



BRISBANE: OPPORTUNITIES, INNOVATION AND LOOKING OUTWARD

Sarma Rajaraman, Chief Information Officer, Brisbane & South East Queensland, talked about the challenges of competing globally as a New World City, what this pioneering city has learned about being innovative and smart so far, and its next steps.

Brisbane is on the east coast of Australia and the capital of the state of Queensland, which covers 1.7 million square km – about a quarter of Australia and twice the size of India. It is the third largest Australian city by population; the city and surrounding area are home to 3.4 million of Queensland's total population of 4.7 million. The city has the largest local government in Australia.

Brisbane describes itself as a New World City. They typically are: smaller with strong specializations; agile; offer a high quality of life; competitive and globalizing. Brisbane appointed the world's second chief digital officer for a city in 2012 and launched its Digital Brisbane Strategy in 2013.

The city needs to innovate to ensure future prosperity and move away from its historic dependence on natural resources. At the same time, disruption is increasing across the globe through new business models and technology,

and Brisbane needs to build the capacity to thrive in such a disruptive environment. It needs to compete for talent against established world cities like Sydney, London and Beijing, as well as against other New World Cities.

There is also a growing expectation from the local community for knowledge about, engagement with and data from the city.

The plan

In 2015, the city developed Brisbane's New World City Action Plan 2022 in consultation with more than 1,000 individuals and organizations to consolidate efforts to date, set the direction for future initiatives, and drive the next wave of economic development.

The plan includes seven key priorities and targets eight industry growth sectors. It is guiding efforts to complete the innovation ecosystem Brisbane is building.

SEVEN KEY ECONOMIC PRIORITIES



It's important to note that the plan is driven by residents, local businesses and visitors, not technology. Customers help shape the council's front-line services; it delivers around 130 different services to over 1.1 million residents and the same number of visitors a year.

Brisbane City Council's budget is A\$3 billion (\$2.3 billion) in 2016/17 and there are more than 7,500 (full-time equivalent) employees across 200 different occupations delivering these services. The council is working on initiatives to enhance and optimize front-line services, leveraging technology, such as:

- advanced analytics for traffic management and intelligent transport systems;
- integrated parking solutions;
- smart LED lighting;
- virtual Brisbane for 3D modeling for major projects and city planning; and
- customer service integration through application program interfaces.

The city is now interconnecting services more too, for example, smart garbage whereby the trucks have cameras and sensors so they can identify and report potholes and other issues while on the road.

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Looking outward

Looking at the services the council provides is only one perspective. Looking outwardly, it recognizes that the ecosystem includes many other important stakeholders such as:

- leading education and research partners in schools and universities;
- neighboring local governments across the region, country and globally; and
- state and federal governments.

The council has a number of programs to build capabilities to develop talent and skills, for example: CoderDojo, which teaches children to code; and power-up workshops to teach social media, digital marketing, e-commerce and web design skills to small businesses. Study Brisbane provides support to international students at schools and universities.

The city provides entrepreneurial support to encourage a thriving start-up ecosystem by bringing global technology entrepreneurs to inspire and encourage the local community. Also, the Lord Mayor's Budding Entrepreneurs Program offers grants to fund practical support to some of the city's best emerging startups.

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To support small and medium businesses, the council provides a business support hotline helping businesses on a range of topics including licensing, development applications, business opportunities and procurement. Innovative Proposals is a process set up to propose innovative ideas to the council.

Moving forward with lessons learned

Brisbane offers a free Wi-Fi network covering the central business district, many parks, libraries, ferries and key precincts. This also benefits visitors and residents. The city is planning to expand its free Wi-Fi network to over 300 access points and The Capital initiative was announced last December with a A\$5 million (\$3.8 million) funding commitment. Opening later this year, The Capital is an innovation hub located in the central business district to bring Brisbane's startups together and complement state and federal innovation programs, and other private innovation initiatives.

Brisbane's successes in summary:

- recognizing the importance of culture and values;
- engaging with the community and industry to test the market for innovation capability;
- focusing on problems and challenges to solve, not exciting tools or technology;
- collaboration across all stakeholders within the council and beyond;
- engaging with customers and partners; and
- realizing that no one vendor has the complete solution.

The city thinks the biggest single challenge is achieving interoperability across other government bodies, but Rajaraman concluded, “These are truly exciting times and I am really proud of where Brisbane is and the opportunities ahead.”