring/monitoring processes for the G21 organisation
13	G21 CEO to conduct six monthly briefings with Councillors from the five participating municipalities as well as with local State and

	Federal members.
14	A strategic marketing program to be designed and developed between Board, G21 CEO and Marketing/Communications Officer.
15	An annual G21 conference/'trade fair' to be conducted.
16	Board Chairperson to be elected from within the Board.
17	The G21 Board to consider various options with regard to Board composition and decide on the structure which best meets the needs of G21.
18	Each municipality to retain equal voting rights on the G21 Board.
19	That one independent Director takes on the role of Industry Representative, providing guidance on engaging industry groups.
20	Four independent Director positions be changed to Executive Leaders of Reference Groups.
21	The G21 Board to consider various options with regard to election or appointment of independent Director positions and decide on the option which will best meet the needs of G21.
22	The G21 Board appoint one independent Director to bring required specialist skills and knowledge to the Board.
23	The G21 Board to develop Terms of Reference and/or Memoranda of Understanding for Pillar Groups and Executive Groups.
24	That the consultancy allocation within the G21 Operations budget be reduced and future consultancy requirements addressed through specific project funding.

Conclusion

Since its formation in 2001, the G21 Alliance has developed a strong network within the Region, and with State Government and other agencies outside the Region. One of the major strengths identified by project respondents with regard to G21 was the collaborative relationships and consultative processes which have enabled G21 members to contribute to its evolution. G21 is now seen as a model of cooperative Regional development and has achieved some significant project successes.

Whilst the 2003 Geelong Region Plan was built around a number of Foundation, Lighthouse and Pillar projects, the 2007 Geelong Region Plan has been designed around five strategic directions which are intended to take the Region forward into the future. Projects will be developed around these strategic directions to ensure that the efforts of G21 members are directed towards achieving significant Regional objectives.

With the evolution of G21 from a 'planning' organisation to a network which is intended to identify and implement projects, it has been necessary to examine the existing structure, operations and governance models currently in use by G21 to determine whether the organisation is best placed to move into its next phase.

One of the concerns expressed by project participants was the lack of communication with regard to clear direction and expectations of the Pillar Groups by the G21 Board. This has been exacerbated by the current 'silo' nature of the Pillars themselves which has impeded cross-Pillar communication. As a result, the Pillar Groups have become isolated. Those Pillars which have developed a clear vision and mutual goals have been successful in identifying and implementing projects. In other cases, Pillars which have not been able to build such a vision have floundered and, in some cases, virtually ceased to exist.

This report has recommended a change in structure and operations to address these issues. By connecting the Pillar Groups to each other and to a common strategic direction through the reference groups, it will be possible to revitalise the G21 network and to refocus all members to work together to achieve the objectives of the 2007 Geelong Region Plan. By also connecting the Pillars to the G21 Board through the Executive Groups, the Pillars will have the opportunity to re-engage with the Board, and the Board will ensure that its strategic expectations are being met.

With the increasing emphasis on moving into an implementation phase, a clearly defined process for 'tiering' projects will ensure that the effort of members is focused towards achieving G21's identified objectives. The revised organisational and project structure will also enable the G21 Operations staff to focus their support more effectively and to build strong communication links throughout the G21 Alliance.

In order to achieve these changes, this report has also recommended that the structure of the G21 Board needs to change to connect it more strongly with the Pillar Groups and to ensure that both political and operational decision makers from the five participating municipalities are engaged with G21.

The proposed changes to the structure, operations and governance model used by G21 are designed to enhance the existing strengths of collaboration and consultation, whilst also addressing the identified problems with vertical and horizontal communication and achievement of project outcomes. This structure should revitalise the G21 Alliance and ensure that all members and stakeholders clearly understand, and work towards, the goals and objectives identified in the 2007 Geelong Region Plan.

Tracing the footsteps of G21[32]:

July 2004	**A Special General Meeting will be called to form the First Board of G21, Geelong Region Alliance.**
June 1, 2004	The final drafts of the G21 Constitution, Board Charter and Memorandum of Understanding are completed and placed on our website. The documents will remain in draft form until they are adopted by the First Board.
May 25, 2004	City of Greater Geelong Council adopt the recommendation to fund G21 for 4 Years and support it becoming a Company. All five Councils have now agreed to support G21 becoming a Company Limited by Guarantee and provide funding.
April 30, 2004	Cr Ed Coppe, Mayor City of Greater Geelong was elected Chair of the G21 Leadership Group.
26 February, 2004	Golden Plains Shire is the first of the five G21 Councils to formally adopt a recommendation to join with other participating regional Councils in the formation of G21 as a Company Limited by Guarantee. They also agree to a 4 Year rolling funding agreement to fund the company.
January 30, 2004	G21 Process Improvement Workshops commenced (3 in total) to review and receive feedback on our first Year of planning. The review is imperative to effectively undertaking Strategy implementation and improving the operation and effectiveness of G21.
January 30, 2004	First meeting of the G21 Leadership Group for 2004. The group endorses the following documents continue development and be used for participation/funding submission purposes: G21 Constitution, Board Charter and Establishment Process.
November 17-21, 2003	Four regional launches were held across the remaining four Council municipalities to launch the Strategic Plan to those communities.
November 14, 2003	The first Geelong Region Strategic Plan was launched at Geelong&s Deakin University Waterfront, by Minister John Brumby.
October 31, 2003	The G21 Leadership Group &approved in principle& the recommended Governance Model of a Company Limited by Guarantee. A Governance Action Plan was endorsed to try and progress this option. Constitution, Charter, Business Plan and Establishment Process now to be developed.
September 29, 2003	Draft One of the Strategic Plan was reviewed and amendments recorded for inclusion in Draft Two by the G21 Leadership Group. The Plan was approved in principle to proceed to completion, editing and publication. Regional launches in all municipalities confirmed for approximately 17th November 2003.
Sept 29 to 23 Oct, 2003	Nine Governance Consultation sessions were conducted with the following groups: CEOs/Mayors of each G21 Council, Councillors of each G21 Council, Pillar Leaders, Project Management Group, Committee for Geelong and regional Agencies. These sessions were to discuss and receive feedback on the five governance models proposed and the &preferred& option.
September 23, 2003	Monash University, Centre of Policy Studies, releases a report "Medium term Economic Forecasts for the Barwon Region". The Report, commissioned by G21 and Committee for Geelong, forecast strong growth for the region for the period to 2015 across 49 industry sectors.
August 29, 2003	Member for South Barwon, Michael Crutchfield is announced as the G21 Political Champion.
June to September 2003	Pillar Groups refine "Initial Frameworks". Pillar Leaders meet fortnightly for half Days to develop/integrate the Strategic Plan.

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[32] Taken from G21 website: www.g21.com.au

May 30, 2003	**Colac Otway Shire formerly enter the G21 Alliance. The Shire already had a strong presence in Pillar Group activity and are a welcome member to the Leadership Group.**
May 15, 2003	**$77,000 Federal Government Regional Assistance Program funding through the local Geelong Area Consultative Committee is announced as successful. The funding is important to ensure depth of development for the process but more important is the fact that the three levels of government are now formally committed to this regional initiative.**
May 6, 2003	**Pillar Leader Workshops commence on a fortnightly basis to establish and co-ordinate the agreed process to develop the Strategic Regional Plan.**
May 2, 2003	**The Honourable John Brumby officially launched the G21 project.** **Bernard Salt of KPMG conducts a presentation on the &Big Shift& reinforcing the regional growth expected for our region.**
April 24, 2003	**Cr Barbara Abley, Mayor of the City of Greater Geelong is elected Chair of G21 at the Leadership Group meeting.** **The brand of the group has been agreed as G21. And the name: &Geelong Region Alliance& and the message: &Our Region_Your Future& were also agreed.** **The purpose of G21 has been agreed as: To lead and support activities that benefit the well-being of the communities of the Barwon region.**
March, April, May 2003	**All Pillar Groups commence Planning Workshops to develop "Initital Frameworks".**
March 21, 2003	**Project Management Group formed to assist/advise on Alliance Plan Development processes.** **Governance Work Group convened to develop and recommend options for the long-term governance arrangements for the Alliance. Options to be based on research and consultation.**
March 2003	**Funding submission finalised for Federal Regional Assistance Program support for Phase 2 of the Planning Process via the Geelong Area Consultative Committee**
February 21, 2003	**John Stevens from Dench McClean Carlson is contracted following the tendering for a strategic planning facilitation support representative for phase one of the project. This work includes the development and publication of the first Geelong Region Strategic Plan by October 1, 2003 and the establishment of structures to facilitate the implementation of the plan (Phase 2).**
February 17, 2003	**The G21 team officially start with a Project Manager - Rob McHenry and a Project Officer - Simone Beekmans . The G21 team start working from Customs House in Brougham Street Geelong .**
February 2003	**Pillar Planning Workshops conducted by Health & Wellbeing, Sport & Recreation, Education and Research Pillars.**
November 30, 2002	**CoGG Corporate Planning Manager and Project Officer seconded to the Alliance for 12 Months.**
November 22, 2002	**Leadership Group Meetings commence. These meetings are aimed at fostering and guiding the delivery of the Strategic Regional Plan.** **A meeting of Mayors, Chief Executive Officer&s and volunteer Pillar leaders was called. At this meeting, the G21 project manager placed all the benefits, feedback, issues and opportunities on the table for discussion.** **The meeting outcome resulted in strong regional support, the project being titled the &Geelong Region Strategic Alliance&. A &Leadership Group& was formed and Terms of Reference agreed in principle. The principles of the alliance and a draft Project Plan were also agreed.**
November 12, 2002	**A report was adopted by the City of Greater Geelong Council with the recommendation: "That Council agrees in principle to continue discussions with regional councils on the development of a &Geelong Regional Planning Partnership&."**
November 11, 2002	**The initiative receives State Government support of the concept and potential funding of $150,000 was announced conditional on the project being on a &dollar for dollar& basis - based on the involvement of five local councils.**
October 22, 2002	**Regional Councilc met to discuss how the project might move ahead through the establishment of draft Terms of Reference, Principles, Success Factors and a Project Plan. This forum determined that a meeting of Councils with the people volunteering to lead the Pillars was essential.**
	A second forum for regional Councils, community and business leaders was held . This forum discussed the overall concept and sought agreement in principle to proceed. As a result, general agreement was given and key people volunteered to lead each of the nine Pillars.
August 12, 2002	**A meeting of regional Councils was convened to brief and ascertain the level of support for a regional approach to planning. The result was positive and a forum was planned to involve those originally consulted in February.**
February to August 2002	**Work continues in the City of Greater Geelong to develop a "Foundation Document" based on 9 themes or "Pillars".**
February 28, 2002	**The first consultation forum was held at the National Wool Museum . Sixty community and business leaders attended from across the wider Geelong region.**

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